

Celebrate International Pilates Day, By Going Back to the Future with Archival Pilates!

Pilates is a wide ranging field and so much of it has been handed down through the oral tradition as shared by the Elders. We do have Joe's books, pictures and videos that tell us some things about how he approached his method, and this is the basis of the archival work. (*Your Health*, 1934 and *Return to Life through Contrology*, 1945).

If you haven't read his books closely, we recommend you do so. It may inspire you in new ways to know you are teaching a method that was created by such a visionary! He truly was a man ahead of his time with strong ideas on how we should not just move, but how we should function in daily life, shower, and dress. As you have no doubt heard, he was a genius of the body and adapted to the person in front of him and their needs. He even created unique pieces of equipment to help students. It was not one size fits all. And therefore, each Elder had a different experience with him and a different take on his exercises as they were shared personally by him for them.

Looking at his descriptions of the exercises as well as viewing his pictures and video clips is educational in and of itself. While some Pilates instructors consider the archival material as 'exercises Joe tossed away,' we don't really know that that is true. We just know not everything was passed down to us today.

In closely studying his descriptions of the mat exercises as written and depicted in *Return to Life through Contrology*, you

will see quite a few differences in how they are often taught today. Much of what has been handed down classically came from Romana, and what she shared changed over the years, and may not have been exactly as Joseph Pilates himself taught it—certainly not to everyone.

So, go back to the source. Study the archival work if it interests you. Think about why he taught things in those ways, how exercises have evolved, who you might prefer to teach the archival versions to. Learn exercises that are new and not part of most schools' syllabuses, and have fun with this vast body of work that is still being added to.

Pamela Garcia has been studying Pilates her whole life, being introduced to Contrology as a teen. She has worked with many Elders, studied through many different schools, and will be sharing the Archival Mat in a special Masterclass workshop May 6th. Don't wonder what it's about, attend and experience the differences and similarities.

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Article written by Zoey Trapp, MS / Photo Credit: Pam Garcia