

We might imagine our bodies as a second placenta, and thus we are intimately connected within the womb of our surroundings. Yield is an essential action for coming into relationship with the ever-shifting tempos, rhythms, and tumultuous or peaceful events of our lives and our world.

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## Endnotes

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14 See also the Water Cube constructed for the Beijing Olympics for more expressive images.

15 An example of this is the resonant undulation that developed in the original 1940 Tacoma Narrows Bridge (a suspension bridge, or tensegrity structure) when high winds provided an input that synchronized to the natural frequency of the bridge; see the archival video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-zczjXSxw>.

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## Rolf Movement® Integration

### An Historical Overview through an Interview with Heather (Wing) Starsong and Gael (Ohlgren) Rosewood

By Kevin Frank, Rolf Movement® Instructor, Certified Advanced Rolfer™

I had the pleasure of several conversations with Gael (Ohlgren) Rosewood and Heather (Wing) Starsong – I wanted to find out more about the history of what we call Rolf Movement Integration. At the end of her 1982 article/pamphlet "Rolfing Movement Integration, an Introduction," Heather wrote a brief history of Rolf Movement Integration as far as it had developed at that time. It is appended to this interview. Other movement instructors have recounted their recollections and experiences in previous articles. This interview is not meant to be the definitive word on who did what and what happened, but rather to capture the story as told by two pioneer movement teachers who were part of what was happening starting in 1968. After speaking with Gael and Heather I drew some inferences about the nature of the story. They encouraged me to add my comments to their account:

Ida P. Rolf (IPR) synthesized a new way to look at the human body; her method evoked lasting shifts in economy of function and, in particular, changes that manifest in the way we stand and move through space, with consequent shifts in psyche and emotion. At the same time, she had a hard time teaching what she knew because there was no pre-existing language for it. There were few people, including trained dancers, who could recognize or define what 'normal' looks like, let alone tell you the particular change of coordination that had taken place. A new language was needed, as well as a new set of hallmarks for normal. This is still a work in progress. IPR was additionally hampered because she was not able to demonstrate what she was looking for with her own body. She needed others to do that. After speaking with Heather and Gael, I got the impression that Rolf Movement work started as an answer to these missing dimensions within Dr. Rolf's project. Rolf

Movement history, as told by this interview, starts in 1968 when Judith Aston was in practicing training and Gael (Smith at that time) was auditing.

**Gael (Ohlgren) Rosewood:** Dorothy Nolte had been given the task of developing patterning exercises, which she then taught to Judith Aston. I'm not sure where these patterning exercises started. Amy Cochrane was certainly one of the sources for arm rotations and leg rotations and so on. Dorothy Nolte was someone that IPR had trained years before. Because Judith was small and also a dancer, Ida asked Dorothy to mentor her. At that time, both Judith and I were being trained to work on children only. So we would both go into another room with Dorothy for mentoring. IPR loved Judith's ability to mimic movement patterns that were being observed.

**Heather (Wing) Starsong:** IPR demoed and spoke about many movement goals during her sessions, asking for movements in the fascial work. Many of those movements were then adopted as some of the basis for the movement work. We also defined goals for the session in terms of movements we wanted to see, and did see at the end of a session. Early on, in the movement work, we were thinking about the tracking of knees. We were being taught to lead with knees; lead with elbows out and head up . . . things like that. This was the nature of what Dorothy Nolte was teaching to Judith Aston.

**GR:** Some years later, Dorothy Nolte organized her movement exercises into a cassette series called Structural Awareness. By then, Judith had taken the movement work in a different direction and was teaching for the Rolf Institute®. Dorothy mentored and trained one student named Rachel Harris who helped to create the Structural Awareness tapes. The following summer, after my practicing, Ida asked Judith to develop the movement work. Judith gave her first movement training in 1971. Annie Duggan was there. I was there as well. The movement work suffered from a lack of defined terms and language, so people experimented. But those early pioneers had their own deep experiences, and had their own interpretation of what was important to evoke via Rolf Movement Integration. Further still, Judith and Ida had different leanings in what they saw as the predominant impediment to normal. Ida apparently was keen on pointing out excess of lordosis as a problem. What became known as 'the psoas walk' was considered

the hallmark of a Ten Series. Judith saw that people could use less effort if they allowed the upper body to come forward, to harness rather than fight gravity. She described grace and ease while transitioning through different planes via spirals and arcs, while IPR looked for the centerline to maintain throughout transitions, against a grid of horizontals and verticals.

**Kevin Frank:** Your descriptions evoke the image of two blind people describing an elephant – both are correct, and neither is perhaps 'seeing' the whole picture. Describing 'normal' function has been elusive hasn't it?

**GR:** Yes. How do we define the organizing principle of better function? Ida wanted the Line and efficiency. Judith saw the strain that occurred as a result and so went with ease and responsiveness. The danger with any ideal imposed on the body is what Don Johnson labeled 'somatic Platonism.' This translated into the narrowing of options and the exaggeration of tendencies according to prescribed hierarchies of values. Ida's ideas hurt quite a few dedicated bodies with her emphasis on long lumbar. Her desire to stay as close to a midline as possible also did not always serve. I think some of us were drawn to investigate the spiral movements in the body, something Ida wasn't as focused on . . . .

**KF:** Do I hear maybe two important points of view in what you say: that the work needed to find a way to revive healthy regulation of lordosis without making a new strain pattern, without using secondary stabilization to accomplish it? And over time the Rolf community has put more store in the expression of change that isn't a pose, but a capacity to adapt to circumstance without thinking about it. We have aspired to embody ease and strategies for ease. We have also looked to include transverse movements of the spine as part of what distinguishes humans from primates – upright bipedal locomotion – spirals and counter-spirals.

**GR:** Yes, even today the definition of efficiency in movement is not a firm agreement within our work and you will find contradictions to our sense of efficiency and those within martial arts. The movement work continued to suffer from lack of plausible, accessible explanations for why we ask people to do the movements we teach. Some students said, "This is profound. I now feel empowered to embody the wisdom of

Rolfing principles." Others said, "This is a mechanical imposition of 'shoulds.'" This jumps ahead in the story, and yet, there was always a restless desire for more clarity: what works and why? How do we define our values in a way that encompasses the full scope of our work? However, there was, I think, a necessary struggle that continued to develop with different personalities attempting to what? – systematize the work so it could be taught? – create a language to describe the mechanisms of the work, the scope of the work, the training necessary to do the work? Judith took the movement work beyond a series of exercises and taught ergonomic principles for sitting, standing, walking, bending, lifting, Rolfing [work], etc.

**HS:** In 1978 things were suddenly a little tough for me because I had to choose whether to follow Judith, who insisted that you go either her way or with Ida.

**KF:** Two strong personalities.

**GR:** Let's back up. In Judith's lead-ins for the (Rolfing) training she was paying less attention to (Ida's template of) posture and more attention to ease of function. She also began teaching indirect hands-on fascial technique because she thought it was helpful to work that way. Students were confused when their Rolfing instructors were saying something different. Faculty asked Judith to toe the line and Judith walked. It all happened in one meeting.

**HS:** I remember that after a training in 1976, Judith was fuming – so it was building slowly for a long time. It's maybe important to observe that they were both alpha women (Ida Rolf and Judith Aston).

**GR:** And Judith was taking movement in a new direction.

**HS:** Judith's split meant that the people she had trained had to choose to go with her or no longer have her as a teacher. I didn't have trouble choosing. I was devoted to Rolfing [SI] and the Rolf Institute. Tom [Wing] and I both choose the Rolf Institute. Emmett [Hutchins] and Judith had been close. The split with Judith and the Institute was really about as big as the 'Guild split.'

**GR:** I got a call and Peter Melchior tells me "There's a lead-in training in two weeks." What did I think of teaching with him? I had never considered teaching. I still felt myself to be a student. But that was the beginning of the incorporation of movement lead-in classes post-Judith.

**HS:** In 1978 some of the [Aston] Patterners came to my house and worked in my studio and talked about what to develop. It was a very creative collaboration. We all pooled the expenses: the plane tickets, etc., whether we lived in Boulder or traveled to get there. We had several more of these 'movement exchange workshops.' Some of the structural Patterners, Sharon Wheeler, Richard Wheeler, Gael Switzer, Roger Pierce, and Megan James would meet to discuss and explore the work. Jane Harrington was not trained as a Patterner at that time but sat in with us at these workshops.

**GR:** There was discussion about what are the principles of Rolf Movement [Integration], what are the goals and how to teach it? There was an eight-session series that came out of this. It was an exciting and gratifying time to share and organize what had been implicit in Judith's teaching.<sup>1</sup>

**HS:** Megan and I put together the first Rolf Movement Integration training in 1979. Jane and Vivian [Jaye] were among our first students. There were two phases of the training. In the first phase we would start with spending the morning in the Rolfling [SI] class. In the afternoon we would then go into the skylight room to demo the movement sessions and have the students exchange with each other. In the second phase the students worked with outside clients. The advent of Janie French and Annie Duggan came right around then, like 1979.

**GR:** During those years when the movement work was being defined and the training developed, another group, Penny Crow, Annie Duggan, Janie French, and Gleah Powers, had continued to study with Judith as her work expanded to include hands-on work. This group came to the Institute saying "we have the real work" – basically "choose us not them." Essentially the Rolf faculty replied, "you girls go work it out." There followed various meetings of the two groups. We tried co-teaching in order to synthesize. Two movement trainings occurred with various couplings. It was quite political and very uncomfortable.

**HS:** Actually it was devastating. Without going into details, there were struggles about ownership and power. Then there was a further meeting with Neal Powers at Annie Duggan's home on Bainbridge Island near Seattle. It was another disaster. The non-Judith group broke away and met on its own at this point. So we had a group that broke away, that stepped back, and

Janie and Annie went on to do the trainings at the Institute.

**GR:** Another issue that was problematic was the psychological piece. This was about seeing patterns and exploring the emotional expression within the pattern . . . and the question about how much to bring this kind of thing into movement work. Some of the push/pull within the structural community has been the issue of the body as an expression of the psyche. The movement work became icky to quite a few people when it was perceived to be fishing around for emotional causes to structural pattern. This quandary mostly gets dropped within trainings because the line between insight and inept therapy gets very tricky. Hubert Godard found a great way to bring in an awareness of lost channels of perception and resource that did not lean on therapy. It is clear that the emotional body informs the physical body in stance and response. IPR spoke of this often. The pioneering of different approaches to make a place for the psyche rather than ignore it took courage. Jane and Vivian contributed to this piece, as well as Peter Levine and Hubert.

**KF:** You mention Peter and Hubert. Maybe we should point out: they both helped our community see the link between psychology and body posture/orientation. Hubert, especially, grounded the 'gravity orientation' idea as the foundation to the human orientation process, that psychological security, at the biological level, is interwoven with gravity response and orientation. This clarification effectively gives Dr. Rolf (posthumously) a chance to update her gravity message and psychology message at the same time. What happened next for the two of you?

**HS:** In the late 1980s the Rolf Institute faculty began exploring new formats for the Rolfling [SI] and Rolf Movement Trainings. That's when Gael and I were more involved again. We experimented with a two-week lead-in taught by an anatomy teacher and movement teacher. I did this both with Ron Thompson and Michael Murphy. Then it was deemed too expensive. Gael and I co-taught a combined Rolfling and Movement training during that time. Students still remember it as very successful. Then we added an adjunct movement training after the Rolfling training. This separated the two trainings again – with an extra two weeks after Rolfling training, but that didn't work well. People were tired after the Rolfling training and just needed to go home. In 1991

Gael and I co-taught a movement training in Brazil, the first one there, actually. Lael Keen and Monica Caspari were in that training. I retired from the faculty in 1994. Vivian Jaye and Jan Harrington were there to pick up the slack, and carry the work forward. I still work with Phase 1 students: sometimes they come and say they had a movement session and the movement was more about hands-on 'structural' work than it was educational as far as I can tell. I am concerned about that.

**GR:** I got very interested in walking after the Brazil training. Ever since I have been watching walking, and functional patterns that show up in walking and how that affects structure. And I have written about it and teach it but I'm not sure it has landed. However, the discussion about walking is clearly in the picture now. Hubert brought in exciting aspects of movement work that had a more specific language and was more scientifically grounded. And yet I am not sure how well his contribution has been integrated, [between] the former movement curriculum and the pieces from Hubert.

**KF:** I think the different phases of the work may actually be integrating; at least with some of the movement instructors now – that's my impression.

**HS:** The movement history has been stormy from the beginning. IPR both appreciated Judith and would not empower her to contribute her own work to the field. And there was a gender thing. Roger Pierce was there at first but then went with Joseph Heller. So, at the beginning, the movement teachers were all women and almost all the Rolfling [SI] teachers were men.

**GR:** Historically, to take the whole picture, we struggle with questions about manipulation versus education. There is still a split between students who want the functional/ educational part and those students who want to learn hands-on manipulation but not movement. As well, how much is [Rolf Movement work] a conglomeration of techniques and exercises versus embodiment awareness and a guided journey of self-discovery, I feel that we have been tracking down a trail that is so valuable in bits and pieces. And yet, how do we truly honor that the body is physical, emotional, the unconscious, and the vehicle for the soul? How do we find the marriage of awareness and developing new habits without trying to control what is not meant to be controlled?

**KF:** Heather and Gael – you provoke vital questions. I am struck by such a vigorous

epoch in the evolution of the work. As you point out, the product is far from finished. I do think we have a specific message for those who are ready to hear it. We can now define our work in terms that make it clear the difference between ego body-building and something that is healthy and that carries Rolf's imprint. I think we can define it and we can teach students about it. I am optimistic about the technology we have and the way we can now speak about it. Thank you so much for being willing to share your history with us.

*Heather (Wing) Starsong, and Gael (Ohlgren) Rosewood are both Certified Advanced Rolfers and Rolf Movement pioneers/instructors.*

## Endnotes

1. Heather's 1982 pamphlet (and article in *The Bulletin of Structural Integration*, Spring/Summer 1982, Vol. A, No. 1) summarized seven basic principles for Rolf Movement Integration: Core, Dynamic Balance, Support, Responsiveness, Lengthening, Integrity of Movement, and Harmony with Gravity)

## Evolution of Rolf Movement® Integration

By Heather Wing (1982)

Although Rolwing Movement is a recent development in its present name and form, movement education associated with Rolwing has a long history.

Dr. Rolf began to develop Rolwing in the early 1940's working in the beginning as much with movement as with manipulation. Always, as Rolwing evolved, she insisted that it was an educational process. When she began to train Rolfers formally, she defined the goals of each Rolwing session primarily in terms of movement. She developed a series of balancing exercises to be done after Rolwing to continue and maintain the changes made, and taught these exercises to all her graduating Rolwing practitioners.

Dorothy Nolte, coming out of a background of nursing and human relations, trained as a Rolfer in the late fifties. She soon saw that her clients wanted to do something for themselves after their Rolwing sessions. Working closely with Dr. Rolf, she developed Dr. Rolf's movements into an independent educational system called Structural Awareness. She began teaching Structural Awareness in 1962 in both classes and private sessions; and during the past twenty years has taken Structural Awareness into

a wide variety of educational settings. Her work is carried on by Rachel Harris, who trained extensively with Dorothy and has recently developed research evaluating the effectiveness of Structural Awareness and a self study program composed of cassette tapes and booklets.

Judith Aston, a dancer, teacher and movement facilitator for Gestalt Therapy, trained as a Rolfer in the late sixties. Working with Dr. Rolf, Dorothy Nolte, and then independently, she created a system of movement education called Rolf/Aston Structural Patterning. She began training teachers of Structural Patterning (called Patterners) in late 1971. For several years Judith worked closely with the Rolfers and Rolwing students, as well as training Patterners. However, by the mid-seventies, her work began to take a direction which she felt was not compatible with Rolwing, and in 1977 she resigned from the Rolf Institute and renamed her work Aston-Patterning.

Rolwing Movement Integration began in 1978 when two former Patterners, Gael Switzer and I, collaborated with Rolwing Teachers Peter Melchior and Emmett Hutchins to create a movement curriculum for Rolwing students. In the fall of 1978 five other former Patterners gathered with Gael and me to share work and sort fro[m] all our varied approaches those concepts and techniques which would best evolve Rolwing in the movement modality.

By June 1979, we had formed the Movement Committee. Our group had grown, as other former Patterners joined us. We had been

teaching classes for Rolwing students for more than a year, had created a place of ourselves in the political structure of the Rolf Institute, designed a training program for new Movement Teachers. That fall we launched our first training program. Membership in the Rolf Institute was granted to ni[n]e Movement Teachers on Jan. 1, 1980 and to nine others within the next year, six of whom were graduates of our first Training Program . . . .

. . . . Rolwing Movement is an alive and growing art. It is nourished by all three of the forms that preceded it. Dr. Rolf's vision is the root and source of work. Dorothy Nolte was the first to develop an independent system of Rolwing-based movement education that could be taught to people new to Rolwing as well as those who had been [Rolfed]. We are indebted to Judith Aston for her rich development of the concept of responsiveness, for her work in helping Rolfers use their bodies more effectively, and for her application of Rolwing principles to daily life activities.

Our work continues to develop as we gain more understanding of human movement in the gravitational field. As individual teachers, we continue to explore Rolwing concepts in our own bodies and activities. We dialogue and exchange work with each other, our Rolfer colleagues, and teachers in related body-work and movement disciplines. Most of all we listen to the teaching in whatever form it comes, of each client who comes through our doors.

## ~~Three Functional Paradigms~~

~~By Chris Hayden, Certified Rolfer™~~

~~Most Rolfers probably have at least passing familiarity with Jeff Maitland's concept of "the three paradigms."<sup>1</sup> As students in the basic Rolwing® Structural Integration (SI) training, we were introduced to them to help us understand how the goals of a holistic therapy, i.e., Rolwing SI, differ fundamentally from therapies oriented toward either relaxation or correcting diseases or other problems.~~

~~This concept seems to me to be clear and concise, capable of basically defining the scope of our work both to ourselves and to outside audiences. However, as the domain of Maitland's holistic paradigm is broad enough so as to include such arts as homeopathy and acupuncture as well as Rolwing SI, it does not relate concretely to the actual process of integration that occurs in our offices and classrooms.~~