

DR Rolf talks about her life

...that there are more significant people in the lives of human beings than their parents, or the person who acts as the surrogate to the parent if the parent is dead or otherwise absent. Mine were very much there. My father was a highly intelligent person. A so called self-made man. A self-made man in his generation meant a man who had had a basic public school education and then got his higher education from various sources, not always easily identified. My father was a contractor in New York City and as he would say, he was willing to take on any construction provided its' feet were in the water, that is he built, he dealt with structures like bulkheads, piers, docks. In fact, I remember my thrill when I looked out on the water at one time and saw a tremendous big scowl, with the entire topshed of a pier on it and which was labled the Rolf Construction Company and this pier was being removed from a sight somewhere up on the North River, or Hudson River we call it today down through Staten Island, which was being done by my father. He was very successful man in his line of work. Unfortunately like many of his generation, he was badly caught in the panic of 1907 and this ended for him his desire to take on very large committments after that he was willing to stay small and secure and sleep nights. My mother had been a school teacher before her marriage and apparently a pretty successful school teacher, especially with dealing with turbulent youngsters who were always sent to her for correction and calming down. I don't know if any of this ever spilled over on me but I've heard many stories of this sort. In other words, both of

my parents were well educated members of their generation, and looked on education and participation in the culture as a necessary part of their life and my life. My father came into a great deal of financial trouble with the Roosevelt panic of 1907 at the time of the Roosevelt panic of 1907 and it took him many years and much hard work to work his way out of it. His indebtedness, his bankruptcy at that time was in the neighborhood of a quarter of a million dollars which in those days was money spelled with a capital M. Actually, over a period of years, he regained his money, and repaid every cent of his debt which was the way the style of that generation. Sadly enough, it would not be the style of this generation. However the going was pretty rough during that period for the family and the family spending was getting rough during that period. I was born in a single family middle class house in the upper Bronx. My education was in public schools in the Bronx. In public schools, in Morris High School which was at 166th street. Then, finally my father who had great sympathy with the idea but was having alot of trouble with it financially agreed that I should try to go to Barnard College and that he would try very hard to see to it that money was forthcoming which would permit this. And this he did, but as I say, it was tough going at that period. So I went to Barnard College, living at home in the Bronx and commuting from my home to College over the four years that I was in Barnard. Of course, Barnard did much to shape my career. My mother, a woman of her generation, saw nothing really for a girl to be doing other than teaching. But a cousin of mine had the idea that it would be a wonderful thing for me to

specialize in chemistry. His ideas won out. In Barnard, I specialized in chemistry and came under the influence and teachings of chemistry and physics there and was given a push into the more modern world of women's opportunities. Women's opportunities really came into the forefront by virtue of the first World War, at which time all of the young, technically trained young men were taken by the army and more privately outfits had a great deal of trouble staffing their laboratories. It was through this opportunity that I was able to become an associate in the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research even before I had my PhD and during my stay there I used the material that I was working with at the Institute to get the PhD which was finally issued by Columbia University. As I look back, I realize to what extent this sort of history formed my generation. So many of us, so many of the women of this generation were suddenly found a door which they could open thanks to the war. At the time that I was being trained during this period, I did much work at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University. That first class of women - a class of four women that was - entered the halls of their learning at that same period, also due to the War. At that time, they were over in a very dingy set of buildings on 59th street and the corner of 10th Avenue. But they did have a faculty which was outstanding, some members of which were quite outstanding in their teaching and inspirations abilities. Such a one was Hans Vinter, Professor of Biology there. I remember very vividly sitting there sitting in his classroom listening to his lectures and when the class was over, wandering out into the winter

darkness of the street and being so - what's the word - entranced that I couldn't remember where I was or how I got there or whether I was in New York or abroad or in Europe or what have you. Since it was this kind of teacher - he taught biology at that time - and his textbook is still highly respected. Actually by the time I was a senior at Barnard College the war was on. I was a member of the class of 1916 and the war which had started in 1914 was involving the United States by the spring of 1916. Before I really graduated from college the pitch of assistance - technical assistance was being felt. Various institutions were trying to solve it in various ways. The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research for instance was also looking for young assistants in their laboratories and in the early spring before I graduated had interviewed me and several other science students for the job of assistant in the Institute. All 3 of us were taken in as assistants, as technical assistants, chemical analysts or laboratory technicians of various sort at the Institute substituting for the men who had been taken out by the army. This was one of the thrills of my life, this being accepted by the Rockefeller Institute as a member of its' technical staff. At any rate, I very well remember the day of rejoicing, tremendous rejoicing, hysterical rejoicing that accompanied the news that the war was over. We had been in it for two years, for two years we had geared our life to a wartime economy and a wartime effort and now the war was over. As I say, the rejoicing was absolutely hysterical. Certainly the discovery at the end of half of a day of

this hysterical rejoicing that really the war wasn't over but this was just a rumor didn't quiet the tumult at all. Perhaps some of you may remember that the rumor was around that the war had ended and everybody went off and rejoiced and had the day off and so forth and so forth only to find that the war hadn't ended, in actual fact it did end about four days later. But by this time the steam was off and the ending was quite quiet. Fortunately, my job wasn't off. The other girls who had been taken into the Rockefeller Institute did not survive the ending of the war. But I fortunately, by this time had a secure place on the staff under the guidance of Dr. T.A. Levin, the head of the Organic Chemistry Department. Our job was the investigation of the various constituents of the body tissues. My particular job was the study of the chemical structure of the lyphits, the substance which made up the structural bulk of the nervous system. With this job, I stayed for several years, Dr. Levin was, of course, a tremendous influence on my life. He was a charming delightful very aerodite man who had been educated in St. Petersburg and was the head of the Department of Organic Chemistry in the Rockefeller Institute. He had a staff of perhaps 6 people of whom I was one. I don't know whether it was six or five people, of whom I was one, and continued to be one for quite a number of years. In 1928, I was granted a leave of absence with pay from the Institute for the purpose of going abroad and visiting various laboratories as a representative of the Institute and also an opportunity for further education for myself. I spent about 6 or 8 months abroad studying for a time in Zurich with Gudby who also was an absolute inspirational

teacher. He took you right out of yourself, even though he was lecturing in the a completely foreign language. I would get to the end of his lecture and go out into the spring sunshine of Zurich wondering where on earth I was and how I had gotten there and was the significance of my being there and what did I do next. Schurdinger was also an instructor in Zurich with whom I studied. But my stay in Switzerland was relatively brief and was terminated by the onset of summer holidays there. So I was released to travel around through Europe going up to Norway, Sweden, Germany and finally ending in France and England in the fall, where I joined my husband for a brief stay and visit to the English universities. When I finally returned in the early winter it was with the agreement of the Institute that they and I were parting company within a year or so. By this time my family was in rather dire problems and my father who had an extensive business going was obviously near the end of his life. So that when I left the Institute I went into the family problems of maintaining and closing my father's business affairs. Remembering his business reminds me of his office at 39 Courtland Street in New York City, way up in what was then a very tall office building overlooking the Hudson River and how impressed I had been as a small child, he had taken me up there on several occasions and it was from those windows that I could look out over the Hudson River and see the steaming in of the ships which had been in the Cuban American War. Later I remember from those same windows seeing the triumphal procession up the river of the replica of the Half Moon, Henry Hudson's vessel which was built to celebrate the 200th anniversary the tercentenary of discovery of the Hudson River by Hudson, who had sailed up that

same river in his Half Moon with my face placed to the glass of my father's windows in his office I was in a favorite position of observation of that celebration of that maritime celebration. So that my life was really my early life as well as my later life was really wound up in New York and it's living and it's history and it's ways. I was in Barnard College at the time of the American entry into the first World War. It was on my way home from Barnard College that I saw the screaming headlines of the sinking of the Lusitania. I was still too young to recognize what this meant, and what this would mean to America. At any rate after about 15 years I was a member of the laboratory of staff of the Rockefeller Institute. I finally left and went back to my family and to its' problems. By that time I had been married for several years and made up my mind that now was the time if ever when I should have children. So my son, my oldest son was born in 1932. By this time I was living, no I'm sure on an estate on Long Island, property - on our property on the North Shore on Long Island. Both of my children were born there. Both spent their early childhood in this little town off the North Shore of Long Island, Stoneybrook. How will I ever get out of my life. We spent many years as a fairly typical commuter family. My husband going to his office in New York every morning and returning on the commuting trains in the evening looking forward to Saturday which freed us from this repeat. In fact we went all through the Depression years in this way. In the meantime I was getting more and more uncertain as to what to do with my life. I certainly wasn't content to stay where I was and how I was indefinitely. Finally, realizing what a terrible chore it was for my husband to commute that long 55 or 60

mile trip everyday, we moved into Manhassat. I found a place in Manhassat and we moved in there. I was convinced after a very extensive investigations of schools public and private around New York that the public schools in Manhassat was the equivalent of the private schools in New York and that we could live in Manhassat and send the children to school in Manhassat and cut the commutation time in about 4. All of this seemed a good solution for the time being at least. It was in Manhassat that I first came to the realizations that later lead to structural intergration. There was a young woman there who I wanted to hire as a music teacher for my children, but she had had a bad accident a couple of years before and no longer had the use of her hands. But I interviewed her one day and looking at her realized that the reason she didn't have the use of her hands was because the joints of wrist and elbow and shoulder were not in line and it was not possible for her to put in the additional strength that would be necessary to play the piano with those arms in that condition. I finally said to her, if I can get your arms to the place where you can play the piano again, will you teach my children music? And she, not believing that this was possible, readily accepted. But it was possible and it happened very quickly. I took those arms of hers and straightened then out. Of course, some of my assurance as well as my information had come from many years of training with a group who were studencing yoga in Nyack, New York, headed by a man named Pierre Bernard. This group really believed in exercise for the physical maintenance of the body and did very intelligent work in exercise through some of their advance students, as well as doing

a great - as setting a pace that was far in advance for their time as far as teaching of the beliefs the historical development of the yoga philosophy. They had a center in Nyack New York where they lectured every Saturday night, closing the lecture at the unearthly hours of 2:30 or 3:30 in the morning and at the end of that time, we all had fried egg sandwiches and proceeded on whatever way we proposed to go. My own way was to drive 60 miles out to my home in Long Island, down along the west coast of the Hudson River crossing on a Ferry, then crossing on Long Island - no I didn't, I crossed on a bridge, which bridge, Fort Washington close enough to Fort Washington Bridge and continuing out to my home which was in Stoneybrook, Long Island a matter of 55 miles away from New York City center. Then in the wee small hours of the morning I would arrive home and turn in. It was a long tough trip, but to me it was worth it. Out from it developed the ideas which have finally coalesced into the Rolf method of structural integration. Theirs however was their when the recognition for integration and their's was the recognition for dealing with the whole man. Over a long period of years, over quite a period of years, I accepted their ideas as the basis for my life and my work. Pierre Bernard was also quite a character as well as a teacher in my life. He was a very independent American of Irish descent who had been brought up in apparently, the family had apparently been tomtraus and was brought up by other tomtraus families in a way that was accepted at that time by the tomtrau code. He had had quite a following by the

time that I and the war had gotten into the picture, much of it had been dissipated by the needs the local needs of the war, but that very beautiful property in Nyack was the source of inspiration to many people, as well as his outstanding ideas. As of today, I would not call his ideas outstanding, but as of that day they definitely were far in advance of their time. Highly controversial to say the least. I and my family, my husband and my two sons spent alot of happy times in that center at Nyack quite a long period of years. I was just thinking this morning about one Easter when Alan was about that high and I had promised him that he could wear short pants by Easter. When Easter came it was bitterly cold and damp and you know, you've seen Easter's like that, so he couldn't go in short pants. He was so outraged because I had promised him short pants by Easter, and we would go up there for Easter and I would take a whole mess of Easter eggs and hide them around on these beautiful grounds. They had lions up there and tigers in the barns as well as donkeys, peacocks oh yes I remember peacocks, gorgeous place. It was during this period that my husband died. Naturally that put an end to many of the such activities. Naturally with a smaller family we had to be closer together and I was not free to step around on Saturday nights anymore and actually for quite a while finances were something of a problem. But I had by this time become thoroughly conversive with the ideas of yoga training and of yog physical integration. So I started teaching within that framework, not as a yoga teacher but just in terms of people who had problems that they had been to a doctor for years and then spent so and so much

money and had had no help, and then their friends had said that they had heard that I did such good work for Jane or John, why didn't they try and see whether I could help them. I did help them and presently I found my doorstep rather crowded with people who needed help in all types all kinds of physical problems. So now, though my family had changed drastically, and my family life had changed drastically, I was completely surrounded with the requirements of a profession. We went on from there. The boys of course were rapidly approaching the college age, finally going away to college. The yoga philosophy to which I was exposed by virtual going to Clarkstone Country Club differed very drastically from any philosophy which I had ever been exposed to as a member of the Rockefeller Institute. The Rockefeller Institute of course had the characteristic Western belief in causes of disease and germs and such like. The ideas of Pasteur, etc., etc. The yoga philosophy believed what is now held so much more generally, that the body is the outward and visible sign of the spirit and that when things have gone wrong with the body, it is an indication of something that has gone wrong on a deeper level of spiritual being in the individual. Therefore, of course it was part of the yoga philosophy that the mind of the man and the spirit of the man should be taught and healed with as much care or perhaps alot more care than the actual physical symptoms. This was the first time that this idea had entered into my consciousness and actually in terms of any or all of my working companions and so

forth there was no one who had heard of such a radical departure from the ideas of the modern medicine, which of course, we The Rockefeller Institute represented and which couldn't under any circumstances been an error. The yoga philosophy also stressed the unit of life. Stressed the communion between that was inherent in all life and in all living processes. It was dealing with a much wider view of the living process and in so doing created a unity of thought that amounted to itegration. Nobody called what they were doing integration certainly not the yogis, certainly not the followers of the yoga philosophy. But integration it was integration of body mind and spirit. Its' physical discipline or exercises however, were not truly an intergration in the sense that I for one was using the word at this point. The exercises as taught by them were the exercises that you have seen in many textbooks, you've seen pictures of postures which seem incredible to get into and so forth. They put alot of stress on joint mobility, etc. But their ideas concerning body and body movements and body freedoms and so forth and actually their ideas concerning the necessity for body stance, for verticality were non existent and the idea of the necessity for verticality as having anything whatsoever to do with the earthly field certainly never stemmed from yoga philosophy. The great contribution of this group and its teacher Pierre Bernard to me was the fashion in which it freed me from the bondage to the accepted ideas of the time. Bernard thought with incision and decision and examined the notions the current notions

pulling them apart, showing what were the contributing factors that made up some of these myths though he would have never used that word. However, it was certainly Bernard who taught me to look at an idea, separating it into fact and myth and examining the myth and the basis on which it was built. It might also be said, that perhaps that I had that tendency long before I got to Clarkstown, what's the name of that Town? Nyack group. I certainly had that tendency, but needless to say when isolated individuals certain tendencies to unusual thought come into contact with people who understand that, who give him further support is a very great help in establishing a philosophy which shapes a life. This I got without question, I got from the Clarkstown Country Club and from Pierre Bernard who certainly was a rascal, a person difficult to get along with, but nevertheless a teacher to me outstanding in quality and character and support. Certainly my life at the Rockefeller Institute had a very great deal to do with the shape of my thinking. I had an extended background through my college and university career, but here I was surrounded by experts and subjected to lectures by them weekly. Presenting me with the background of current ideas in medicine at the time. It was an outstanding opportunity and I must say that I accepted it as such. The Rockefeller Institute was not particularly informed in terms of chemistry, but the chemists of the Rockefeller Institute by virtue of their position in the Institute certainly managed to get themselves informed in the ideas of medicine at that time. It was also the time of my working for a PhD that the idea of the environment began

to be heard in the land. Up until this time, individual situations were looked at as situations, but along about the time that I was a PhD student, various teachers became impressed with the recognition of the part that was played by the environment in any episode in any life, in any happening. So that it was at this time that the idea of man in an environment began to be part of the thinking. It still was not the thinking of the orthodox of the time, which was still looking at events as individual events rather than as results of a situation in an environment. Developing the idea of structural of the current modern structural integration of course, a great emphasis is placed on the effect on the man of the energy environment and all of his results from thinking which have not been formulated at all prior to the 1920's I guess. So that the theory of integration could not have been validated, could not have been seen with valid premise previous to that time. The idea of man as an energy field living in the field of earth as an energy field could not have been accepted as a valid assumption at that time. Energy fields were not really seen, not really accepted as environmental at that time. I don't know there's alot more that should be said in their and I don't know quite how to get into it.

Side Two

A monkey does his living inside of another energy field which is the energy field of the earth. I don not know whether all energies are the same. I don't know if you can add the energy of the earth to the energy of the man. I am pretty sure you can detract from the energy of the man, by the energy of the earth if the energy of the man is wrongly distributed in space. Or as we would say and see it if a man's structure therefore his energy field is at variance with the lines of force that are the energy fields of the earth. These in general are vertical hence the field that surrounds the man must meet the vertical substantially or the verticaly of the earth's energy field distorts it and the man's well being depends on a non-distorted energy field. This is what he sense when he says, "I feel good", or "I feel bad." He is really reporting on his conception of his energy field. This is a very modern concept and it completely disregards the Aristoplian concept of man, and for that matter the Victorian concept of man. That man has been seen as an energy field only in the last 50 years or so. Man has been seen as an energy field only since the days when we began to consider energy. You know I did a paper on this thing not that long ago a year - year and a half ago in which I did alot of discussion wonder where that paper is? It is to be noted that always in man's concept of himself or for that matter the living structure there has always been a vast unknown. Men have tried to make this unknown area smaller by naming it. They have fallen victims to the idea that if they could name something they then knew something

about it. So they have called this unknown in the case of living beings, living structures the vital force, the elan vitale, the life force some people call it God. It is a name put on an unknown that has no real that makes no real contribution to our knowledge. The idea of what my idea of man is - must mean be dependent on what my ideas in general are and have been. This in turn of course suggests the understanding of a point of view - no my point of view always seems to deal with matter. The material side of the universe. I mean to say nor imply that I am a materialist, but I will say and imply that my preoccupation with life consists of seeing the actual material in which life is inbedded as material that differs that in differing in its constitution differs in its expression. So its expression is related to its constitution that difference in expression, in my opinion talk about his outward and visable evidence of difference in constitution. I have always been interested in this attempt to understand life in terms of understanding the actual material in which it is inbedded. This does not make me what is commonly known, to what is ordinarily known as materialist. I most certainly believe in something that is greater than the materials that we study in physical and chemical laboratories. But my interest has always been to look to them first as a clue to life and its expression, as a clue to the particular expression of the life force that we differentiate under different names. Names of humans vs. animals and different names of John vs. Mary, etc. Somehow the clue to those differences is contained in different chemical constituents. I have always been interested,

therefore I am and have been and probably will continue to be interested in chemistry as such and physics as such, because physics in its own way determines chemistry.