

## BEACH THERAPY

Refreshing, Stimulating & Free!

*Written by Jim Gabriel, LMT, SET, NMT, BA*

Imagine, Lido Beach, Sarasota, mid-January, 1980, 4:30 P.M., 63 degrees Fahrenheit. It is an overcast, cold and windy day for this usually warm Florida town. The water temperature is a sharp 59 degrees. A young man exits a blue sedan on the North Lido parking lot, leaving one key in the ignition, car running, doors locked and the heater on full blast.

Barefoot, he runs across the cold sand wearing only a bathing suit. His beach towel is draped like a poncho to break the chilly wind. He reaches the glassy waters edge. "I must do this and I will! This is what I have been conditioning myself for since the summer." His job as an orderly requires lifting men. Back strains, and past elbow and whiplash injuries routinely flare up.

He runs into the water, coldest of the year, no one is even walking on the beach. The water is up to his hips. "Just dive in!" he thinks, as he dives in. The cold water hits, feeling like icy gravel. The chill makes him squirm and thrash under the water like a grub on dry ice. He surfaces in seconds as the chill becomes tolerable....and then the warming tingles begin. A cranial rush starts and then becomes a glow that radiates from stem to stern, from head to toe. His neck adjusts into place and the low back pain melts away. He sighs deeply and floats for another two minutes. He is relieved of stress, pain and joint inflammation. "No extra charge."

A moment later, the exhilarating heat begins to lessen and it is time to leave before the cold chill returns. All totaled, the time elapsed, 3-4 minutes in the water. He jogs back to the car, by now his body a fiery rose red, flush with circulatory heat and concentrated, oxygenated blood. The towel is wrapped around his head



and shoulders, but there are no goose bumps! The key from the bathing suit pocket unlocks the door. Awaiting is a dry towel in the toasty car. The young man is feeling no discomfort, is refreshed and ready for night school after a day of strenuous duty at the nursing home.

This was my personal introduction to hydrotherapy during my training to become a Neuromuscular Massage Therapist. I loved the beach for pure enjoyment and came to feel complete gratitude for its health giving properties. There is nothing like it: the music of the waves, birds and human laughter, beautiful vistas, the awe inspiring sunrise and the glorious sunset, and of course, the healing waters. It is a gift to each of us. Let us show our appreciation by preserving the beach for ourselves, our health and that of future generations.

*After twenty five years of pioneering Neuromuscular Therapy in Atlanta, Jim Gabriel and his wife, Becky happily returned to Sarasota to open the Gabriel Center for Massage Therapy. As an accomplished public speaker, he loves to share his experience and perspective on holistic pain management.*