

What I Did on My Summer Vacation

The summer is coming to a close now, so the book is done. Next week I return to school, and the process continues. I will miss teaching, and, especially, I will miss my practice students, intrepid volunteers all. The bonds we formed are the kind you can have only when you have been through something together.

This leap into working on my own has been a bit like a first Alexander lesson. No teaching I may do in the future, I suspect, will produce the same sense of wonder that I have felt watching these first students discover the Technique for themselves with the aid of my largely improvised guidance. Seeing and feeling them change under my hands – and often having experiences of which I am not even capable, because of physical issues of my own – has in turn been a profound and often vicarious experience for me, and sometimes even a revelation of aspects I had never glimpsed before. Working directly with these people, especially those grappling with serious physical challenges, gave me the opportunity to, as it were, walk a mile in their shoes and understand on a deeper level the difficulties they face and the courage and perseverance they bring to bear in living with them.

It was the training I have received that enabled me to think and act in accordance with Alexander principles and to modify their application to fit the needs of each student. But beyond that, I found teaching the Technique to require of me every skill and capacity that I possessed, from the results of life experience to those of extensive formal study. For I learned that each student was unique and needed to be shown the Technique in a way that had meaning for him. To work with these 23 people, ranging in age from 19 to 82, I had to find, not a way of teaching, but 23 ways. Rather, it was we who needed to discover the means together, as I depended in large measure on their feedback, freely given, and on their open willingness to experiment. It has been a privilege to work with this group, an experience of which I never expect to have the like

again, for they were as much my teachers in this formative period as I was theirs.