

It's a Reflexology Double Anniversary!

Thanks for the opportunity to share with you the experiences I had with my wonderful teacher, Myra Achorn. I was lucky enough to be her very first student, starting in June 1998, receiving my certification in November of the same year.

Myra worked tirelessly to give me an extremely strong foundation in the knowledge of reflexology. She was thorough and well versed in the anatomy and physiology, technique and ways to save wear and tear on my body. On top of that she was amazingly generous with her time, expertise and support. There were moments that I flailed about and she would steadily steer me on the right course. There were times when my spirits plummeted and she would buoy me up. There were times that I was confuse and she would set me straight. I love that woman, that teacher, that mentor!



My thanks go out to her for the privilege of being her student and I congratulate her on her many years of stewardship in Reflexology. Our profession has no greater champion than our Myra!



Oh my, when I read what my first pupil, Elisabeth Wolfe, wrote, well, I didn't know what to say! Such kind words that make this anniversary most gratifying. Thank you, Elisabeth, for being my first student and know that it was a pleasure to share my knowledge with you. I am proud of you, as I am of all my students.

Looking back over these 15 fifteen years since I started teaching as well as the 23 years since I became a reflexologist, I am struck by one realization that I want to share: there is a "ladder" one can climb in this profession. This is not to say that all practitioners would want to make the climb. It is fine to be a solid practitioner, but the point is that in this field "the sky is the limit."

I look back and see that simply put, you first become a reflexologist when you become "certified" by your school. I believe it is then important to join reflexology organizations, starting with, of course, the Maine Council of Reflexologists, of which I am a charter member. You can also join RAA (Reflexology Association of America) and if and when you choose to become nationally certified, you go to ARCB, which I did. Without meaning to brag, I am proud to say that I was the first in the state of Maine to earn ARCB certification in 1992!

As you gain experience and develop a passion for reflexology and realize that the public wants and needs to learn about it, you may begin to share your knowledge by lecturing at events and to various groups. I recommend that you go to conferences and workshops whenever possible. In doing so you will expand your knowledge base and have the opportunity to interact with other reflexologists, even perhaps having the opportunity to meet with some of the "superstars" in our field. I have had the pleasure of getting to know, for example, author and reflexology activist Christine Issel, Dwight Byers (Eunice Ingham's nephew and a world teacher), Bill Flocco (teacher and author) and others. This is important—there is nothing like the inspiration and encouragement you gain in meeting someone person-to-person.

Elisabeth Wolfe, MCR member, was my first student! She telephoned me one day and asked me if I would teach her. The truth is that I didn't feel "qualified" to be a teacher at the time. I called Christine Issel who encouraged me to "go for it." I also had the encouragement of two current MCR members, Alison Gingras and Emily Cyr, as well as that of Debbie Jenney who now practices in Massachusetts. Support and guidance from colleagues is so important!

When I embarked on teaching, I thought I would just "try" it and see what happened. But those students kept coming and I kept on teaching! I did what Christine Issel advised; I just taught what I knew the best I could. If I didn't know or understand something a student asked, I would try to find out. My teaching career blossomed as had my practice. There was a lot of hard work and everything did not always go smoothly, but you learn to solve problems to the best of your ability. In 2003 I applied to the State of Maine to get a license for my school. That was a big challenge, but it was accomplished. In 2008, both Dwight Byers and myself received an Outstanding Educational Service Award in the field of reflexology from the Reflexology Association of America (RAA).

I have been exposed to many varieties of reflexology as I have attended numerous workshops. Nowadays with the ease of international travel and the Internet there is greater exposure of various forms of reflexology. I don't necessarily object to any of them, but I do focus on and teach what I call "The Standard American method of Reflexology" which involves thumb walking, finger walking and pressure pointing/hooksing—on the feet and hands with no tools or oils. I do finish sessions with a castor oil foot massage as I am convinced in the healing properties of castor oil.

REFLEXOLOGY! When I started doing reflexology, who would have ever thought that 23 years later— 41 classes and 126 students later!— I would still be doing it and still loving it! It is still the most exciting thing for me, especially when someone calls me with some challenging foot problems. And I get so pleased when, for example, I am out in public wearing my "reflexology" shirt and someone stops me to ask something like: "What part of my foot does this area go to?"

So, for me reflexology has been a great career. I believe there is still that ladder to climb. You can become a teacher, an international lecturer, an author, a spokesperson, a consultant. In a growing profession the possibilities are so many.

And as I celebrate my 15th year of teaching along with Elisabeth Wolfe celebrating her 15th year of practice I feel gratitude that I have been led on this path. I am very grateful to Elisabeth! I could not have had a better first pupil! At first I was unnerved because Elisabeth was a nurse, but she told me "Don't even think of my being a nurse. I am here for reflexology. In the nursing field we deal with pain, with pain management. It's different!" Elisabeth helped me to feel comfortable in starting off my career in teaching, so I send her my best regards.

As the two of us celebrate our anniversaries, I think of "two" thoughts to end this little memoir: There's a ladder to climb and we all need encouragement from each other.

Myra S. Achorn