

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the second issue of the Ron Fletcher Company newsletter. The first led to some surprising and wonderful feedback. I loved hearing from all of you who wrote or commented about what's going on in our Fletcher corner of the Pilates community and I certainly hope everyone is enjoying being better connected.

I'm beginning to realize that, to keep the Fletcher ship moving forward, it takes everyone. From the newest students (with their joyful "ahas!" of discovery) to the most senior teachers with their depth of experience, everyone plays an important part in the progress.

To me, the sense that we *are* moving forward *together* brings many joys. Because it feels as if, in doing so, we are helping to vitalize and strengthen the heartbeat of Ron's work.

And that is incredibly exciting.

Catherine Anderson — Editor, *The Fletcher News*
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Letter from Ron

This morning I opened my folder of precious "letters from Clara"... thinking to find one of her delicious quotes to start me off on a meaningful message for the newsletter... I became so intrigued with the thoughts and feelings expressed in a letter she wrote to me on March 15th, 1971... 5 days before the opening of my studio in Beverly Hills... that I realized I wanted to share all of it... so here 'tis, kids, with a few tears in my eyes and a slight ache, but much love in my heart:

Ron, dear Ron, thanks for your wonderful letter which I have long been waiting for. Finally you could set a date in spite of all the obstacles including an earthquake. It took courage on your part to start up but, Ron, you have proven you are the right man... now go ahead. The way is clear. Joe and I will be spiritually with you. March 20th will start another chapter in the book of your life, and this, I am sure, will be the most important one in all its forms. I strongly believe it was fate, not coincidence that brought you together with the Pilates... we planted the seed, it took strong roots... you had faith in the work and in yourself... now go ahead... the work must and will go on. It will not be easy, as you will always face opposition and ignorance, but there is no doubt with your fighting spirit you will conquer. Joe always said, "opposition is the match that lights the fire", and he was a fighter as you well know... You have many friends, and the trust and confidence they have in you will always be an inspiration... faith and prayer will be of great support and set everything straight. My love and best wishes are always with you... Clara

Rereading Clara's long-ago words, I am renewed in spirit and freshly inspired to get my buns up and out and to carry on... just as Joe and Clara expected and trusted me to do. You know, they're with me all the time.

Just as I am with you.

Sincerely Yours...for sure,
Ron

Pat's Perspective: Fletcher's "Articulate Spine"

Ron's discovery of the articulate spine began when Joe instructed him, from a seated position on the reformer, to roll down one vertebra at a time. Ron quotes Joe as saying, "Don't schtep on my finger!" meaning Ron was to place each vertebra, one at a time on the reformer with precision and control. At the end of rolling down, it was expected that the spine would be lengthened and each vertebra would be placed on the reformer.

Today, many eschew this view of spinal placement preferring, instead, to focus on what they call a "neutral spine". Their concern is, that in this area, Joe's approach will remove the natural curve from the lumbar spine - found in a balanced standing posture - and instead encourage improper spinal placement while standing. But Ron reminds us that Joe did not teach the roll down to mold a static posture; rather he taught the roll down to bring awareness and articulation to a part of the spine, the lumbar, which we often limit in terms of extension.

Without extension of the lumbar vertebrae, we cannot begin to form the curve necessary for "Rolling in a Ball" in matwork. One of the principles Joe taught was "flowing motion". Today, we might describe this as spinal *articulation*. The Pilates method encourages precise forward flexion, extension, lateral flexion and rotation of the spine in matwork and all equipment work in order to maximize the spine's full potential for both strength and flexibility. When performed with the principles of awareness, balance, centering, concentration, control, precision, and breathing, this rich program leads to the principle of flowing motion.

Flowing motion strengthens the muscles that articulate the spine creating a natural ease and grace within the body. The Pilates method encourages the body to find the natural balance in all postures. Thus, there is no "neutral spine" or deliberate placement of the spine, but rather, there is the process of learning to optimize - without conscious effort - the spine's natural response to its positions relative to gravity. Pilates is a practice!

Conscious daily practice of the focused mind with a controlled body results in an articulate spine throughout the day — this is Contrology.

Pat Guyton, Master Teacher — Director, TRFPOS

"Live the laws. It is enough. When you remember the laws, you'll remember me. Our time together has begun a successful yet irreversible learning process..."

— The sage speaking to her student in Dan Millman's "The Laws of Spirit"

Fletcher Facilitators*

The Facilitator's role is to mentor our students and to provide for them the necessary prerequisite hours to enter the Ron Fletcher Program of Study. It is, first and foremost, about The Work. Countless hours are spent getting the work into the body. As Joe told Ron, "You have to get it into the bones."

The exchange that occurs throughout this process, however, is far richer than one might initially imagine. To be a teacher means to be a student—to be in study, to be constantly evolving. This is the philosophy by which our Master Teacher, Ron Fletcher, lives. It is a philosophy Joseph and Clara Pilates, and Martha Graham, instilled in their students and it is what Clara asked of Ron.

Ron has kept this promise—at 82, he is still in study, still evolving. And because of his commitment, his Pilates lineage continues to evolve. To be a teacher means to communicate with others what our teachers, and their teachers, and their teachers passed on. It is about discipline, purpose, intention, continuity, freedom and joy. And, ultimately, the development of our true potential.

We share this lineage.

And what is it exactly that those of us who form part of this Pilates tapestry share? It is more than a body of work. It is the gift of movement itself and, more specifically, a set of revolutionary new principles with which to approach movement. The success of the Facilitator Program lies in our ability to carry out these principles and in our ability to instill them in our students.

Ron's commitment ensures that we are constantly evolving. More importantly, it challenges us to grow into the future. And we *are* moving forward. Two of our students attended the January Intensive and four attended the Spine Corrector Course this February. Upon their return, they shared *their* experiences with the two students who will attend the Towelwork Course this May. You see, the lineage continues...

Aida Zorrilla

**Please note: Program of Study Qualifiers have been re-named Program Facilitators.*

The Core of the Matter

In my last piece I discussed the “Chakras” which describe an eastern, energetic view of the core of the body. In this article, I will introduce the concept of the “Inner Unit” which describes the core of the body from an anatomical perspective. The Inner Unit is comprised of a grouping of muscles that interact synergistically at the center of the body. Activation of the Inner Unit is essential for stability and health of the lumbar spine and sacrum. The presence of an Inner Unit implies that there exists an Outer Unit which is a set of peripheral muscles. The muscles of the Inner Unit have separate neural input from the Outer Unit.

The muscles of the Inner Unit include:

Transversus Abdominus: The deepest abdominal muscle. The fibers run transversely, and intimately attach to the lumbar spine and sacrum via the thoraco-dorsal fascia. The thoraco-dorsal fascia is a complex interweaving of connective tissue which helps integrate the trunk with the lower body.

Levator Ani: This muscle forms the pelvic floor

Multifidus: The deep fibers of this postural stability muscle attach diagonally from one vertebra to the segment below and minimize shearing forces to the spine.

Diaphragm: This muscle plays a principal role in inhalation and exhalation.

In the Fletcher Work, the Inner Unit is activated when we perform the integration of upper and lower hemisphere—or Ron’s approach to what Eve Gentry termed “Imprinting”. Lying supine with legs and shoulders relaxed, practicing the breath while engaging the belly, reaching the spine toward the floor and keeping the pelvic bolts centered is an effective application to isolate the Inner Unit. In The Ron Fletcher Program, the Inner Unit is described using the terminology “Girdle of Strength” or the “4 Quadrants”.

Jonathan Oldham, Our Resident P.T.

References

1. Richardson, C., Jull, G., Hodges, P, Hixdes, J. (1999)
2. Chek, P. (1999) *A New Frontier in Abdominal Training*. Internet Newsletter
3. Lee, D. (1999) *The Pelvic Girdle*. Churchill Livingstone.
4. *Therapeutic Exercise for Spinal Stabilisation in Low Back Pain*. Churchill Livingstone.

“Work Wurk Werk”

Job Opportunities for Fletcher Teachers

Power Plus, Inc.

1776 S. Jackson St. #100
Denver, CO 80210
(303) 758-4606
Contact: Tim or Sabra Zimmer
Specifics: 20-35 Hours per week

Body Fundamentals

Tucson, Arizona
(520) 299-6541
Or fax resume to (520) 299-6542
Specifics: part time position; dance or movement background preferred

Studio 4

San Francisco Bay area
(650) 560-9571
Contact: Catherine Anderson
Specifics: new studio looking for part and full-time Fletcher certified teachers.

Pilates Bodyworks

Singapore
Contact: Alvin Giam
Email: info@pilates.com.sg
Specifics: hiring full time teachers or teachers seeking a “working holiday”. We are a Ron Fletcher Studio and the first Pilates studio to open in Asia 6 years ago. Prefer teachers with 2+ years teaching experience. Salary commensurate with experience.

Fletcher Studios to Host Pilates Day Events: 15 and Counting!

As of April 12th, we are pleased to report that at least 15 Fletcher Studios and individual teachers have signed up to host Pilates Day events on and around May 15th. In support of our international Pilates community and the creation of the PMA Pilates Certification Exam, these studios are planning to host events with signature Fletcher style and creativity. It's not too late to join the cause for our profession — just log onto www.pilatesday.com to download the necessary forms to join in.

The following is a sampling of PMA Pilates Day events at Fletcher venues:

- **San Antonio's Studio A:** Owners Aida Zorrilla and Paul Scheuer are planning an elegant evening event at the Watermark with Ron as the guest of honor!
- **Studio 4:** Catherine Anderson is planning to coincide the grand opening of her new Bay Area Studio with a Pilates Day event.
- **Pilates Center of Cincinnati:** Jennifer Hetzler will offer introductory mat classes, a reception and silent auction to benefit the PMA.
- **Dianne Miller** is planning a series of events in Vancouver including inviting 100 participants to do the One Hundred!
- **Risa Boose, Jonathan Oldham and Trudy Zahler** of Boulder are co-hosting a group reception.
- **Body Works Studio** in Tucson: planning a Pilates Principles Party with a presentation by Pat Guyton.

More Fletcher Teachers and Studios Hosting Pilates Day Events:

- **The Studio Pilates:** Sagrario Castilla, Toronto
- **Physical Methods and Body Lines:** Stacey Dreisbach, Pennsylvania
- **Pilates Bodyworks:** Alvin Giam, Singapore
- **Inspiration to Move:** Rachel Nace, Pennsylvania
- **Ascending Phoenix Studio:** Susie Pearce, Arizona
- **Core Fitness:** Mary Pinzone, Virginia
- **Power Plus:** Tim and Sabra Zimmer, Colorado
- **Cynthia Taylor,** Ohio
- **Sara Udvare,** Nevada
- **The Ron Fletcher Program of Study**

Upcoming Events

Fletcher Workshops

April 16-18 *Costa Mesa, CA*
Diane Diefenderfer *DDiefH@aol.com*

May 7-9 *Cincinnati, OH*
Jennifer Hetzler *bodywell@one.net*

June 4-6 *San Francisco, CA*
Catherine Anderson *cath7771@netzero.net*

Level I — 10-day Intensive

June 18-27 *Tucson, AZ*
Body Works Studio, Inc. *520-323-7070*

Towel Course

May 21-23 *San Antonio, TX*
Aida Zorrilla *studioasa@sbcglobal.net*

Six-Month Level 1 Programs

May-October 2004 *Denver, CO*
Sabra Zimmer *powerplusdenver@aol.com*

October 2004-March 2005 *Tucson, AZ*
Kyria Sabin *bodyworksstudio@earthlink.net*

Visit www.ronfletcherwork.com/education
for more information about intensives and courses.

Hot Off the Camera!

We are pleased to announce two new additions to our Fletcher DVD selections.

The Fletcher Spine Corrector DVD is now available through our Company website: www.ronfletcherwork.com, on the 'Fletcher Goods' page. And the Fletcher Matwork DVD will be out next month.

Just like the Towelwork DVD, each includes an introduction by Ron. We think you will find these to be fresh approaches to the Fletcher work that will inspire both your teaching and your personal practice!