

Reflections on my work with Frank Pierce Jones in light of my other experiences with the Alexander Technique

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The author regrets he is not available to enter into correspondence about this article at this time.

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Publishing history

This paper was circulated privately in 2016, with an invitation to others to pass it on.

This version edited by David Gibbens, February 2016.

Abstract

This article describes the author's experience of learning the Alexander Technique, and of learning to teach the Alexander Technique, with a particular focus on his experiences with Frank Pierce Jones (1905–1975) starting in 1968 and continuing intermittently until Pierce Jones died. The author also comments on his encounters with Pierce Jones's wife, Helen Rumsey Jones (?–1993). Some criticisms are offered of some aspects of Pierce Jones's approach compared with that of other first-generation teachers, such as the Carringtons and Peggy Williams, with whom Armstrong trained.

At the same time, the author describes the Joneses' serious concern regarding a perceived dilution of teaching standards in the USA in the period before Pierce Jones died, in particular the growing emphasis on group work as an approach to teaching the Alexander Technique. Armstrong concludes that both the approach to teaching and the approach to training teachers adopted by first-generation teachers such as Carrington are the appropriate ones.

In its mild criticisms of Pierce Jones, the article offers an implicit challenge to the prevailing hagiographic approach to key figures in Alexander Technique history.

Introduction

To my knowledge, I am the only Alexander teacher to have worked with Frank Pierce Jones both before completing a full teacher training and very extensively afterwards. Because Frank is so widely known for his writings and research, I hope that describing some aspects of my association with him in the context of my other experiences of Alexander teaching and teacher training might be of interest to the larger Alexander community.

Early private lessons: 1965–69

My first experience of the Alexander Technique came during two summers of nearly daily private Alexander lessons, starting in 1965, with Joan Murray at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan. I also had lessons there with Walter Carrington during his teaching visit in the summer of 1966. Some years before she came to Interlochen, Joan had trained with Walter, whose training course also included as principal teachers his wife, Dilys, and Peggy Williams, a very exacting first-generation teacher. Walter, a no less exacting teacher, had been Alexander's assistant in training teachers after World War II until Alexander's death in 1955. I had learned from Walter, Joan, and her husband, Alex, that Frank was

considered the most prominent American Alexander teacher who had trained with Alexander and his brother, A.R. while they taught in the U.S. during World War II.

Early lessons with Frank Pierce Jones

So I made it a point to have as many lessons as I could with Frank during 1968 and 1969 while I was serving a three-year enlistment in the Army Field Band, a touring concert unit commanded by the Pentagon. This was just before I went to England in September of 1969 to attend Walter's three-year teacher-training course.

Those early lessons with Frank were somewhat of a contrast to the lessons I had already had with Joan and Walter, and I found them a bit puzzling from an intellectual point of view. But the psychophysical experience I received from Frank's hands seemed to be in the same general ballpark as what I had received from Joan and Walter. The chief differences were that Frank didn't maintain a more or less constant contact with his hands on me, as Joan and Walter had. And Frank didn't require me to be stationed at a particular chair chosen for the lesson, which, of course, is the traditional format for teaching – often combined with 'lying-down work' on a table. Nevertheless, Frank did include guiding me from sitting to standing and back to sitting a number of times

during each lesson within the context of ‘walking me’ around to various chairs in the room. Often, while I was seated, he would continue working on me for some time while he sat facing my left side.¹

The essential difference with Frank’s lessons, though, was that he conducted them more as a social visit than as a special Alexander teaching session. The visit was focused chiefly around having a conversation, primarily about Alexander-related concepts and topics – a conversation in which Frank did most of the talking.² He saw pupils in the drawing room of the gracious and spacious apartment in the historic six-family house – ‘The Lowell’ – where he and his wife, Helen, lived in Cambridge at 33 Lexington Avenue not far from Harvard. The room was decorated very tastefully with art work, different styles of chairs, a settee, small tables often with a pot of blooming flowers on one of them, lamps, a bookcase, and a high bureau that had drawers and various objets d’art sitting on it. Frank would usually start working on me with his hands right where we had been standing conversing after we entered the room. This gave the situation the feel of a predominantly intellectual exchange that coincidentally involved his putting his hands on me from time to time to enhance the working of my primary control as part of illustrating a point that had come up in our conversation. This approach to a lesson served to keep it from being mistaken for some type of physical therapy or posture and movement training.

Frank had no long table to use for giving pupils lying down work, and I think there were several reasons for this. One was that Frank’s training with F.M. and A.R. Alexander probably didn’t involve much table work, if any, because there probably were no tables of the right size in the places where they taught while they were in the U.S. – like the Hotel Braemore in Boston, the Whitney Homestead in Stow, Massachusetts, and the Media Friends School in Pennsylvania. Also, I assume that the Alexander brothers were so adept with their hands that they could bring about quite substantial changes through chair work alone – as was Walter Carrington, although he did have a table in his teaching room in case he found that a particular pupil or student needed lying-down work. But I think the main reason Frank didn’t want to do table work – or to create a special Alexander lesson space – was because his chief interest and concern always seemed to be to make the Technique as appealing as possible on an intellectual and philosophical level to nearby Harvard, MIT, and Tufts faculty and other members of the academic, medical, and scientific professions. I thought that Frank’s cultivation of this perspective was probably due to his own academic orientation as well as to his appreciation for John Dewey’s views on the Technique and its potential to influence the fields of education and philosophy.

Since Frank had been a Classics professor before coming to do research on the Alexander Technique at the Tufts Institute for Psychological Research, his language was far more erudite than I was accustomed to in the performing arts. I sometimes had trouble absorbing what he said during those early lessons simply because his vocabulary was so unfamiliar to me and almost everything he said seemed to be abstract or indirect, rather than statements of what he actually thought, believed, experienced, or wanted me to understand. He would use words like ‘ratiocination’ and ‘proprioception’ – words I’d never heard before, even though I had been carefully studying Alexander’s four books while riding the bus on the Field Band’s long concert tours. So, for me, there was a gulf between what I received from Frank’s hands and what he was telling me in words – as if I had undergone two separate, but somehow related, experiences: one conceptual or intellectual, and the other sensory.

Some contrasts with other teachers

I’m not sure exactly how many lessons I had with Frank during those Army years, but it must have been at least half a dozen. I remember coming up to Boston from Washington a number of times both on my own and with other bandmates, and again on several occasions when the Field Band played concerts here. But one main thing I remember thinking and feeling each time I had a lesson and walked down Brattle Street from Frank’s home to catch the subway at Harvard Square was that his perspective on what the Technique might demand of one intellectually and philosophically seemed far beyond any capacity or inclination that I possessed at the time. This contrasted starkly with my experience in lessons with Joan and Walter, which had been so immediate and practical that they helped me to be present from moment to moment in relation to nature and every action and thought that I had throughout the day. Of course, what I received from Joan’s and Walter’s lessons pervaded all of my musical practice and performance too, since my flute playing was also being inspired then by my study with Joan’s husband, Alex, the first flautist of the London Symphony, who was also an ardent proponent of the Technique and had urged all his students to have Alexander lessons. Joan had been in the performing arts too – a professional dancer – so I felt at home in all her communication with me. In fact, my lessons with her always seemed to include an unspoken aesthetic inspiration that enhanced all the basic ideas that we addressed from lesson to lesson. But that isn’t to say that lessons with Joan were in any way intellectually or philosophically inferior to those I had with Frank. In fact, my lessons with Joan seemed all the more remarkable because they were so inspiring in their practicality. Every conversation I had with her was scintillating and full of profound insight into every aspect of human behaviour

and reaction – but the conceptual insights were secondary to the primary psychophysical experience. In contrast, Frank’s focus seemed primarily on the concepts while the sensory experience happened, almost mysteriously, in the background.

One particular lesson with Joan illustrates this contrast well. It happened toward the end of my first summer of lessons in 1965 between my junior and senior year of music school. We were just finishing the lesson where Joan taught in the simple kitchen of the Murrays’ summer cottage, and I was going up quite well – as far as I could assess at that point in the development of my awareness of my use of myself – when another university flautist arrived for her lesson and knocked on the screen door I was facing. Joan left me sitting for a few moments while she showed the girl into the next room to wait until my lesson was over, so I saw who it was as she came in and passed right by me. As it happened, I had developed a secret and unlikely-to-be-requited crush on her, but until that moment I didn’t think that there was much about my feelings for her that could ever be obvious to her or anyone else. But when Joan returned and put her hands on my neck, head, and torso to continue directing my primary control, I was shocked to realize how drastically I had pulled down in comparison to my ‘lengthening in stature’ just before the girl arrived. The instantaneous, and entirely subconscious, change in me had been far greater than I imagined it could be. Joan didn’t say anything to me about it, though, and in a few seconds it seemed that she managed to redirect me fairly quickly to my earlier lengthening in stature as we finished the lesson. This very powerful, but also very brief, experience puzzled me deeply because, up to that day, I had been thinking of the Technique primarily as an essentially ‘physical’ method. So when I came for my next lesson, I couldn’t wait to say to Joan, ‘This technique isn’t just a physical technique, is it? It’s sort of physical and psycho...’ She immediately said ‘psychophysical’, a word I’d never heard before but one that, of course, is widely used in Alexander’s writings, to name exactly what I was trying to describe from my own experience. This revelation was enormously exciting, and from then on, it was as if an even broader world of thinking and learning opened up for me.³ I don’t mean to suggest that one could not have a similar realization during lessons with Frank, but because his teaching format was more intellectual and formal, such an intense emotional situation and response was far less likely to occur – for me, at any rate.

Although my experience in lessons with Frank during those years was somewhat perplexing, there was nothing about his teaching that made me feel that he wasn’t teaching the authentic Alexander Technique just as much as I had felt that Joan and Walter were teaching it. I also had a few lessons during this time with Rika Cohen, who was living in Boston then, and although her style of

teaching was rather different from Joan’s and Walter’s (Rika had trained with first-generation teacher, Patrick Macdonald), it still seemed like I was receiving essentially the same experience from her hands as I had from the other teachers.

All these lessons fired in me an enthusiasm to train someday to become a fully qualified Alexander teacher, even though I questioned seriously if I possessed the intellectual and emotional maturity and the general aptitude for becoming an even basically competent teacher. It was clear to me that the Alexander Technique was a most remarkable discovery in the realm of health and behavior and that the discipline entailed in teaching it demanded utmost respect and allegiance. The Technique definitely wasn’t something to be toyed around with or treated casually, as if anyone should be able to teach it after having some private lessons or group workshops. This perspective is illustrated by the experiences I describe in the next two sections.

Army Field Band ‘Alexander Teaching’ Experience: 1966–69

Another factor that comes into play when I reflect on my experiences with Frank stems from some ‘experimental work’ I did with a number of my Army bandmates who had asked me to demonstrate the Technique because I often spoke about how valuable I felt it was to me both personally and as a musician. Initially, I never considered trying to show them anything with my hands because I knew that I didn’t have any idea of what was involved in that aspect of teaching. I also knew that Alexander himself had required trainees to complete at least three years of full-time training when he established his first training course in 1930 and that this same three-year standard was continued by the society (The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique [STAT]) that was established after Alexander’s death in 1955 by numerous teachers he had trained. However, one bandmate, a trumpeter named John Henes (now a fully trained Alexander teacher himself), was so intrigued by what I’d told him that he insisted I try to show him something about how the Technique actually works. Since there were no qualified Alexander teachers anywhere near Washington at the time and since he persuaded me that I couldn’t do him any harm, I finally agreed to try to show him a few things with my hands – but only on the condition that we mutually acknowledge that I wasn’t a trained teacher and that I felt I really didn’t know how to teach the Technique at all.

We started by my asking John to sit down on the foot locker in his barracks room. We often used these trunks as seats when we would get together in each others’ rooms to talk, listen to, or play music together, etc., and

they were about the height of a footstool. I first asked John to consider standing up again soon, and then I began to use my hands on him with the idea of eventually persuading him to let me guide him into standing. I remembered, in general, the places on my neck, my chin, the back of my head, and my torso where Joan had used her hands when moving me in and out of a chair, so I merely mimicked those contacts as best I could. I had understood, however, that the essence of the hands-on Alexander experience wasn't supposed to be based on any kind of overt or direct manipulation, such as is used in various forms of massage or physical therapy.

As I was working on John with my hands, I don't remember what I said to him by way of any specific instructions, but I think I asked him to try to pay attention to his neck and head and not to make any tension or changes in that relationship as I asked him to let me try to guide him into standing without his making any effort of his own. He seemed able to allow me to do this, and, while he was standing, I continued to place my hands on his neck, head, and shoulders in a light way with an upward intention. After a few moments, I asked him to let me guide him back into sitting again, and this seemed to work pretty well too as far as I could tell. At least I felt that I hadn't done something bad to him, but I also knew that John had been on his high school wrestling team and that he was probably able to withstand much more forceful contacts than I was making. I think this whole session only lasted about ten minutes, and that I got him to let me stand him up and sit him down a couple more times as I kept reminding him not to do anything to help me. I'm also pretty sure that I reminded him at various times to 'think' the basic directions of neck being free, head going forward and up, and back lengthening and widening.

As it turned out, John was quite astonished at his experience during those movements and periods of stillness, of moving and being in such a different general state from what he was used to feeling, and he couldn't help exclaiming how remarkable it seemed to him. I was very surprised that he felt that way, because I didn't have the slightest idea of what I may have done to help him have that experience, and I certainly couldn't perceive with my hands that I had caused any changes in his overall use of himself that would account for his strong reaction. He was so excited, though, that he rushed down the hall to get his good friend Dean Ross, a bassist, to 'come and see this neat thing that Joe can do!' Dean came down to John's room, and I did pretty much the same things with my hands to guide him from sitting to standing and back to sitting, asking him not to make any particular tensions in his neck or help with his legs, etc. He was just as astonished as John had been, and I was equally baffled at how all this had just happened.

Over the rest of my three-year stint in the Field Band, I became bold enough to do more explorations of using my hands on various other bandmates who had become very interested in the Technique, and all of them seemed to find what I tried to give them very helpful. Of course, I had spent a good deal of time talking with them about the benefits and principles of the Technique when we got together in off-duty hours, and I think that these conversations helped them to absorb more from my hands-on work than they otherwise would have – more that they could also use in their daily lives.⁴ One of these bandmates even found that he could use what he'd understood from our work together to keep himself from panicking when he got an injection from a doctor or dentist. He was thrilled by this accomplishment because he had thought that his panic in those situations was something he'd have to endure all his life. In spite of these good results, however, I continued to assert that I wasn't in any way qualified to teach the Technique, and I urged each of these bandmates to have full-fledged Alexander lessons whenever they were near a trained teacher – which a number of them ultimately did after they left the Army. Furthermore, whenever we would perform in cities where there was a qualified Alexander teacher, I would usually try to arrange for at least a few bandmates to have an introductory lesson. They were always impressed and excited by the experience, and I think it helped them to realize why I didn't claim to be a qualified teacher.

In retrospect, I would guess that these bandmates had this fairly positive experience when I used my hands on them in this imitative and crude way because even a little sustained, gentle, and upward direction from another person's hands can sometimes produce rather dramatic results since this kind of contact is so foreign to anything most of us experience as adults, even though we may have once felt it from our parents or other adults when we were young. And, even in our non-combatant situation, there was a constant undercurrent of fear that we might, at any moment, be transferred to a place where our lives could be in danger. So perhaps the Alexander-type contact was somehow alleviating a certain degree of subconscious neuro-muscular stress in my bandmates. I also think that my great enthusiasm for the Technique and my essentially caring attitude went a long way toward giving them a positive experience too.

While I was in the Field Band, Joan and Alex Murray moved from London to teach at Michigan State University in East Lansing. By then we had become good friends, and I would visit them to have more lessons whenever I could go on leave. During these years, they also began their explorations of the Dart Procedures as a valuable adjunct to Alexander teaching, and I was excited to be a subject for some of their early demonstrations of what they had been learning from Professor Dart and his

writings. The Murrays' enthusiasm for the Technique was highly contagious, and I was grateful to have come to know them so well – not least because their teaching, friendship, and support helped me so much to cope with the demands of those years in the military, which came at such a troubling time in history. I had hoped that I might be able to train as an Alexander teacher with Joan after leaving the Army, along with pursuing my master's degree in flute performance under Alex's guidance, but Joan was not training teachers at that time. They, as well as Kitty Wielopolska and Rika Cohen, strongly urged me to go to London to train because they knew that the teacher training programs in the U.S. at that time did not adhere to the Society's standards and they were also uncertain about the credentials of the teachers who had established these courses. Frank also supported my decision to train in London when we corresponded about his offer to contact my congressmen to request that they recommend me for receiving assistance from the G.I. Bill to pay my training course tuition.

London: the teacher training course: 1969–72

As soon as I was discharged from the Army, in September, 1969, I sailed to England to join Walter Carrington's three-year teacher-training course. Since I had been studying the Technique for four years and had had lessons from Joan, Walter, Rika, and Frank, I thought that I might be more advanced than some of my classmates and that my training might not take the full three years. But on my very first day, when Peggy Williams was showing me how to direct myself as a whole while she supervised me in the simple act of putting my hands on and taking them off another trainee, all my illusions were shattered. I was shocked that none of what I'd done as the basis of using my hands while working with my bandmates met the requirements of what is involved in teaching the Technique. After that day, I thought that it would probably take me at least ten years before I would be capable of teaching on any fundamental level. What Peggy showed me was that at this beginning stage I had to focus entirely on improving my own direction of my use of myself as a whole (which I also soon realized was far from what it needed to be – despite my having had so many private lessons) and not at all on attempting to use my hands themselves in any particular way to direct the use of the person I was being guided into placing them upon. She made it clear that if I took any initiative at all at that stage to place my hands on another trainee by myself, instead of having a teacher place my hands on the trainee for me while the teacher also assisted me in directing my use of my primary control, a truly valid Alexander experience could not be transmitted. Most Alexander pupils have no idea that the

teacher's intense and careful moment-to-moment hands-on scrutiny of the trainee is required for several years if the full training development is to take place. Equally important is the feedback from the person who is having the hands of the trainee placed upon him or her, and this person needs to be another qualified teacher or an advanced trainee. Without this double scrutiny and feedback about the trainee's use of him- or herself at every step in the development of all facets of the hands-on skills required for teaching, self-deception is very likely. Otherwise, one would be bound to get the idea, as I had in the Army, that he or she is doing the same thing that the trained teachers are doing with their hands. I don't think I fully appreciated the importance of this dual-scrutiny aspect of the training experience until early on when I was teaching in Boston and attempted by myself – and failed – to help one of Frank's pupils to understand what he lacked by not undergoing a training course.

As I reflect back on my forty-some years of teaching the Technique, it's obvious that I could never have acquired the same level of expertise and understanding that I received from the three-year training experience if I had merely continued working with people on the basis of what I thought I understood from my experimental work with my Army bandmates. I probably could have become a fairly good fake Alexander teacher, and people may have unwittingly benefited from what I gave them because they wouldn't have been qualified to evaluate the difference between what I would have done and what a fully trained teacher could do. With that realization in mind, it is also astonishing to think that others sometimes assume that they can teach the Technique fully – and even train others to teach – on the basis of even less experience than I had from my four years of private lessons. I had superb lessons from those teachers, but the lessons were in no way the equivalent of the training course.

It also became clear early on in the training course that both the students in various years of training and the teachers who visited from time to time were at quite different levels of experience and expertise in the use of their hands – often depending upon their training thus far or upon how long they had taught. It was clear that some were not yet always fully able to stop 'doing', or 'end-gaining', with their hands and that they needed more help in getting past that tendency. So I felt very lucky that my illusions had been shattered by Peggy on that first day of class. It was obvious too that her and Walter's remarkable skill with their hands extended far beyond what most of us could dream of achieving until we'd taught for many years. This realization was shared and reinforced by the other first-generation teachers who assisted on the course or visited regularly, including Dilys Carrington, Elisabeth Walker, and Dr. Edward Gellately, as well as by the second-generation teachers who did the same: Christine Ackers, Diana Mason, Nina Haahr, Jeanne Haahr, Jean

Clark, Sonia Lushington, and Ursula Benn. Summer visits by Chariclia Gounaris, Grethe Laub, and Vera Cawling also confirmed this high standard of teaching. Contrasting with these teachers was one person from the U.S. who was a guest in the class for several terms, and whose training had only consisted of about half the Society's three-year requirement. It was obvious to everyone that she had not received the full depth of training that we were being given, and she acknowledged it herself after she had attended the course for several weeks and had first-hand experience of our teachers and how we were being trained.

So, when considering my second phase of work with Frank, it's important to remember that improvement during the training course happened very, very gradually and required constant attention to building up the consistency of direction that was required for facilitating the overall, 'normal' working of the postural mechanisms that is involved in the correct employment of the primary control.⁵ It wasn't until about the middle of my third year that my conditions and manner of use of myself as a whole⁶ improved enough for me to gain a constancy in my overall direction sufficient for working on another person without the guidance of a teacher's hands. From then on it did seem that I was at last on my way to becoming a full-fledged teacher. Eventually, during my last 12-week term, Walter and Peggy acknowledged this, and I was allowed to start teaching a few private pupils at the school. By the time I received my teaching certificate in July of 1972, I had enough experience under my belt to feel that I could return to the States to begin a private teaching practice of my own, which I hoped to do in Boston in conjunction with pursuing a master's degree in music.

Boston: working as a trained teacher with Frank Pierce Jones: 1972–75

I moved to Boston in the fall of 1972 after first consulting with Frank to see if he thought that there would be a need for another Alexander teacher in the area. He was quite enthusiastic about my coming to teach there, and he even offered to have me accompany him to a presentation on the Technique that he had been invited to give at the New England Conservatory soon after I arrived. A former training-course classmate of mine, Judah Kataloni, had also done some private Alexander teaching there a few years earlier, so interest in the Technique was still quite high at the school. Frank's lecture was well attended, and I acquired a number of pupils from that occasion. Not long afterward, a singing teacher at Boston University arranged for me to demonstrate the Technique to a number of her colleagues in the music and theatre

departments, and I soon had a full teaching practice comprised mainly of professionals and students in the performing arts.

During that first year in Boston, Frank also suggested that I come for lessons with him because he felt that one should continue having work for some time after completing one's training – as he had done when he finished his training with A.R. Alexander. Since I'd had so much hands-on work during the full-time course in London, I wasn't really eager to have more of it just then. But Frank seemed to want to discuss with me his views on teaching and research, so I agreed to come for lessons, thinking that it would be a good opportunity to consider his approach in the context of that much larger body of experience I'd so recently had in training.

Occasionally, he and his wife, Helen, who had done most of the Alexander teacher training at the same time as Frank, would also invite me over for tea to talk about the Alexander Technique and how it was being taught, and these occasions gave me a much deeper insight into Frank's perspective than I had gleaned during my earlier lessons with him while I was in the Army. A great deal of controversial activity was also beginning to take place in the Alexander world at large then, and he and Helen were eager to express their views on what was transpiring – particularly as a result of new forms of group teaching in the U.S. and of approaches to teaching and teacher training that presented the Technique as a type of movement education in which pupils were taught to 'maintain their alignment'⁷ or merely to 'move their head up and let their body [sic] tag along' as a part of initiating an action.

Helen was as critical as Frank of these developments, and it became obvious to me that she and Frank actually functioned as a team, even though she didn't participate in the actual hands-on work during a lesson. She had conducted research of her own as part of her master's thesis,⁸ and she was always nearby during a lesson and ready to add to the conversation, particularly at the beginning and end when she would often be the one to help me on with my coat, etc. Eventually, it also became clear that she intended to carry on with Frank's approach to teaching if he were ever not able to do so.

Particular aspects of Jones's teaching

In 1972, my more extensive experience of so many different teachers' approaches helped me to perceive more clearly the nature of differences between Frank's way of working and theirs. As in my early lessons, Frank would work on me with his hands for a few minutes and then cross the room to stand and face me while he continued conversing about the Technique. Often, while he was across the room, I would experience a change in my manner of use as I was listening to him talk. The

change would usually seem to happen when he was mentioning something about how Alexander himself taught or when he referred to the words Alexander used in describing facets of the Technique. For instance, he might say something like, 'F.M. thought that if you order your neck to relax, your head forward and up, and your spine to lengthen,⁹ it could set off an overall response to gravity that could be the basis for all you do in life.' He merely offered this statement as a theory, rather than as a principle that he was endorsing as valid for everyone, and, in this way, he avoided directly suggesting to me or asking me to 'let my neck be free and to direct my head forward and up, etc.' However, Frank's mentioning that Alexander once made this statement seemed to have an indirect effect on my own thinking and directing just as I was listening to Frank speak the words. Pupils of his who came for lessons with me at various times would often report the same experience of a change happening within them while Frank was talking to them from across the room, and they were sometimes quite astonished by it. I think some even attributed this phenomenon to Frank having a psychic power to 'direct' people from a distance. If these pupils were already inclined to believe in psychic phenomena, it's easy to see how they could interpret this non-hands-on experience as an instance of Frank's using such powers. But at this stage of my increased self-awareness, it was clear to me that it was merely Frank's indirect *suggestion* of what 'might be able to happen' that somehow connected with his pupils' awareness and direction, even though they were seemingly focused on listening to Frank speak and not being encouraged by him to focus directly within themselves in order to enhance their manner of use at the moment.

I doubt if Frank realized that some of his pupils interpreted this experience as an instance of his psychically projecting a direction toward them from a distance. I'm sure it was so far from what he had in mind as the purpose of the Technique that he would have been shocked to learn that anything in his teaching approach was interpreted in this way. It eventually gave me great cause for concern, after Frank's death, that these pupils continued to think that such projection was essential in teaching or communicating the Technique or even in relating to others in a general social situation – especially when they would speak in terms of 'sensing' or 'visually perceiving' from a distance the degree of direction 'coming from' another person in their presence. This misinterpretation also seemed to me to be the antithesis of what Alexander discovered in the realm of 'constructive conscious control of the individual', which has nothing to do with one person attempting to extend control over others – either directly or indirectly. Imposing one's will on others, no matter how well-intentioned it may be, has been abhorrent to all the Alexander teachers I have respected. That sort of

manipulative behaviour is surely a most insidious form of end-gaining.

Frank continued to conduct each Alexander session as if it were a first demonstration of the Alexander Technique, and he would often mention points that he had gone over in previous meetings as if he were presenting them to me for the first time. On the other hand, there was a spontaneity and inventiveness about how he approached the various actions he might guide me through, like walking me over to a tall bureau and manually directing my arms and hands into opening and closing one of its drawers. He had a unique way of navigating arms, hands, and fingers for you in this activity that made it feel as if you were opening and closing the drawer by yourself with a feather-light effort, while he was actually doing the opening and closing for you by very subtly pulling or pushing your wrists and elbows in the required directions. (It also helped that it was an easy drawer to open!) At times, he would also suggest that I could be simultaneously aware of both myself and my contacts with surfaces in the immediate environment, such as the floor beneath my feet, the chair beneath my torso, as well as the spatial dimensions of what I could see from my position in the room at a particular moment. For instance, he would point out that I could take into my awareness of myself as a whole my view of a table with a lamp on it across the room opposite me, the window behind the table, and the view outside the window all at the same time. This often created a unique kind of 3-D effect in the way I perceived the whole environment at that moment, and the effect often continued for a while after the lesson, though I had no idea how it came about and couldn't reproduce it on my own after it had subsided. I never had this type of visual depth experience while working with any other teacher, even though I would often find that I saw everything around me more vividly and fully (including a broadening of my peripheral visual field) after having work from others.¹⁰

A somewhat more direct feature of Frank's teaching was his use of poetry and recitation in a lesson to help students work on their use of themselves in relation to their breathing and vocal production – as Alexander himself had done while working out his procedure for maintaining an improved use of himself while speaking. Since Frank had been a classics professor, he knew many famous texts and poems by heart, and he would often choose one of them to feed to me phrase by phrase, leaving plenty of time between phrases for me to allow my breath to return freely without my feeling that I needed to make any special effort to draw air in. All the while, he would be directing me with his hands as he took us through the text or poem. *Through the Looking Glass* was a favorite, and I always enjoyed that part of the lesson enormously, even though I had gone into breathing and breath support very extensively when applying Alexander

principles to flute playing (this stemmed from my flute study with Alex Murray). During the teacher-training course we had also spent a great deal of time addressing the issue of breathing in relation to speech by meticulously studying Alexander's 'Whispered Ah' procedure. Frank seemed to have fun with the reciting too, and that made it feel like an activity we were participating in and experiencing together, rather than merely a procedure that he was coaching me through.¹¹

Lying-down work

As I mentioned before, Frank didn't give lying-down work to his pupils and had no teaching table in the places he taught. An experience I had while I was observing him work with some pupils in the lecture room of the research building at Tufts seemed to show that he had little training in the use of table work compared to the careful instruction for accomplishing it that we received on Walter Carrington's training course. One of Frank's pupils asked him, 'What is 'table work?'' and Frank replied, 'Come over here to this table, and I'll show you.' He had the pupil lie down face-up on his back on a long conference table and he proceeded to go around to the pupil's head, arms, and legs and waggle each of them around a little bit in a rather brusque way. After a few minutes of doing that, he guided the pupil back up into sitting at the side of the table, and the pupil said, 'Ick! that felt awful! Now I understand why you don't believe it's a good thing to do that with pupils.' Of course, what Frank did with that pupil on the table had no relation at all to what I understood table work to consist of, which I and most teachers I've known find very important and valuable as a means of helping to alter a pupil's conditions of use.¹²

In order to placate Frank on the issue of table work, I felt obligated to downplay it as much as possible in the master's thesis I was writing under his guidance, even though I did use it in the lessons I gave the group of pupils who participated in the experiment. When Walter Carrington read the thesis, he remarked on how I had been 'almost apologetic' about including table work, adding that Alexander himself certainly believed that it was very important.

Research and the academic environment

Of course, by the time I came to Boston to begin teaching, I had also studied a number of Frank's writings, so I had a much greater general capacity than I had had in my earlier lessons with him to follow his talk about his research and its implications for the future of the Technique. During our training, Walter had also meticulously taken us through Frank's article 'Method for changing stereotyped response patterns by the inhibition of certain postural sets',¹³ and we also had superb lectures

in anatomy and physiology from Don Burton. As I got to know Frank and Helen better as colleagues and realized that they had developed a unique way of viewing the Technique, I was glad to add it to the large stock of impressions that I had been acquiring over the years. I think that they appreciated my openness to and great interest in what they had to say from their particular experiences, and they seemed glad to have the chance to speak more in detail about their understandings of the Technique, their views on teaching it, and their ardent wish for it to be accepted by people in the academic and scientific professions – particularly in institutions of higher learning like Tufts, where Frank conducted an introductory summer school course involving the Technique (called 'Kinesthetic Perception') and where at least one person was using it as the subject of his doctoral dissertation.

Master's thesis work at Tufts under Jones's supervision: 1973–75

During my first year in Boston, I had gone on building up my private teaching practice while I was trying to decide where I would pursue my master's degree in flute performance. I eventually realized that I didn't want to attend one of the main music schools, and since Frank had invited me to visit the research building at Tufts to show me materials from his various research projects, I decided to ask him what he thought of the idea of my pursuing a master's degree there that could somehow combine my further music study with a research project on the Alexander Technique and its use in musical performance because that had been a primary area of focus for me in applying the Technique to my own playing. He was quite enthusiastic about the possibility – particularly because Tufts had established a combined majors program through what was then called the 'College Within' – and he offered to arrange for a course of study that would be sponsored by the Tufts Research Fund for Kinesthesia. The program would involve my taking regular courses in the music department, studying flute with Fernand Gillet (a former first oboist of the Boston Symphony), and conducting research under Frank's advisorship for a thesis that would be based on experiments examining the effects of the Alexander Technique in helping musicians deal with performance stress.¹⁴

For the next two academic years (1973–75), I met with Frank regularly at Tufts, either once or twice a week, at his small office in the research building, where we would discuss various facets of my thesis project and his ongoing thoughts about teaching and research. After we had talked for a while, he would usually say 'I could do some Alexander work with you', and, without asking me whether I wanted it or not, he would come over to me

and start working on me with his hands as we went on talking about various relevant topics. Usually, we would also continue our discussion over lunch at the college grill nearby. As the months passed, our conversations grew more and more scientifically oriented as I studied his and others' research writings more thoroughly and as he monitored my writing of the thesis. During this time, he also introduced me to the strain gauge platform¹⁵ and showed me films of studies he had done of the startle pattern and of musicians performing. These films were extremely interesting and revealing – especially one with a number of slow motion segments showing a series of people reacting, one after the other, to a surprise gunshot. It was a very dramatic confirmation of the universality of the startle pattern in humans as it manifests itself in the tightening of the neck, pulling back of the head, raising the shoulders, and scrunching the entire stature downward, etc. – as can also be seen in the still photographs and electromyograph readings in Frank's articles and book. In retrospect, although Frank cites Landis and Hunt's 1939 research reported in their book, *The Startle Pattern*,¹⁶ I wonder why he didn't include any observations of the primacy of the eye blink and facial distortion that Landis and Hunt found to precede head displacement and other larger muscular responses. It seems these aspects of the pattern could hold the potential for a deeper and more subtle understanding of the working of the primary control, especially in light of what neurophysiologist and psychologist Mario Passaglini said about the eye muscles possibly functioning as an 'entrainment circuit' to the other, larger skeletal musculature – particularly the trapezius, which is so involved in head support.¹⁷ Alexander teacher and zoologist Kathleen Ballard has also elaborated on this facet in her recent article *The Eyes and the Primary Control*.¹⁸

Concerns about group teaching

During these years at Tufts, Frank and Helen continued to invite me to tea from time to time for more talk on the Technique and the teaching of it. They were also growing more and more concerned about what was happening through presentations of the Technique to large groups. As this form of teaching became more widespread, they, along with many other teachers I knew, felt that it was seriously jeopardizing teaching and teacher-training standards, particularly because people with very little experience were being encouraged to try to use their hands to work on other pupils in the classes without much, if any, guidance or traditional training instruction. The Joneses became more and more displeased and worried about this turn of events and took every chance to voice their concerns to me when we met. As time went on, they would often bring up the topic and become extremely incensed – which was very unlike them – about what they had heard and seen was happening. After

talking about it for a while, they'd say, 'Well, let's not talk about it *any more*.' But in a few minutes they would bring up another point about the situation that greatly distressed them because it ran so completely counter to all they held important in the Alexander work. Since I agreed wholeheartedly with all their objections, I felt I didn't have to do much more than lend a sympathetic ear. In retrospect, I hope that my listening somehow gave them comfort and support at that difficult time, since a lot of this watered-down group teaching unfolded just when Frank's health was seriously declining. I think it was much harder for him and Helen to cope with his illness because they were so worried by these troublesome developments, which threatened to degrade the fine reputation and representation of the Technique that they had worked so carefully to establish and uphold.

Personal observations and experiences

I should also mention something about a decision I made when I began the research program at Tufts under Frank's guidance. He had often spoken of the importance of 'taking an experimental attitude' about the Technique – not only with regard to research into its nature, but also with regard to the teaching and preparing to teach it. I realized that I had brought with me from my three-year training a very strong sense of what the Technique was, how it should be taught, and how teachers should be trained. But, to be as objective as possible, I thought that I should try to set aside many of those ideas for the duration of my thesis work and not presume that anything was 'proven' yet to be 'right' once and for all until the relevant research had been done. That decision helped me to be freer to listen to all Frank had to say and to compare it objectively with what I had learned from my study with Joan, Walter, and Peggy, and my contact with a other excellent teachers with whom I had begun to collaborate: Chariclia Gounaris, Kitty Wielopolska, Don Burton, Jean Clark, Nelly Ben-Or, Vivien Mackie, and Pam Hartman.

It wasn't always easy for me to feel entirely comfortable with this decision, however, and there were many occasions when I had to reckon hard with Frank's somewhat indirect assertions that no-one has a final say about what it means to be a "qualified" Alexander teacher. I recall one time when he introduced me to one of his undergraduate pupils at Tufts by saying, 'This is Joe Armstrong. He recently did an Alexander course in London.' Since he didn't introduce me as 'an Alexander teacher' or as someone who had done an 'Alexander teacher-training course' or even 'a three-year Alexander course', I found it very difficult to set aside the impulse to say that I had completed a full, three-year teacher-training course and also held a certificate from the Alexander Society.

On another occasion, I was passing an undergraduate pupil of Frank's who had seen me with him at the research building, and she stopped to invite me to a group that some of Frank's pupils were organizing to discuss their experiences of the Alexander Technique. When I told her that I was actually already a trained teacher, she was embarrassed that she hadn't known this information before, and she apologized for assuming that I was merely another of Frank's pupils.

Another aspect of my association at Tufts with Frank that I found disconcerting was how, as I mentioned, he would usually start working on me with his hands during our meetings to discuss my thesis. While it seemed appropriate for him to work on me intermittently with his hands during a lesson at his home that we had arranged specifically for that purpose, I didn't feel that we had agreed in any way that our meetings in his office would also be occasions for me to receive hands-on Alexander work. In fact, if he had asked if I wanted him to work on me, I would have declined. At that stage of my experience, I really didn't want much more hands-on work, if any, from anyone – unless it came about as part of an equal exchange with the colleagues I mentioned above. This aspect of the situation at Tufts was very uncomfortable for me because I didn't feel there was any way to graciously decline having Frank work on me without offending him. Furthermore, his hands-on work often left me with a very unpleasant 'over-lengthening' because he didn't seem to realize that I didn't need as much directing as his pupils did. It would often take me some time to recover from his hands-on work before I could be in a good enough state to carry on with my own teaching, flute practicing, etc.

The Joneses' positive influences

As I went on with my private teaching practice, however, I continued to work along the lines that I had been trained to follow, doing traditional chair and table work while also helping many of the performers I taught to find ways of applying their Alexander experience and understanding to their playing, singing, and acting. Since it was proving to be extremely effective, I saw very little need to change my approach. But I feel certain that my ability to explain facets of the Technique verbally to my students was changed and improved by my work with Frank and my closer study of his writings, and I think that many of my pupils benefited from my references to his research work and the copies of his less scientifically oriented articles that I often gave them to read – particularly 'A Mechanism for Change'¹⁹ and 'F. M. Alexander and the Re-education of Feeling'.²⁰

Above all, through my association with Frank and Helen, I felt that I had become part of a very respected involvement in the Alexander Technique that Frank had

developed here in Boston through many years of careful and conscientious teaching and research, and I was extremely grateful for that. He and Helen conveyed a great sense of dedication to the perpetuation of a very high standard of teaching and public presentation of all facets of the Technique. As with most of the other teachers I had worked with, they never exhibited an element of self-promotion – only the fervent wish to see Alexander's discoveries accepted by all walks of humanity.

Of course, during these years I also corresponded regularly with Walter Carrington. It pleased me that I could convey something to him about my work with Frank, whom Walter knew and greatly respected. In general, those were very exciting and gratifying years, both for me personally as a teacher and, I think, for the Technique in general, as more and more people became interested in studying it – particularly in the performing arts.

Developments around teacher training

But during these same years, as the whole host of New Age techniques and disciplines began to proliferate, in many ways the Technique also got swept up in the wave of 'everyone trying a little bit of everything'. It isn't so surprising that those years also saw the beginning of the very regrettable dilution of the teaching of the Technique, as more people in the U.S. seemed to feel that they could start teaching it and training teachers with little or no training experience themselves. Some training courses required barely more than half the amount of time required by STAT.

As this situation troubled Frank and Helen more and more deeply, it also troubled me and many other teachers I knew. In retrospect, I think it was all the more tragic that Frank became ill in 1975, because if he had lived on in good health we might have been spared many of the difficulties over teaching and training requirements that ensued, particularly here in the U.S. I'm certain that I would have eventually brought up with him my feeling that upholding standard training requirements was necessary until research could adequately demonstrate any possible validity of other approaches. During our discussions in the last semester with Frank, just before he became ill, he sometimes brought up the subject of starting an Alexander teacher-training course that would be part of a university degree program in psychology. But he also said that he didn't really have any idea of how to go about training teachers and wanted to know how I would do it. I told him that I would probably try to do it very much in the way I had experienced in London on Walter's course, since Walter had been steadily refining the process following F.M.'s death.

During that last term that Frank taught in the spring of 1975, he decided to form an extra-curricular interest

group with three or four of his Tufts Alexander pupils who would meet with him once a week to explore the topic of using the hands in the Alexander Technique. I visited the group several times, but it seemed clear to me that Frank had no definite idea of how to introduce these pupils to the factors involved in using their hands – at least in comparison with what Walter, Peggy Williams, and the other teachers I worked with in London had communicated so meticulously.²¹ While working with one of the pupils in the group, I made a few suggestions on the basis of how we had been schooled in using our hands in London, and he and the others seemed to grasp right away that this approach could be quite reasonable and effective – with the primary focus, of course, being their own use of themselves rather than anything specific that they would try to do with their hands on someone. However, I wouldn't have been surprised if Frank had eventually discovered his own unique way of training teachers if he hadn't been forced by his declining health to stop teaching. Or perhaps he would have drawn more on my training experience for exploration and consideration. Since he asked me to take over his summer course when he realized he was too ill to do the teaching himself, I like to think that he had gained enough trust in my skills and in my understanding of his research work by then to invite me to collaborate with him in such a training endeavor. Starting a full-fledged training course at Tufts as part of a degree program in psychology would also have served to thwart the tendency of some of Frank's pupils to think that they were qualified to carry on with his way of teaching after he died.

Eventually – as I continued to teach after Frank's death in 1975 and ultimately began a teacher training course of my own in 1978 – I realized that I had pretty much come full circle with regard to my earlier decision to set aside my convictions about teaching and training requirements. I returned to my view that the traditional way in which I had been trained by first-generation Alexander teachers was really the best and most valid way of teaching and training in the Technique. I felt that the experience I had received from Joan Murray, Walter Carrington, Peggy Williams, and Chariclia Gounaris before and during my training years was of the highest order. But it was certainly valuable to have taken an experimental attitude when I worked so closely with Frank because having done so has allowed me to go on staying open to new understandings and discoveries in both my teaching and in my daily use of myself. So far, though, none of those new understandings and discoveries have changed anything essential in my perspective, which is based upon studying Alexander's writings and knowing well so many traditionally trained first-generation teachers, including Frank himself.

Postscript: thoughts on research

One point about Frank's view of the Alexander Technique that I more recently realized may be questionable is his understanding of Alexander's use of the term 'primary control'. In 2006, I wrote about the subject in a letter to the editor of *The Alexander Journal* entitled 'Positive and Negative Primary Control'. Frank, as many others still do, saw primary control mainly, or only, from the positive, or ideal, perspective – a view I think that stemmed from the belief, stated in his book, that Alexander chose the term primary control to replace the phrase 'position of mechanical advantage' when writing *The Use of the Self* in 1932. However, according to Walter Carrington, Alexander chose 'primary control' to replace the expression 'primary movement' – a term he had used as early as 1907 in the article 'Respiratory Re-education'. I thought that Walter must be correct about Alexander's substitution because 'position of mechanical advantage' – unlike the largely discarded 'primary movement' – has continued to be used in its own right to refer to those particular configurations of parts of ourselves (like 'monkey') that help to enhance our primary control directions in whatever we have chosen to do. 'Primary control' would also have served Alexander to shift emphasis more toward 'directing' and away from any 'doing' that 'primary movement' might have tended to evoke; whereas, if 'position of mechanical advantage' were the precursor of 'primary control', as Frank seemed to consider it to be, one would be more likely to view primary control as a single, final configuration to be achieved, rather than a dynamic that affects (for good or ill) *any* position one might need to be in – whether it be well balanced or severely contorted.²²

In that same *Alexander Journal* letter, I also gave a suggestion about how the concept of primary control could be examined experimentally:

Tristan Roberts has explained (*Alexander Journal*, Summer 2001) why most of Jones's research on movement can no longer be considered valid. But it still seems to me that an extensive electromyographic study of what Roberts calls "anticipatory pre-emptive actions" along the whole continuum of reaction patterns, from the mildest all the way to "startle," might also lead to a demonstration of the normal or "correct" operation of primary control and illustrate the influence of the "direction or misdirection" of primary control "upon the normal or abnormal working of the postural mechanisms," both of which Alexander pointed out in *The Universal Constant in Living* as needing thorough understanding in the fields of anatomy and physiology. I think such an approach could provide a more pertinent basis for further research than studying the trajectories and other characteristics of movements that come after these anticipatory pre-emptive actions. For,

reckoning with what happens to our primary control at the “critical moment” – just before reacting turns into responding – remains the most central concern in our effort to improve our manner of use of ourselves “in reaction to the stimulus of living” whether we are in motion or at rest.

In his introduction to Alexander’s third book, *The Use of the Self* (1932), John Dewey writes on Alexander’s own endeavor of intense and exacting self-scrutiny:

Those who do not identify science with a parade of technical vocabulary will find in this account the essentials of scientific method in any field of inquiry. They will find a record of long continued, patient, unwearied experimentation and observation in which every inference is extended, tested, corrected by further more searching experiments; they will find a series of such observations in which the mind is carried from observation of comparatively gross, superficial connections of causes and effect to those causal conditions which are fundamental and central in the use which we make of ourselves.²³

After spending those two years at Tufts under Frank’s advisorship and after learning a good deal of the ‘parade of technical vocabulary’ with which so many people identify the process of scientific verification, I have come to think that the ‘voice (and hands) of experience’ from over a hundred years of working with Alexander principles still hold the immediate potential to clarify a realm of human experience in a way that many thousands of hours of laboratory experimentation would be hard put to achieve.

I am also reminded here of what Walter Carrington once told me with regard to Frank’s research as described in his writings. Although Walter respected Frank enormously and welcomed all attempts to validate aspects of the Technique through research procedures, he nevertheless said that he thought Frank’s scientific studies were essentially too difficult for the lay person to understand and not scientific enough for scientists to accept. And while I do think that Frank made a very valiant effort to bring an objective and scientific perspective to bear on facets of the Technique, it seems to me, in retrospect, that he may have somehow gotten sidetracked in the vast realm of what Susanne Langer considers ‘the idols of the laboratory’. She says:

To speak of “hominid individuals” instead of “persons” and of “verbal behavior” instead of “speech,” of a clinical interview as a “stimulus to verbal behavior,” and so on, is to translate ordinary thinking into a jargon for literary presentation. ... It is an Idol of the Laboratory, and its worship is inimical to genuine abstractive thinking. A sociologist or psychologist who will spend his time translating familiar facts into professionally approved language must surely have more academic conscience than curiosity about strange or obscure phenomena.²⁴

In Frank’s descriptions of the hands-on procedures that were used in his experimental studies, he merely

refers to them in terms of ‘pressures’²⁵ and leaves the reader with the idea that anyone should be able to duplicate these pressures for purposes of experimental replication without undergoing any particular training whatsoever. One can speak of giving people an experience of kinesthetic lightness and helping them to improve their kinesthetic perception by changing stereotyped postural responses, etc., but the essence of the process followed by Alexander and most of those he trained was based on a unique use of the hands that all the other teachers I have worked with at length would claim is intrinsically different from any other form of manual contact used to elicit changes in the quality of another person’s neuro-muscular activity in relation to gravity from moment to moment in both movement and at rest. I don’t think any of those teachers would refer to the hand contacts as ‘pressures’. Often the most powerful results are brought about with the very lightest of contacts because they are so well directed and so attuned to what is needed in the pupil at any given moment. This was, perhaps, the most astonishing thing that students noted about Peggy Williams’s teaching: she could detect with one hand at your neck precisely where a single finger contact from her other hand was needed in order to get a very dramatic change in the working of your entire musculature in relation to gravity. She would often refer to this phenomenon as a ‘connection’, and in the process of identifying it, she would often say, ‘Oh, I see! There it is...’

This is not to say that stronger contacts might not also be used at times in teaching, but they would be considered entirely different from what most people would make out of more localized muscular efforts. Until the nature of this unique manual capacity can be adequately described in words and reliably measured by impartial instruments, the examination of any claims about the Technique can have very little value in terms of formally establishing what constitutes adequate teaching and training.²⁶ We are left then with the collective skills that have been passed down through several generations of teachers who have attempted to train and teach along the lines that Alexander himself began to formalize in the 1930s, when he established the first official training course for teachers. In 1930, he included, in an appendix to *The Use of the Self*, an ‘Open Letter to Intending Students of Training Course’:

For the benefit of those who have not read my books I must point out that would-be teachers of my work must be trained to put the principles and procedures of its technique into practice in the use of themselves in their daily activities before they attempt to teach others to do likewise. Herein lies the difference between the proposed training and all other forms of training. For students may take courses of training in medicine, physiology, theology, law, philosophy or anything else without the matter of the

use of themselves being called into question. But in the training for this teaching a considerable amount of work must be done on the students individually so that they may learn to use themselves satisfactorily, and it is only when they have reached a given standard in the use of themselves that they will be given the opportunity for practical teaching experience.²⁷

The phrase ‘when they have reached a given standard in the use of themselves’ seems to me to be the critical element in this statement. And it should be obvious that the teacher (in this case, Alexander himself), and not the student him/herself, is the person who decides if the student in training has reached that given standard and is ready for the practical teaching experience. Similarly, with regard to the establishing of a new teacher-training course, it has long been a requirement that a teacher applying for permission to train others should have taught for at least seven years after undergoing a standard, three-year teacher-training course. Frank didn’t emphasize the necessity of these stipulations, however, and several of his pupils seemed to feel that he had approved of their beginning to teach the Technique, even though he was quite ill by that time and didn’t appear to be thinking very reasonably – at least not in my interactions with him during the last weeks of completing my thesis and when visiting him in the hospital after he had undergone brain surgery. This reluctance in Frank to commit to acknowledging the standard requirements for training to teach²⁸ created a very difficult situation on many levels, and, after his death, Helen and I tried hard to figure out how best to deal with it in a way that would continue to embrace everyone in the area who was serious about maintaining the reputation of the Technique. In retrospect, I wish that I had been more emphatic – both while Frank was alive and after his death – in stating my convictions about what constitutes adequate teacher training and about the requirements for establishing a teacher training course. Peggy Williams certainly made no bones about telling untrained people who thought they were qualified to teach that they really weren’t. I remember asking her once, when she made a teaching visit to Boston in the 1990s, if she had ever found that anyone was qualified to teach who hadn’t gone through a full training course. Without hesitating to consider the question, she answered, ‘No’.

Notes/References

- ¹ I understand that A. R. Alexander sat next to his pupils most of the time while teaching because he had an injury that made it difficult for him to stand for very long at a time. I imagine that Frank was influenced by this aspect of A.R.'s work because Frank worked with A.R. a great deal both privately and in the training course. There are also photographs of F.M. working with children while he is seated at their sides. Of course, a teacher's ability to do this depends largely on how much flexibility he or she has in the hip joints and how well his or her torso is working in relation to the legs.
- ² Walter Carrington also did most of the talking during my work with him, but his manner of speaking could be characterized more as a lecture that included anecdotes related to Alexander principles. This same style is manifest in the many published talks he gave to his training class. He was a master at speaking extemporaneously at length on Alexander-related topics in a way that helped trainees enormously in their own understanding and thinking about their use of themselves while he was actually talking through the elements he was describing. See *Thinking Aloud* (1994) and *The Act of Living* (1999), both edited by Jerry Sontag, published by Mornum Time Press (San Francisco, CA).
- ³ I'm not certain how my response in this situation would be classified. Most neurophysiologists or psychiatrists would probably call it an 'emotional response', without allowing for or considering its neuromuscular manifestations. For me, though, it held many components that could be labeled as fear, frustration, awkwardness, extreme self-consciousness, confusion, longing, futility, hope, despair, and delight – all bundled together in an instant but overwhelmingly neuromuscular as I perceived them during the Alexander lesson experience.
- ⁴ Of course, all these bandmates could relate directly to my story of how I successfully applied my Alexander understanding to the 'low crawl' that we all were required to do so often during our initial eight-week basic training prior to our assignment to the band. I've described this experience in detail in an article called 'Reconsidering "Forward and Up"', accessible online at <http://www.joearmstrong.info/FWDANDUP3rtf1.htm>.
- ⁵ In his fourth and last book, Alexander explicitly states that the primary control is a concept that can have both a 'correct' and an 'incorrect' employment that affects either a 'normal' or an 'abnormal' working of a person's postural mechanisms. Some tend to view primary control only from its 'correct' manifestation, but it's clear that Alexander ultimately considered it to be a 'constant' in living, as Walter Carrington once wrote me: 'for better or worse, for richer or poorer'. F. Matthias Alexander, *The Universal Constant in Living* (London: Mouritz, 2000[1941]), pp. 107–110. See also my letter 'Positive and Negative Primary Control and Research', *The Alexander Journal*, 21 (Spring 2006), pp.69-70, accessible online at <http://www.joearmstrong.info/AJOURNL4.htm>.
- ⁶ See my article, 'Manner and Conditions of Use' (Alexander Studies Online: revised version, 2015), accessible online at <http://www.alexanderstudies.org/text/manner-and-conditions-use>; original version: AmSAT News, Summer, 2003.
- ⁷ Alexander's statement about 'posture' and 'position' seems relevant to note here: '... "correct positions" or "postures" find no place in the practical teaching employed in the work of re-education advocated in this book. A correct position or posture indicates a fixed position, and a person held to a fixed position cannot grow, as we understand growth. The correct position today cannot be the correct position a week later for any person who is advancing in the work of re-education and co-ordination.' *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* (London: Mouritz, 2004[1923]), p.114.
- ⁸ Helen Rumsey Jones, *Postural Responses of Third Grade Children in Reading and Writing*, Master's thesis, Tufts University, August, 1965.
- ⁹ This is Alexander's wording of the orders in the chapter entitled 'Illustration' from *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*, p. 115.
- ¹⁰ I never discussed this aspect of Frank's teaching with him, so I don't know if it was something he developed on his own or if it was an approach he experienced from working so much with A. R. Alexander. When Frank showed me some early drafts of the parts of his book that were specifically about the Alexander brothers, it struck me that he admired A.R.'s work more than F.M.'s and that he was more influenced by A.R.'s teaching.
- ¹¹ I have followed Frank's lead in using this 'echo' form of poetry recitation in my own teaching, and I have found it provides a very valuable format for teaching inhibiting and directing on many levels. Pupils also find more carry-over into conversational speech than they usually do by merely working on the 'Whispered Ah' alone. I describe the procedure in detail in my article 'Working on Breathing: Exploring Its Relation to Vocal Production and Wind-Instrument Playing' (revised version, April 2015), accessible online at <http://www.joearmstrong.info/breathing.html>; original version, Statbooks (April 1994).
- ¹² See my 'Manner and Conditions of Use' (note 6 above).
- ¹³ Frank Pierce Jones, 'Method for changing stereotyped response patterns by the inhibition of certain postural sets', *Psychological Review*, 72/3 (May, 1965), pp.196–214; republished in *Frank Pierce Jones: Collected Writings on the Alexander Technique*, edited by Theodore Dimon and Richard Brown (Cambridge, MA: Alexander Technique Archives, 1998), pp.249-276.

- ¹⁴ Joe Armstrong, 'Effects of the Alexander Principle in Dealing With Stress in Musical Performance', Master's thesis, Tufts University, May 1975, accessible online at <http://www.joearmstrong.info/JoeThesis.html>.
- ¹⁵ An apparatus that can detect and measure shifts in a person's weight while standing or sitting.
- ¹⁶ C. W. Landis and W. A. Hunt, *The Startle Pattern* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939).
- ¹⁷ C. Wielopolska and M. Passaglini 'The Discovery and Use of the Eye Order in Teaching the Alexander Work' [Unpublished lecture], edited by C. Atwood, p. 13.
- ¹⁸ Kathleen Ballard, 'The Eyes and the Primary Control', (Alexander Studies Online: revised version, 2015) accessible online at <http://www.alexanderstudies.org/text/eyes-and-primary-control>; original version published in *The Alexander Journal*, No. 16 (Spring 1999), pp.9–17.
- ¹⁹ Frank Pierce Jones, 'A Mechanism for Change' in Pitirim A. Sorokin (ed.) *Forms and Techniques of Altruistic and Spiritual Growth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954), pp.177–87; republished in *Frank Pierce Jones, Collected Writings*, pp.65-80.
- ²⁰ Frank Pierce Jones, 'F. M. Alexander and the Reeducation of Feeling', *General Semantics Bulletin* (Institute of General Semantics: Lakeville, Connecticut, Summer 1951), pp.78–81; republished in *Frank Pierce Jones, Collected Writings*, pp.37-46.
- ²¹ In the chapter 'The Alexander Training Course' [1941–44] in his book on the Alexander Technique, Frank describes how, after F.M. returned to London in 1943 and left A.R. in charge of completing the training of the American students, A.R. gave them very little, if any, instruction as to how to go about using their hands in teaching, leaving them instead to find out for themselves what seemed to work best. See Frank Pierce Jones, *Freedom to Change* (London: Mouritz, 1997; first published as *Body Awareness in Action*, New York: Schocken, 1976), p. 80. A.R., when asked about how to use the hands, reportedly responded vaguely, 'Put them where they're needed.' But in those days and later on, students in training usually weren't allowed to use their hands until their third year anyway, after their own conditions of use had changed substantially. In fact, I believe that, for a long time, training courses required students to sign a contract that they wouldn't try to use their hands to convey the Technique to anyone outside the training course until they had received their teaching certificate.
- ²² See my 'Positive and Negative Primary Control...' (note 5 above).
- ²³ F. Matthias Alexander, *The Use of the Self* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985[1932]), p.8.
- ²⁴ Susanne K. Langer, *Mind: An Essay in Human Feeling*, 3 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967, 1972, 1982), i, p.36.
- ²⁵ Jones, *Freedom to Change*, pp.129–130.
- ²⁶ In 1998 I made an attempt to compose a set of hypotheses that I thought, if examined in sequence, would reveal the essential nature of Alexander's discoveries. They were published in *NASTAT News* (No. 42, p.20) and can be found on my website at <http://www.joearmstrong.info/AlexanderHypotheses.html>.
- ²⁷ Alexander, *The Use of the Self*, p.117.
- ²⁸ I have often wondered if part of Frank's reluctance to commit himself to fully upholding STAT's standard teacher-training requirements was partly due to the fact that he wasn't allowed to join STAT because his teaching certificate was signed by A.R. Alexander rather than F.M. himself. I had understood that this situation was largely due to senior teacher Dr. Wilfred Barlow's objection, whereas the other teachers on the STAT Council would have gladly accepted Frank as a member.