



COLLEAGUE'S VOICE

December 2025

Interview Christine Issel by Vera Krijn

Whoever has crossed paths with Christine Issel at a Reflexology conference, recognizes her as the "anchor" with the answers to any questions. She has the innate ability to shield herself from attention by "closing her quills", like the solitary porcupine, while floating through the crowds. She believes herself to be "just a scribe" and glory or recognition are meaningless to her. This is a case where modesty should be outlawed.

Vera Krijn



Our path has crossed several times, our first encounter being at my national certification exam for the American Reflexology Certification Board (ARCB) where she was my proctor. I still have her first book "Reflexology, the Art, Science and History" which she signed on that occasion.

She has been my soundboard while I was president of the New York State Reflexology Association during legislative activities, leadership courses and at reflexology conferences. She contributed articles for our newsletter whenever I asked. One thing is clear, Christine has been the anchor and mentor for myriads of people. Yet, who is she and why is a new generation not aware of her work and legacy that spans more than 45 years?





Christine Issel

To start, Christine is the person responsible for instituting most of our national and international reflexology organizations, including the International Council of Reflexologists (ICR). She is responsible for reflexology competency standards across America through the American Reflexology Certification Board (ARCB), has written training manuals and organized national and international conferences.

She has been actively involved in legislation and accomplished separate laws in five states of the USA, and gained exemptions in 32 states for reflexologists have the right to practice. She is an author, and currently a consulting board member of ICR and the Reflexology Association of America (RAA) as well as several other state organizations boards. She used to be involved with the Association of S. Miguel for Bioenergetic Medicine, Castro Verde, Portugal, the Association is now defunct. Did I miss something?

Let's see if we can discover who the woman is behind all this. What are you currently doing?

To clarify, my accomplishments in the field of reflexology have always been a collaboration with many others. Currently, I am in contact with reflexologists from around the world, mainly in a consulting role. I see myself as a resource of information in the field of reflexology that I happily share. I also spend time answering emails, researching, and I am writing another book.

What kind of book?

Of course, it will be reflexology oriented, and it pertains to awareness and consciousness. My book mirrors my personal journey, which transitioned from the subtle energy surrounding us and quantum physics towards *awareness and consciousness* and how to apply its relation to reflexology. It depicts how our spiritual (*not religious*) growth contributes to the evolutionary process of humankind.

I still have a copy of your first book that you signed for me in 1997 at my certification exam. "Reflexology, the Art, Science and History". "Vera, best wishes for continued success with reflexology. Thanks for taking the ARCB exam, love Christine.

Well, you probably don't have the latest edited version published in 2014 which is a lot bigger. Instead of 200 pages it is 400 pages and includes 18 mini-biographies of a few leaders in the field at the time of publication.

So, it grew, just like ReflexologySy, "the gift that keeps on giving". Reflexology was the best investment that I made in myself and my life, it gave me a life with purpose.

Reflexology changes lives. It doesn't matter if you're the teacher or student, practitioner or client. It's amazing and keeps me in a state of continuous awe.

I remember when my first reflexology teacher, Sande Rosen was saying "Reflexology changes your life", and me thinking "yeh, yeh, let's get real", because it sounded a little like religion. But she was right.

I discovered that you were born under the sign "Sagittarius", which often is depicted as "trailblazer, adventurous, creative, and strong willed, which are necessary qualities for the resilience and perseverance

Bill Flocco, often referred to me as *"The iron hand in the velvet glove"*. When you do the work, it uncovers and points you towards a direction that enables you how to proceed. Abraham Lincoln said: *"The best thing about tomorrow, is it arrives one day at the time"*. And when you look back at your life history, you can see that every "stone" was a part of the structure of the road in front of you. The secret is to just say yes to opportunities and challenges that come your way. You will succeed.

Bill's characterization eloquently highlights one of those concealed qualities that most people might not associate you with, because you are someone of "few words" who forges ahead with meticulous reasoned arguments.

I never planned anything, things "just happened" because I said yes to questions and followed my intuition. For example, the ICR materialized because I was asked to develop an US-Canadian organization. As I started to structure it, my inner voice told me "Make it international". I followed my intuition and the group accepted the idea.

I am also not a writer in the conventional sense of the word. As a matter of fact, "Reflexology, the Art, Science and History" was just an idea with an outline and table of contents from my research at Stanford University, that I gave away because I wasn't a writer. However, I reclaimed it when the person I gave it to, didn't do anything with the material for a year. It's a classic example of taking our power back. Our internal dialogue will show us the way.

This leads me to the proverbial question must ask "how did you stumble upon Reflexology"?

Making a long story short, I had a health challenge and reflexology took care of it.



It is fascinating that this the answer of everyone I have talked with. There probably weren't too many reflexologists, how did you find someone.

We all have a story of how we discovered reflexology, and indeed there were not many reflexologists in 1969. As luck would have it, an acquaintance asked me to pick up a book on Reflexology from our local health food store. I had never heard of reflexology and I picked up this thin, little book. It was Eunice Ingham's "Story's the Feet Can Tell". Being of an inquiring mind, I read it before I gave it to her. Afterwards I had two thoughts:

- Does the American Medical Association know about the claims this woman is making?

If Reflexology only does half of what she claims, I'll be impressed. As a critical thinker I question everything and I am not easily impressed.

Anyway, I booked my first reflexology session just to see if there was anything to these claims. I had a long history of recurring Urinary Tract Infections (UTI's) that was treated on and off without real improvement. When the doctor told me that there a buildup of internal scar tissue which he could surgically remove, I said naïvely, "that's fine, but won't I have another scar?" To which he answered , "Yes, but you'll only have one big scar instead of a bunch of little scars". His nonsensical answer coincided at almost the same time that I came across Eunice Ingham's book.

My first reflexology session was an eye opener, I couldn't believe how amazing it made me feel. In retro respect, I sometimes wonder that if I had known beforehand the consequence that reflexology would have on my life for the next 50 years, I wonder if I would have canceled that appointment! The reality is that after that first session, I never had a UTI again in my life. And I not only remained a client for seven years, but I also made sure that my husband and children all received reflexology sessions regularly.

The challenge with Reflexology is that it sounds often "too good to be true", which sets off alarm bells with most people. This is the reason that Reflexology doesn't get the recognition it deserves. I prefer to "undersell" Reflexology as "stress management". That's a non-threatening approach that resonates with medical professionals. It's a fact that 75%-90% of all medical visits are related to stress related conditions.

Yes, and it's also important to emphasize that doctors need to experience a session to understand what it does and feels like, otherwise they think it's a bunch of "lulus".

When my family moved from the Sacramento area in California to Colorado there was no reflexologist to be found. Having not much faith in conventional medicine, I decided to study reflexology just to keep my family healthy. That's in a nutshell how I got involved in Reflexology.

Where and with whom did you study ?

My initial instructor was Dwight Byers, and I have studied since with everyone I can through seminars, books, conference speakers, arranging workshops for others, and since Covid-19 with webinars.

After my studies, I had a remarkable first client. She was a 28-year-old teacher, who had suffered from partial paralysis after an automobile accident and determined to return to the classroom. Her gait was unstable; she walked by swinging her right hip and leg outward and her right hand was clenched in a fist. Twice a week for three months, I worked on her hands and feet, and during that time her hand slowly opened and her gait improved. I thought "Ahh, reflexology works through the nervous system" by rerouting impulses. I was in awe how a simple application could obtain such dynamic results.

What was your next course of action?

After we moved back to Sacramento, where there was a group of people who had also studied with the International Institute of Reflexology (IIR). They wanted to meet and I opened my house, after which and one thing led to another. You see, Vera, I grew up in a family with eight kids, and being the second and oldest girl, helping others was instilled in me and became a part of my DNA. Even today, when someone says, "Let's you and I meet." My mind starts going in "overdrive", thinking who else could we include or invite? "The more the merrier is my thinking." It's almost a reflex.

I see you as a facilitator who “connects the dots”. Was this the time that the group came up with the idea to start an association, or was it an organic process?

I would say an organic process, a series of events that set the process in motions. When we first got together, someone had initiated a massage program and asked if I could take care of the “reflexology-section”. I said “sure, no problem”, because I have the tendency to say “yes” to everything.

At that time, all we knew was that the history of reflexology started with Fitzgerald, and I thought “it can’t have just dropped out of the sky, there must be some connection with the history in medicine.



This was in the late 70’s and early 80’s, long before the internet. Thus, I spent a lot of time at the library of Stanford University and began to focus on the neurological aspect by reading volumes of medical journals from the 1880’s and 1890’s. I had those publications physically in my hands and photocopied everything than I deemed important. This way I could follow the thread of how things progressed in the field neurology and the possible link between reflexology and medicine. It would give reflexology the credibility it needed.

To give reflexology credibility people need a rational explanation and that process must have taken a lot of time.

Oh yes, it took a lot of time. It is a peculiar thing that many things in my life happened serendipitously. With this I mean, that when I start a project, it’s if a gate opens and the information just flows onto my desk. That’s the fun part; writing is the hard part. It took me about four years to follow the threads of my research that finally impelled me to write *Reflexology: Art, Science & History*.

Don’t you think that you have asked the right questions to the right people?

No doubt. It’s a fascinating process that often starts with asking myself a question, which often helps me to fill in the blanks.

In this case “fill in the blanks”, most likely comes from your “internal wealth”, being the materials you’ve accumulated over the years. Writing can be an exercise in masochism, because you keep on editing and are never satisfied.

Exactly, and then fact checking and including all the sources is painstaking work. Also, I have found 90% of writing is rewriting. I look at a subject from all angles and numerous points of from different authors, because I want to discern the truth as closely as I can. Also, I don’t want people to take my word, I want them to check my sources and interpret the information for themselves and come to their own conclusions.



I agree, nowadays, people just repeat what they hear without fact checking themselves, which contributes to convoluted stories, that become the “new truth”. This disturbs me.

Yes, there is a lot of “bad” information out there on any subject, especially when the internet is the only source, and with a lack of critical thinking, people just regurgitate the same information over and over again. How can we grow with that attitude professionally? This creates a problem for our reflexology educational system and our future development. There is a joke that “science moves ahead one death”, meaning progress happens after the death of previous discoveries that the egos of proponents of the discoverer cling to. I think that maybe the same in our field.

So true. It’s difficult for people to disagree or step outside their comfort zone. We need more openminded and courageous people.

In this day and age, people want instant gratification, instead of investing time in educating themselves. In my opinion, to become a professional reflexologist should require a minimum of a 2-year college education that includes “basic health” nutrition, anatomy, physiology, psychology, and lots more subjects like our own reflexology history and research studies.

That brings me to the American. Reflexology Certification Board (ARCB) which was something established by you as well. What inspired you and how did you adapted and standardize the American reflexology certification process?

The idea behind ARCB was to bring credibility to reflexology by establishing an exam by an independent agency to validate of the school certification programs. It was to be a step above the student’s initial program, certifying a student’s competency without bias, just like it’s done in most other occupations.



It seems like a “oliphant” task and an incredible sales-job. How did you convince schools to encourage students to take an independent exam. My original school encouraged us, and that only increased the credibility of the school to me.

Again, I listened to my inner voice. We, George Balut, an instructor with IIR from Ohio, and Larry Clemens from Chicago, an independent reflexology practitioner, and myself dreamed and created the foundation of ARCB. Again, this was before the internet and involved long and expensive phone calls. After taking all the necessary steps, we established a non-profit corporation and produced a study guide containing standard information pertaining to our profession, so every applicant was tested on the same material. Eventually we developed a psychometrically valid exam and beta tested it. It took several years to come to fruition.

You make it sound like a trifle, which is of course far from the truth.

We were simply at the right place at the right time. I said before, once we started it was a chain reaction of things happening. Let me give you one example of how serendipity works in my life:

Reflexologists in the state of Washington were trying for years to gain exemption from the massage law. After lots of meetings, the massage board was adamant that to practice reflexology you needed a massage license. One of the board members from the reflexology association called me and said, “Nothing is going to work, they just don’t want to listen”. I answered, “We did all we can do, let’s leave it to “Spirit”. Lo and behold, she called me a couple of weeks later and said, “Without further meetings or work on our part, the massage board did a complete turnaround, we are now an independent profession”! That reminded me that we often must give the spiritual world time to work on our behalf after we’ve done all we could; and remember spirit time is not the same as human time.

It is surprising how patience and a positive mindset often resolves problems without lifting a phone or finger. When actions seem to have failed it could be just not “the right messenger or audience” at the right time. Are there still things you like to do?

I read at least 3 books a week ranging from quantum physics to romantic suspense. I don't have a TV nor do I engage in “streaming”. I spend a lot of time behind my desk writing and of course re-writing. I find that writing requires block of uninterrupted time so I don't lose the train of thought I am working with

I must chuckle, because the rewriting process by yourself is a task without end. In essence you are cerebral, which quite fits your astrological sign of Sagittarius and I get the idea, that your home is your sanctuary.

Yes, it is. I really have had what I term “a white bread” life. I am graced that life just flows for me and whenever there were challenges it gave me the opportunity to figure things out. I stay in touch with friends and family, and my philosophy is that everyone I meet has “a gift to give”. I don't mean in a material sense; it could be a smile, a recipe, a recommendation, introduction, anything.

Which book gave you most pride? She shows me the cover of her latest book “Energy, the New Frontier in Reflexology”.

I really don't have a favorite. If you read my books in sequence, you'll see a “leitmotif” of my personal journey and how I have grown spiritually in my thinking. The cover of the “Energy book” shows someone's aura and is the work of my daughter when she was young. It confirmed everything I intuitively sensed but didn't see, and she could see on an intuitive level.

The Spiritual world has always guided me, some would say that's listening to my gut. I am mostly an observer, and if I don't have any words to contribute to a conversation, I remain quiet. I also believe that my way is just one person's opinion. Ultimately, I live by this quote of Marcy Calhoun: *“Every change you make gives everyone in this world the opportunity for change. Because of change, you have opened the door for others. However, make your changes for yourself and no one else”*. And I would add, “It is not my job to control anyone.”



Thank you so much for your generosity of time and what you have contributed to our profession. I see you as a woman of substance with a "celestial" touch that is leaving an imprint on the world of reflexology.

Vera Krijn



Information about a webinar

Exploring Relaxation Through Reflexology: A Gateway to Well-Being

Date – Monday, February 2nd 2026

Time – 10am -12 noon (California time); 1-3pm Eastern time & 6-8pm in the UK

Thank you to the Reflexology Association of California (RAC) for the opportunity of our working together and supporting our webinar.

To complement your experience and what you already know this webinar will explore:

- The science and importance of relaxation and what it means to you
- The art and power of touch,
- The many benefits that come from delivering your reflexology with greater rhythm and repetition,
- We'll also look at how uplifting self-care relaxation reflexology practices can help restore balance, and
- We will invite you to join us to 'follow the FRT Rainbow self-care protocol
- Finish with your Questions & Our Answers
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You are invited to take time for yourself and join us in this webinar. We look forward to sharing time with you.

For details and to Sign Up - Go to ReflexologyAssociationOfCalifornia.com

