

**WALTER CARRINGTON MEMORIAL SERVICE**  
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**By Daniel Pevsner**

It is some thirty-six years ago since I went to Walter to have my first Alexander lesson. What, I assumed, was going to be a casual, temporary association, turned out to be a lifelong friendship. Soon after we met, Walter decided to take up horse-riding again, and that I was to be his instructor. It had been a good few years since he last rode, so, as a good friend, I did my best to dissuade him; after all, he was in his late fifties, injured and handicapped - not good material to work with. Well, as I am sure some of you know, Walter could be an absolute mule when the mood took him. The first year must have been torture, yet he never relented. He had this trick up his sleeve where he never acknowledged pain. He did not simply overcome it, in the ordinary sense, he just discarded it.

For ten years or so we kept up with his lessons whenever possible, using various riding-school horses. Then in '83, when I bought a stable yard, Walter got himself a horse of his own and kept it with me. He did in fact have two; the first, Jake, was trained and prepared for him by my former wife, Gloria. The next one was Badger who in some ways, was trained by Walter himself to suit his own needs. During the next 20 years, Walter came to ride three times a week, even in the worst of weathers, until alas, it all came to an end a couple of years ago when the place had to be sold and Badger, conveniently perhaps, was due for retirement; he was over 30 then, a venerable age for a horse.

Walter had all the attributes of a true horseman, and made himself a good rider by surmounting some great physical limitation. Miss Goldie, who came regularly to watch him ride, thought that his was a marvellous example of mind over matter, and that his riding was the best advert for the efficacy of the Technique.

While horse-riding gave Walter much pleasure, it also gave him some further insight in the workings of the Technique. Here, perhaps, it is necessary to explain that Walter practised Classical Horsemanship, which, in olden times, was regarded to be one of the arts. Riding enabled him to follow Alexander's recommendation to apply the Technique to some practical activity, so that one has a better criterion for right and wrong, while

being able to monitor progress more accurately. Riding taught Walter not only about his own use but also about the use of the self, in general. From the horses Walter acquired a deeper understanding of the Primary Control. There is nothing like a horse for demonstrating the relationship between head and neck and the rest of the body. A major part of training the riding horse is concerned with the development of this relationship, and the enhancement of it through teaching the animal the horsey equivalent of what we call inhibition. Walter's equestrian research went on for well over thirty years and by his own admission had a profound influence on the way he used himself and on the way he taught. Alexander, I think, would have approved.

In appearance and manner Walter was a pre-war, old school Englishman, but his way of thinking, the way he related to people and situations, was a product of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Age of Reason. His favourite philosopher was the Austrian Karl Popper, whose book, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, helped explain the process of Alexander's quest and confirmed it to be good science.

Popper's is a philosophy of action and practicality, in defence of choice, of freedom of thought, and against all dogmatic impositions; values that always had a strong appeal for Walter, and guided him, mundanely and spiritually. God, for him, was universal, above denomination. Like Gurdjieff before him, Walter believed that the world will only reach salvation when all individuals attain enlightenment. Although he knew, from his own experience, of the power of religion and of the comfort it gives, he believed, nevertheless, that our fate is in our hands and that humanity is responsible for itself.

Neither Alexander, nor Walter, saw the Technique as therapy, despite the fact that it often has such a beneficial effect on the health of the pupil. They thought of themselves as teachers, not curers or healers. For them the Technique was a method of self-help, which, in order to be successful, has to be learnt by a pupil who is prepared to take responsibility. To Walter, the medical benefit of the Technique was only one element amongst others and not always the main one. He regarded learning the Technique as the best foundation for the learning of skills and for putting them to use. Even more importantly, he thought of the Technique as a wonderful way of introducing people to rational behaviour.

Walter Carrington gave the whole of his being and all of his working life to the cause of the Alexander Technique. He understood its spirit and message, and with the help of his much loved wife and partner Dilys, gave all his energies to the training of future generations of teachers and to the general promotion of the Technique. Sadly, in recent times he also had to become its protector and its defender. His immediate, urgent legacy to us is best spoken in his own words:

“... these two things - the unity of mind and body, and the attitude towards right and wrong - are the two main features that distinguish our work... It is no good seeing our work like that of anyone else because it is not. If we are true to our own principles, if we really live the Technique... then there won't be much room for presenting our work as though it was like anything else. To present it as a form of therapy... or to present it as anything other than it is - a psycho-physical process - is to misrepresent and mislead.”