

*In The Swim*  
August 2008

Many years ago, I attended an Alexander Technique Teacher's meeting which was held at the lovely Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, CA. On one of our breaks we decided to have a swimming competition at the Asilomar swimming pool. I jumped into the pool with the other teachers, lined up at one end of the pool and tread water waiting for the starting whistle. It was a race and we were all geared up to win. 1, 2, 3 and off we went. No one was thinking about their Alexander directions; we were only thinking about getting to the other end of the pool as fast as we could. *We were "end-gaining"*. You wouldn't believe all of the thrashing and splashing that I created as I *pushed* to the other end.

Noting the obvious, that our Alexander Technique thinking had been left behind, we decided to repeat the race with a new set of rules. The second time, we were to forget about winning and *"inhibit" thinking about the other end of the pool*. Instead we would *focus on our Alexander directions*, "neck free, head leading off the end of the spine, backs lengthening and widening. 1, 2, 3 and off we went again. This time the water was quiet. The teachers watching us said that we looked like we had been transformed, gliding through the water like dolphins. I was so focused on my directions that I neglected to notice the other end of the pool and bumped my head. Not very hard, but nevertheless, it was quite jarring because up until that moment, my movements were effortless and sleek. I had also completely forgotten that I was being timed. And the incredibly, even my time on the second round was improved!!