

The swimming teacher demonstrates what a layman can hardly believe: The arms crossed behind the head as a type of pillow, the knees drawn up while the soles of the feet are touching. He lies like a rigid plank. Lazily drifting like a water lily on a pond, proving that people do float.

Naturally, the demonstrator Rainer Bolle realises that not everybody immediately believes what the eye sees. Therefore: copy it and do not analyse it for too long. It is difficult to suppress the »fear«.

Rainer Bolle, together with his wife Doris, has discovered a market gap, which is represented by non-swimmers, of which there are several millions. Somehow they missed the boat. Very often this fear, developed in early childhood, was created by a little mishap: it could be a girl who was carelessly pushed into the water, a young man who was made fun of in the forces, problem cases (at least in one's own opinion) who have never had a chance to learn swimming in a relaxed atmosphere.

According to Bolle there is only one problem case amongst 1000. And to prove this he is actively advertising the fact. His confidence is backed up by a guarantee and this he fulfils »one hundred percent«. Whoever comes to his swimming school will be able to master the technique and his/her body control after one week. The rest is only practise. Whatever happens: Bolles are there to await you during your next holiday.

His idea is based on a tiny secret which is called »water familiarity«. He strengthens the feeling in everybody »that nobody can actually go under«. After only one hour one is instructed to cross the pool underneath the surface of the water for as long as one can hold one's breath and if possible even with a little leg movement.

And believe it or not: one does not sink to the bottom. A nearly indescribable experience.

However that is only the beginning because after approx. 2 days of high spirits on the third day the disillusionment starts. The act of swimming on top of the water (head high, stomach relaxed etc.), the co-ordination and especially the individual movements can cause a state of panic to those who look for water confidence.

During the Tuesday, depressions emerge and the old fears return. One breathes incorrectly, or swallows water and the craving for survival increases. What should one do in a world with all its limitations? Especially as a non-swimmer, which is no fun either.

The unsure and lonely ones are now drawn together. These types of pressures make everybody like conspirators. It is difficult to convince them that they will learn to swim.

One can hardly believe it. But: would Bolle still be in business?

He smiles, repeats his story and is still very sure. He maintains that his students are not really in a position to know their ability. Not at this stage, anyway — »you have to leave that to me.«

And he adds cheerfully that they are proceeding to the deep water the next day.

The break-through comes on Wednesday. It is unbelievable but thinking is not allowed. The subconscious seems to take over the decisive controls. Barriers are broken down, one forgets everything and it starts to get easier. By lunch time of the big day the »other shore« is reached. Like an Olympic winner one reaches for the rope: 22 feet (7,5 m) with 16 strokes.

Rainer Bolle always »wins«. At least there is nobody left by Saturday who falls behind. Since the average age is nearly 60 years this is yet another proof of his method.

The lady from Palatinate — early seventies — embraces him. She has been widowed for about one year and wanted to learn to swim. People, she determinately remarks, must be able to keep above water, just in case.

The swimming school of Rainer and Doris Bolle cannot be praised enough. To realise in one week what was basically already abandoned has an appeal that really snowballs.

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In the pool at Bolles

At the beginning there are generally two things which one experiences: Anxiety and fear, and there comes the inevitable inclination to abandon the plan (I could never do it). Paralysis hits nearly all the senses. A bundle of nerves is kneeling at the edge of the pool and ponders about the fact: Will I float or sink . . .