

IYANW Update

Iyengar Yoga Association of the Northwest

November 2007

www.dongura.com/iyanw

Current IYANW Officers:

Pat Musburger - President

Tonya Garreaud - Vice President

Nina Pileggi - Treasurer

Paul Cheek - Membership Chair

Don Gura - Communications Chair

Judy Landecker - Scholarship Chair

Jennifer Shonk - Secretary

Upcoming Workshops

IYANW encourages members to send announcements of upcoming workshops being offered by certified Iyengar Yoga teachers.

Sunset Yoga Center – Portland, OR

www.sunsetyoga.com

Janet MacLeod

April 4-6, 2008

Yoga Northwest – Bellingham, WA

www.yoganorthwest.com

Dean Lerner

Feb. 22-24, 2008

Joan White

Oct. 31-Nov. 2, 2008

Julie Lawrence Yoga Center – Portland, OR

www.jlyc.com

Julie Lawrence

Candlelight Restorative Workshops

Dec. 17-18

Laurie Blakeney

Jan. 4-6, 2008

Gloria Goldberg

May 16-18, 2008

Boise Yoga Center – Boise, ID

www.boiseyogacenter.com

Yoga in the Yucatan with Vickie & Jerry

March 6-15, 2008

Continued on back page

A Note from the President: Teachers and Teaching

Pat Musburger

B.K.S. Iyengar is noted for saying "A good teacher is better than a good book, but a good book is better than a bad teacher." To manage both those circumstances he wrote a number of good books and trained a multitude of good teachers. I have been told that, years ago, in classes at the institute in Pune, when Mr. Iyengar would give an instruction that differed from what was written in *Light on Yoga*, students might call it to his attention. His response would be "Dead book!" Then, perhaps in the same class, they would ask about a movement in a pose and he would bellow "Haven't you read my book?" Good teachers can be unpredictable.

The tradition of *Parampara*—passing knowledge from teacher to student who then becomes teacher—runs deep in Iyengar Yoga. We are the beneficiaries. Teaching is considered an art to us and we are blessed with many fine artists.

In this edition, one IYANW scholarship recipient shares her experience with a gifted teacher. As she is guided into deeper study she discovers new freedom. One of our most experienced teachers, Vickie Aldridge, recounts the changing impressions that she experienced in her years of study with the Iyengars. And we include some of Guruji's thoughts on the characteristics of a good teacher. More than likely you will recognize many of them in your teachers.

Whether we are in class with our favorite teacher or consulting that not so "dead" book, as Iyengar students we know that knowledge brings freedom once we are able to apply it to ourselves. Good teachers guide us in our search and sometimes we don't even realize it until we get there. ■

Namaste,



Guruji Answers Queries on Teachers and Teaching

Excerpts from articles in *Yoga Rahasya Special Edition Volume A*

There are three types of teachers explained in our scriptures...They are compared to the mother cat, mother monkey and fish. Mother cat catches the kitten with the mouth and carries it wherever it goes. The baby monkey sticks to the mother and lastly the fish, having no lids the eye balls are ever alert and attentive...

Some teachers forcefully make the students work like the mother cat, some make them dependent like the baby monkey holding on the mother. The third group of teachers makes the pupils keep their eyes and ears wide open so that they can observe the teacher... In addition to these I want to add one more quality in a teacher. The teacher should be filtering and purifying his *sadhana* to guide the pupil to do, redo, learn, unlearn and learn so that perfection is touched by both...

Continued on page 3

Coming Next Issue: *Personal Yoga Practice*

Let us hear from you. Send articles or news of assessment results, studio workshops and other happenings, recommended resources and pictures to don@dongura.com or yogagirl@hevanet.com Deadline is April 30, 2008

An Hour with Geeta Iyengar:

Vickie Aldridge

Over the years, as I have come in contact with the Iyengars and seen the adoration given to them by many of their students, I remember being somewhat puzzled that these Americans would bow down and touch their feet. To someone raised in a Christian Baptist home, this is a very foreign show of respect that borders on idolatry. I remember thinking that I would never be compelled to do it, no matter how much I respect the teachings of an Iyengar.

I first saw B.K.S. Iyengar at the American Convention held at Harvard University in 1987. I must admit that I followed him and his entourage around the campus for a bit of time, in awe of the opportunity. The very next day he saw me in Trikonasana and took pity on my neck, which had suffered two whiplash injuries by then. He called everyone in class around to look at my discomfort and made it clear that until my chest and thoracic spine were able to open and move, I should keep my head centered on my chest without turning it up. I remember feeling seen and cared for. If I wasn't a convert by then, that cinched the deal. I had become a devotee to the Iyengar method, if not to the man himself. I continued to go to every convention and even to Pune, as I learned to face my fear of being in his presence.



Sunita Parthasarathy, Vickie Aldridge and Geeta Iyengar

Ten years later I was one of 50 women in the world fortunate enough to be selected to participate in the Women's Intensive held at the Iyengar Institute in Pune, India. Watching Geeta teach us with so much understanding and compassion touched my very soul. She was so present with each of us, and our individual problems. Of course, there was the trademark yelling, and short tempers that the Iyengars are famous for, but in spite of that I felt they had a real desire to help us learn and take the knowledge back home. It was clear that they were simply trying to keep us sharp and aware so that we didn't waste our time or theirs.

Toward the end of this 3-week intensive, we had ceremonies and presented Geeta with gifts, I found myself with tears in my eyes, and willing to bow at this woman's feet. I had recently lost my mother and Geeta had become a Yoga Mother figure for me. How amazing that this born-again Christian girl had come to this place!

I studied at the Institute this past January, and while there I tried to keep a low profile in some respects, as I think that the Iyengars must get very tired of all of us being there in their space. So the whole month went by and I had one simple exchange of words with Geeta about a problem I had been having with my shoulder.

At the convention in Las Vegas this last May, I was able to spend an hour with Geeta and her sister Sunita. I was rooming with my good friend, Gail Ackerman, who is the chairperson of the newsletter, *Yoga Samachar*. She was scheduled to have an interview with Geeta on the first day of the conference. As it turned out, Gail's partner for the interview wasn't able to go, so Gail asked me if I would like to join her. "Oh yes, I would definitely LOVE to join her!" This statement causes me to smile now, as it brings up something Geeta said many times during the convention, we Americans seem to LOVE many things; we use the word a lot.

Before meeting with Geeta, Gail and I had been looking at her prepared questions in our room. We unknowingly left them there as we went off to find Geeta's room. We were greeted at the door by a sweet and smiling Sunita who we chatted with for a bit. When Geeta entered and Gail prepared to begin with the questions, she discovered that they weren't in her notebook. I quickly sprinted off to our hotel room a few buildings away to retrieve them, came back a little heated and revved up, but trying to play it cool, and the interview proceeded. This interview can be read in two installments of *Yoga Samachar*.

My impressions...Geeta's hands look like they should be playing a musical instrument, they are so expressive. Geeta's smile is so warm and inviting, yet her penetrating eyes seem to be able to look into your soul; it is her generosity of spirit that made me feel accepted and connected. Her girlish laughter is infectious and puts one at ease. She was so gracious and generous with her time and thoughtful in her answers. This personal time with Geeta and Sunita was over in one short hour, but will be treasured for a lifetime, and yes, I did bow to her as I left with Namaskar hands, and resisted the urge to give her a big hug, which was what I really wanted to do. ■

Scholarships Await You

IYANW offers scholarships to members to support yoga training. We are looking for a few good yogis who would like a little financial support to further their enlightenment.

You need not be a teacher to apply. Scholarships are given twice a year to members of our community who have shown a commitment to Iyengar yoga through practice, study, and service. The monies can be used for any expenses related to your yoga. You could use it for weekly classes, special workshops, assessment, or specialized training. Deadline for the next scholarships is December 31. Go to the website to read more about it and to download an application.

Welcome a new studio to the Northwest:

8 Petals Yoga

Congratulations to owners and certified teachers Maria Bacher, Cat Enright-Down and Elizabeth Kerwin.

8 Petals Yoga
1317 Commercial Street
Bellingham, WA
360-920-5297

Julie Lawrence Yoga Center—Teacher Training Commentary

Kisa Davison

January, 2007 was not only the beginning of a new year, but the month marked a new chapter in my life as a student of yoga. For six weekends, from January until June, I studied yoga with 29 other students under the direction of Julie Lawrence at the Julie Lawrence Yoga Center in Portland, OR. The intention of the training was to guide us to a deeper practice, as students, teachers, and teachers-to-be. The requirements for study, reading, practice, and *svadhyaya* were expected. I found it a welcome task to make a list and check off my “things to do”. The biggest challenge, however, was to *not do*. We were asked to let go and open up to the experience. And when I was finally able to do this, what I found was sublime.

There is a story about a sculptor who sets aside a disgruntled and resistant block of marble in favor of another stone that welcomes the carvings of the master. In the end, the stone that was free of expectation, resistance, and desire was made into a beautiful work of art. If we consider this stone’s intention, we find that the stone was not only looking inward at the control of self. Instead, the stone surrendered to the sculptor, through devotion to the sculptor and his passion and talent.

Through my study with Julie, I found myself in a struggle with this concept of surrender. The checklists of homework, asanas to practice, and anatomical details to memorize drove me to *accomplish*. But, at the end of each homework assignment, Julie asked us to read and consider a selection of yamas and niyamas. The questions she posed could not be answered “correctly”. Instead, they had to be answered *truthfully*. It was this practice each month that slowly transformed my understanding of devotion. More

Guruji Answers Queries on Teachers and Teaching continued from cover

To be yoga teacher is very difficult. It can be both a blessing and a curse. It depends on how one looks at it—a positive or a negative outlook. The positive outlook will be rewarding. The negative attitude will be frustrating and stunt the growth of the teacher. If one is not growing as a teacher it is self defeating. We as teachers have to grow tremendously in stature and outlook if we are to remain as sincere teachers working from the bottom of our hearts...

Congratulations to our New Teachers!

Results from the 2007 IYNAUS Assessments are in. All the hard work and dedication paid off for these teachers.

Intermediate Junior I:

Tonya Garreaud
Don Gura

Teacher in Training:

Julie Burtis
George Kindl
Meg Sutton
Denise Weeks



Julie Lawrence does *Salamba Sirsasana* on the equator.

than just a sense of duty, obedience, or selfless discipline, devotion is an act of surrender.

As Julie guided us from the beginning in exploring pranayama, this newly transformed concept of devotion was deepened. We were asked to practice in the method that we learned each session for 20 minutes per day, six days per week. I struggled to stay awake each morning as the warmth of my bed beckoned on those cold, dark mornings. In the beginning, I fell asleep, I made grocery lists, and I cuddled with my children. Eventually, the practice became more natural. When the distractions bubbled, I brought my attention back to my breath. And finally, one day, I surrendered to the practice. That morning, as I crawled onto my mat and I whispered a prayer. “Let all beings have happiness and the causes for happiness. Let them be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.” Then, I covered my eyes and I surrendered. Twenty minutes later, the bell chimed and I bowed my head again in devotion to the practice that touched my heart.

There is God in us all. When we surrender our fear, worry, and pursuit, we bow our heads in devotion to the God in everyone. It is then that we are able to receive fully the gift of peace and bliss.

I bow my head to Julie, her teachers, and my fellow students. I am grateful to the IYANW Scholarship Committee whose scholarship allowed me to participate in this training. Thank you all for guiding me as I write this new chapter in my study of yoga. I am honored to receive your light. ■

Besides being chaste and calm which come out of integrity and character he should be candid, clever, confident, challenging, cautious, constructive, courageous, conscious, committed and critical. These attributes must go hand in hand with his caring and daring outlook which brings cheer to the student boosting their morale.

My advice to the teachers is that they should involve themselves not only in the art of doing but be totally involved with the students who come and seek spiritual food. ■

“The breath must come first and be steady, the first violin in the orchestra. It is the student’s job to create the music of the first violin and then add the other pieces of the orchestra when the time is right. Listen, prepare, and don’t be hasty.” – Prashant Iyengar

The Northwest Yogi Profile

Earlier this year we sent out a survey through email. We asked members about their practice, which poses they find challenging; and took the opportunity to do a little recruiting for committee and board positions. For fun we wanted to share some of the information we gathered. About one third of our members responded, which really isn't too bad. Like TV ratings or political polls, each person represents more than one person.

Of the respondents 76% were teachers (not necessarily certified Iyengar but teaching), 26% had studied in Pune, 39% had a regular Pranayama practice, and the average length of study for respondents was 12.8 years. We see from this profile that we are an experienced bunch of serious yogis.

When asked about the pose that they most enjoyed practicing the responses covered most of *Light on Yoga*. But standing poses and inversions were by far the most popular. Standing poses were chosen for their centering effect and the sense of vibrancy that they bring. Inversions were favored for their energy and their sense of accomplishment. Here are a few of your comments:

No matter how many times I do it, I still love Trikonasana.

Half moon pose—it's a great stretch of my crooked back.

Sarvangasana feels stable, soothing, calming.

Headstand. I enjoy knowing I can invert and do the pose.

Adho Mukha Svanasana. It comes easy at any time of your life, and changes a bit each time you do the asana.

On any given day I will find asanas I am in sync with. Something I need that makes me feel wonderful.

Thanks to all who participated—more tidbits next time.

"Let go of old ideas and habits. Stay aware and fresh." – Geeta Iyengar

Upcoming Workshops - Continued from cover

Hailey Yoga Center – Hailey, ID

Vickie Aldridge
Restorative weekend
January 25 - 27, 2008

Tree House Iyengar Yoga – Seattle, WA

www.thiyoga.com

Janet MacLeod
Feb. 15–17



Nina Pileggi, Paul, and Janet MacLeod during their visit to Sunset Yoga.



William Prella works to put the finishing touches on silent auction items at Yoga Northwest in Bellingham. The studio threw a party to celebrate 20 years of business and announce their move to a new studio space.



Resting after the party at Yoga Northwest.

"We all have to practice in such a way that we compare and learn for ourselves." – Geeta Iyengar

Let us hear from you

Membership:
iyanw@iynaus.org

Newsletter:
don@dongura.com

General Information:
pmsburger@comcast.net



Iyengar Yoga Association of the Northwest

2552 14th Ave W #402
Seattle WA 98119

