

Taking Bowen Therapy from the Past to the Present

I have often wondered what it would have been like to walk into Tom Bowen's clinic in Geelong when he was treating huge numbers of people on a daily basis. I think that if we were able to go "back to the future" and experience that environment it would be extraordinary.

Whether it was observing him at work, as Ossie did, or experience Tom's hand performing a treatment would be something to behold. Of course most people, who visited Tom for treatment would not have had the benefit of anatomical knowledge that we learn as Bowen practitioners today. If we have the opportunity to treat someone who was treated by Tom you may be able to get some idea of what he did and what he was like as a person.

One person I have treated was a fireman in Melbourne and suffering what he believes to have been sciatic pain. He doesn't remember very much about Tom himself but he described the treatment as what I identified as the Sciatic procedure we have been taught to perform. Prior to his visit to Tom, the fireman had received other treatments without success but he didn't have to return to Geelong for further work as with one treatment, the problem was resolved.

In the 1970's I lived in Melbourne and had the good fortune to have a holiday house at Barwon Heads, which is beach side town about 20 minutes' drive from Geelong. To get to this township I needed to drive through Geelong and along the street where Tom had his clinic. I had heard of this man, who worked on people's injuries but unfortunately never had a visit that today I wish I had.

When Tom was doing his work in Geelong there were a small number of others in Melbourne and other places around Australia using a variety of techniques to work on mainly dysfunctional tissue. As an injured athlete I visited some of these men.

I believe that most of these others had their beginnings in working on injuries with sporting clubs. From my own personal experience, these men were very heavy handed, meaning their techniques were what we would describe today as deep tissue massage and usually very painful for the recipient. They were often referred to as manipulative.

There usually was considerable force applied and often combined with speed of movement of the practitioner's hands. There was an underlying belief by the recipient of the principle that "if there was no pain, there was no gain". *This unfortunately is the trend of groups trying to copy the original Bowen technique today. They lose the essence of Bowen to allow the Body to reset to heal itself.*

To describe their work in the parlance of today it could be said to be muscular or even musculoskeletal. In a practical sense, the technique used by Tom when he performed his treatments is the complete opposite to the manner in which others performed in their treatments at that time. From what we learn from Ossie's recording of Tom's work the Bowen technique was more about the movement of tissue in a subtle non-invasive manner to stimulate the body's healing process for the body to respond and heal itself.

We have heard anecdotal evidence of positive results he achieved when he treated pathological conditions. It may be considered that his work was neuromuscular or even neuromusculoskeletal because of



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the reported benefits he achieved on neurological and structural disorders.

I am extremely grateful that Ossie recorded Tom's work and had the foresight to formulate a teaching delivery program that is the basis of the Bowen training we have today. To have acquired the skills of the procedures that were the work of Tom Bowen is exemplified every day in my clinic when I am able to aid the recovery of a presenting pathology.

A typical example happened a few months ago when I attended a local game of Rugby League. Many of the participants are regular visitors to my clinic for the correction of musculoskeletal disorders. With less than five minutes remaining in the game, one player badly rolled his right ankle laterally and I was asked to look at the injury. By the time I got to the change room the ankle was badly swollen and a trainer had already applied an ice compact to the area.

Utilizing the knowledge that I had acquired as a Bowen Therapist, I treated the injury and applied appropriate strapping which provided support and compression. Fortunately, the ice had only been on the body for a short period but was not reapplied after my treatment. I received considerable advice from others in the change room; however the rapport that I had built with the player over quite some time gave me the opportunity

to instruct him on the appropriate protocol to abide by.

His initial response to me was that he had a similar injury in the past and then was sidelined for four weeks. This game was one week before the finals. With the experience gained from treating similar type injuries, I was confident I could have him return to training in ten days and play in a game in two weeks. And that is exactly what happened. I treated him with appropriate Bowen procedures and re-taped the ankle after each treatment. The reduction of the inflammation was remarkable and the return of a proper range of motion was quite incredible. (See picture 20 hours post trauma).

He returned to competition in two weeks and two weeks after that he played in a premierships winning team. His gratitude was unbounding.

I do not know of any other treatment that could have allowed the recovery to be as speedy and complete as it was in this case. This is an example of having knowledge of the technique handed down from Tom Bowen.

We will all have incidents in our life as a practitioner where the Bowen technique has benefited recipients in great ways. It is wonderful to be able to live in the present, but occasionally it is nice to look back

into the past and be grateful for the opportunity to utilize the work of Tom Bowen.

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Pictured is the injured ankle of the Rugby League player, twenty hours hours after the injury occurred.



Inflammation is reduced markedly with bruising already appearing.