

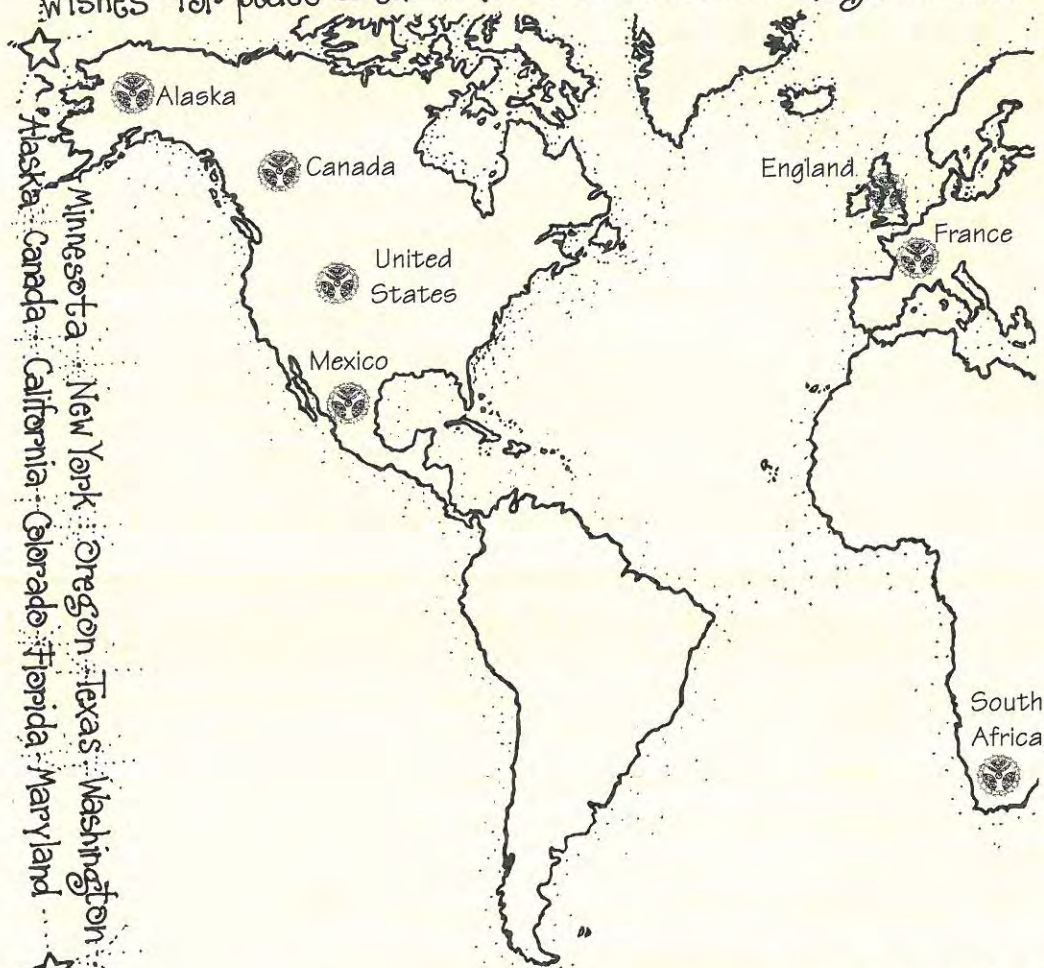


VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

Unit 592, 185 - 911 Yates St.

Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

wishes for peace on earth from the Victoria Yoga Centre



wishes for peace on earth from the Victoria Yoga Centre

Associations are like guardians, not parents.
Association is to guide others – not supreme.
Association is to cement people,
and not meant for friction.
— B.K.S. Iyengar

Give *the* Gift *of* Yoga

Your Victoria Yoga Centre membership expires on **December 31, 2000**. When you renew your membership, give someone you love the gift of Yoga — with a membership of their own. Membership to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society provides:

- Subscription to the newsletter
- Voting privileges at the annual general meeting
- Discounts for Victoria Yoga Centre workshops
- Support for Victoria Yoga Centre activities and workshops
- Support for workshops given by guest teachers

Thank you for your continued support of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Connie Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.

Editor: Neil McKinlay

Newsletter Committee: Gwynneth Powell, Lauren Cox,
Caren Liedtke, Greg Sly, Shirley Daventry French

Layout & Production: Marion Stoodley- Page Perfect
Design & Type

Cover Drawing: Lauren Cox

Photography: Robin Cantor, Ty Chandler, Linda Benn,

Typing: Caren Liedtke, Nancy Poole

Advertising: Carole Miller

Distribution: Karen De Lisle

Membership/Mailing List: Connie Barker

Printing: Hillside Printing & Copy Centre

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA or visit our website at www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca

Deadline for next issue: January 15, 2001

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any of our material, except that copyrighted by the author or artists. When reprinting, please credit this Newsletter and send us two copies of the publication containing our material. Copyright material is only available with written permission.



CONTENTS:

REFLECTIONS

Shirley Daventry French p. 4

UNDER THE LIGHT OF MY FATHER

Geeta Iyengar p. 9

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Leslie Hogya p. 14

THINGS MUST HAVE A PURPOSE

Ingelise Nherlan p. 15

LIGHT ON CERTIFICATION: A VIEW FROM THE MAT

Ann Kilbertus p. 18

JUNIOR INTERMEDIATE ASSESSMENT SYLLABUS

..... p. 20

REFLECTIONS ON A JEDI MOMENT

Ty Chandler p. 21

THE JOURNEY HAS BEGUN

Lauren Cox p. 22

COMMENTARY ON CO-ORGANIZING

Robin Cantor p. 25

AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY

Corrine Lowen p. 28

ASSESSMENT 2000

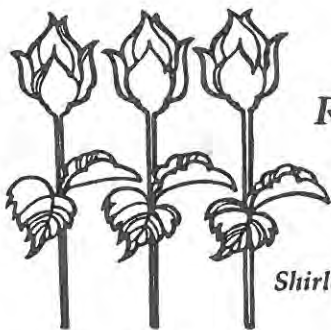
Marlene Linda Miller p. 29

A VOLUNTEER STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Gwynneth Powell p. 31

JUNIOR INTERMEDIATE ASSESSMENT

Linda Benn p. 33



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

In the early seventies, before Radha House Victoria had come into existence, I used to organise workshops and other events for Swami Radha. One Friday evening I arranged for her to give a talk at my home to introduce local yoga students to some of the philosophical teachings of yoga. I had taken great pains to spread the word that this was happening. On the day of her arrival I busied myself getting the house ready and preparing food and refreshment. I was eager and excited. And then the doubts began. I live thirty minutes from downtown which to someone from a big city is nothing, but Victorians view anything more than ten minutes as "all the way out there". What would I do if hardly anyone came?



Later, I heard many stories from Swami Radha, illustrating the futility and danger of getting caught up in this numbers game, but this understanding was yet to come. At that time I still felt that my prestige in Swami Radha's eyes would be enhanced if many people came. Also I was so enthusiastic about my discovery of yoga and its teachings that I wanted everyone to know about them.

I need not have worried. So many people came that we were all crammed into my living and dining rooms for

a wonderful informal talk from this remarkable teacher. Afterwards I served refreshments and the house was abuzz with lively conversation, questions, ideas. Swami Radha was very gracious and generous with her time, and the evening was obviously a great success. Swami Radha was staying at my home, and when everyone had left I was anticipating some compliments on my efforts. What happened was this. Derek and Swami Padmananda, who had accompanied Swami Radha to Victoria, disappeared somewhere, and Swami Radha and I were alone. Instead of the pat on the back I was expecting, she commented on my oversight in not putting out any tapes, books or brochures promoting her work. At the last minute Padmananda had to scramble to make up for this omission. Next time, Swami Radha admonished me, take care of that task.

One thing I had not done, and that was what she chose to comment on. I was taken aback. It's a long time ago now and I don't remember what I said or did next, nor what she said or did next. I do remember struggling with my emotions. But I have never forgotten this and have been attentive to such details ever since, making sure that the work is propagated and perpetuated by all possible means. Swami Radha embodied the spirit of karma yoga and expected nothing less from those who studied with her.

She was right. I had not thought ahead to the next step. Her talk had raised many questions. Where do we go from here? How could we take the ideas we had heard and put them into practice in our lives? Having taken a small step on the spiritual path how do we keep going? For some people perhaps this was the first time they had even considered the existence of a spiritual path. How could they explore this possibility further? As far as it went, I had done a good job; but it had not gone far enough.

I am fortunate. I met Swami Radha shortly after taking my first yoga class, when she came to Victoria to give a series of talks on yoga philosophy. Impressed with this woman and intrigued by what she was saying, I wanted

to learn more about the Eastern spiritual teachings. They had a ring of good sound common sense and justice. This interest led me to Yasodhara Ashram for periods of study.

At the heart of Swami Radha's teaching lies the concept of selfless service. *Selfless service will make you divine*. This refrain vibrated throughout the ashram where a small handful of residents did an incredible amount of work of all kinds: farming, writing, building, publishing, gardening, editing, cooking, studying, housekeeping, teaching. Sometimes they had to go outside of the ashram into the community and take a job to bring money into the ashram and ensure its survival. Most of these people were trained in some profession or other, and had left very remunerative jobs to live in a spiritual community where they often found themselves doing menial tasks.

All the residents there had interesting stories of how they had come to the ashram. One of them liked to tell the tale of how she had left a lucrative practice as a clinical psychologist in New York City because of a personal tragedy, and arrived at the ashram thinking they would be glad of her considerable acumen as a counsellor to help in their courses. They were glad of her services – to clean toilets! And for some time! When she had come to terms with her grief, when she had learned some humility, when she was able to feel gratitude for the ashram and its support, then they were very glad to have her join their faculty of teachers. For everyone in the ashram, all of their work, whatever its nature, was built on a foundation of personal spiritual practice.

It was on this foundation that the Victoria Yoga Centre came into being as a place where we could encourage and support each other on our personal yogic journey and at the same time propagate the teachings of yoga in our community. Following the lead of Yasodhara Ashram, selfless service lies at the heart of the Victoria Yoga Centre. When we embraced the work of B.K.S. Iyengar the tradition continued.

It was at Yasodhara Ashram that I first read *Light on Yoga*. There I took my first class in Iyengar Yoga with a teacher called Norma Hodge who had just returned from India. It was with Swami Radha's encouragement that I went to Pune to study with Mr. Iyengar and discovered another teacher who embodied the principles of selfless service. These two great Masters of Yoga shared an unwavering search for truth and unfaltering desire to point their students in the direction of the light of yoga.

Swami Radha is dead now but her teachings continue at Yasodhara Ashram and Radha Houses throughout North America and in Europe. There are also her books and tapes – far more now than existed at the time of the lecture at my house. Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar is very much a living presence still guiding his foremost disciples, his daughter Geeta and son Prashant, and devotees in all corners of the world.

Once I read a Buddhist statement that even if we carried our parents around on our backs for the rest of our lives, we would still not be able to repay the debt we owe them for giving us birth. It is the same with our spiritual teachers. As Geeta Iyengar would probably put it: *It is our duty to serve them*. The debt we owe them for giving us a spiritual birth and raising us to maturity in our practices is immeasurable. Selfless service is not a favour to them. Selfless service is a favour to ourselves, to our Higher Self. Karma yoga is not an easy path because the ego is so clever in sowing confusion between what is self-serving and what is self-realising.

In the sixties and early seventies, when a wave of enthusiasm for yoga washed over North America, this idea of selfless service was generally at the forefront of the teaching. Now, it seems to be regarded as archaic if it is given any attention at all.

Last night after yoga class, Neil McKinlay told me a story. An article of his was recently published in *Yoga Journal*.¹ On hearing about this, his father who is not a student of yoga, purchased a copy, read Neil's article and then browsed through the magazine. "It's all

advertising," he was moved to say afterward. "How do you decide what mat to use?" Obviously a man with an ironic sense of humour, but also observant. This is his impression of yoga from *Yoga Journal*. Neil and I shared a laugh over this but really it is very sad.

I understand that *Yoga Journal* has to generate funds to keep going. I understand that I am in danger of being called a 'fuddy duddy' if I remark on how much I prefer the old *Yoga Journal*, thin, unglossy and full of articles on yoga rather than how to make money teaching yoga, how to promote your centre, how to promote yourself.

It is difficult to find a balance, because without information people will not know where to go to find a yoga teacher or yoga class - or even a yoga mat. One of the reasons I was moved to start the Victoria newsletter, was because I kept hearing about events after they happened and thought it would be nice to compile information and learn about things beforehand when there was still a chance to attend. In the beginning we did attempt to generate advertising to subsidise our costs. In fact we thought we would be able to cover the entire cost in this way. If we had continued perhaps we could have done so, but the cost was too high. We were embarrassed by the claims in some of the advertisements submitted. We spent hours arguing over what should be included and whenever we decided not to include something we were accused of elitism and censorship. Eventually we came up with an advertising policy which limits our advertising to promotion of Mr. Iyengar's and Swami Radha's work with priority given to yoga centre events. Since most of this is unpaid advertising we fund this newsletter out of yoga centre general revenue.

Another of our decisions was not to charge directly for the newsletter because we feel that what is most important is to provide students with an opportunity to learn more about yoga and the teachings of our teachers. We do encourage those who read and enjoy the newsletter to take out a yoga centre membership

and in this way participate in and support this work.

While we may be out of fashion in this North American yoga market, I am delighted that the spirit of karma yoga persists in the Victoria Yoga Centre. It was very much alive at the recent Junior Intermediate assessment held in Victoria the last weekend of October 2000.

To host an assessment is a big job. You need a yoga space, equipment, timers (both human and mechanical), students who can do the postures on the syllabus, candidates, assessors, transportation, computers, clipboards, papers, marking sheets, pencils, calculators, water, billets for out-of-town students, accommodation and meals for the assessors, and more. And you need someone to coordinate all of these details.

At one of the monthly teachers' meetings Leslie Hogya, the yoga centre president, announced that Victoria was hosting this assessment. She pointed out that she would be in Thailand for the six months preceding this event. Furthermore, Linda Benn, Lauren Cox, Ann Kilbertus and Marlene Miller would all be candidates taking the assessment, and I was one of the assessors. None of us would be able to take care of the local organisation of this event. So who was going to do it? Robin Cantor and Ty Chandler volunteered to take charge and they did a splendid job of monitoring a large contingent of volunteers.

Drivers were found to meet all of the assessors at airport and ferries and take them back again when their work was done. Meals were prepared, cooked and served at my home where all assessors were staying and at Leslie's where we went for lunch. After the assessment two people drove "all the way out there" to clean my house and do laundry. Four groups of people volunteered to be students at one or more of the four sessions: two on each day. The afternoon sessions were on inversions. Those who were students on Saturday afternoon had to do five Headstands, five Shoulderstands, plus variations of these postures and



'Going Deeper'
with Shirley Daventry French

numerous Full Arm Balances. On Sunday it was a little easier with only four candidates teaching. These resolute students were indispensable to the process and gave sterling service.

Being an assessor is one of the hardest jobs I have ever done and one of the most difficult. We are on the candidates side. We want to pass all of them but, alas, this is not always possible. One never knows how well prepared a candidate is, nor how they are going to handle the stress of practising and teaching in front of the assessors. When a result is marginal we take a lot of time, reviewing the candidate's performance and marks to make certain that we are being just. We are very cognisant of the responsibility and respect we owe the candidates who have had the courage to expose themselves in this manner. This has to be weighed against the responsibility to our Guru, B.K.S. Iyengar, our respect for him and his work and the trust he has put in us.

For me this was a particularly challenging assessment

because five of my students were candidates, all of them longtime students who had taken their initial training with me. I had encouraged them to take this higher level of certification and together we had worked hard for this day. The process was complicated by the fact that one of them now lives in Hong Kong and, apart from my visit there in January and her visit here in July, most of her preparation was done by e-mail and telephone.

In cases like this where I am an assessor and one of my students is taking the assessment, my marks do not count. I have to sit back and see what the other assessors make of their practice and teaching, hoping that none of them will be penalised for things I have taught them. I thought they all did very well, and when the marks were finally tallied on Sunday evening I was able to relax because the other assessors thought so too!

All who participated in this assessment in whatever capacity did so in the spirit of karma yoga. No-one receives a penny for their work. Everyone volunteers their time in gratitude for their teachers and the teachings.

In the words of the Buddhist prayer: *May all be blessed as we are blessed.* ☸

1. *Dharma and Bob*, by Neil McKinlay published in *Yoga Journal*, December 2000.

About the Photos

With few notable exceptions, the photographs in this issue offer us glimpses of Shirley Daventry French's 'Going Deeper' workshop (November 18th and 19th). These wonderful images were taken by Ty Chandler.

Geetaji is Coming!



*Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar
will be
attending the
Canadian Iyengar
Yoga Teachers
Association
Conference*

**May 2nd - May 6th, 2001
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC**

Mark Your Calendars!



by Greg Sly

The following interview appeared the October 1993 issue of the *Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter*. The piece offers a wonderful introduction to Geeta Iyengar, daughter of B.K.S. Iyengar, one of the main inspirations

behind this community. Among other things, we are given some insight into Geeta's view of her place in what has become a family tradition. Appropriately, then, the article is entitled:

Under The Light Of My Father

The following is part of a two-hour interview given by Geeta at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, India, during the Canadian Intensive in October, 1992. It was conducted by Margo Kitchen and videotaped by Heather Malek, Calgary. This portion was transcribed and edited by Judith Minis, Edmonton, in consultation with Marlene Miller, Victoria.

Q: We've enjoyed chanting to Patanjali before the classes. I was wondering, when did you begin doing this?

A: We decided to chant these two *slokas* from the very beginning. That means that when Guruji asked us to practice yoga we started already with the recitation, but in the classes we were not doing it.

There was a big problem when we began in the Institute because, when people came as beginners, they had this idea it is a religious prayer, of concern only to the Hindus and others should not recite it. It took a little time for people to understand. Whenever we had some public programs, some celebration - for Divali or Guruji's birthday, etc.- we used to recite these *slokas*, these prayers; and then people started taking interest, asking us what it means. When it was understood, everybody accepted it. For the last four years we are doing these prayers before the classes.

Q: Could you give us the meaning?

A: You know these two *slokas* have come from the Bhojavritti. To Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* Raja Bhoja has written the commentary; just like there is the *Vyasa* commentary, similarly Bhoja has written one commentary and the *slokas* make a beginning to that. And it's so appropriate. That's why I thought we could use it, it helps people.

It says, first of all, that Lord Patanjali is considered to be the incarnation of Adishesha, the cobra, which is the seat for the Lord Vishnu, the very creator of this world. It is said that took birth three different times, giving three different sciences for people to improve themselves.

First is yoga - *yogena cittasya*. That means to purify this mind, purify the consciousness, he gave the science of yoga to us. *Padena vacam* - *pada* means word, *vacam* means the art of speech; so second he has written the commentary on grammar. That means using the words so that our way of speech is clarified, distinct and pure. To bring that purity of the *vaca*, that is, the speech, he gave grammar to us. *Malam sarirasya ca vaidyakena*: as the speech sometimes has impurities, as consciousness has impurities, similarly the body also has impurities. So thirdly, to remove these impurities of time body - *malam* means impurities, *sarira* is body - he gave us *vaidya*. He gave us *vaidya*; *vaidyakena* refers to the science of medicine. So all these three: yoga for the consciousness, the grammar for the speech and the very medicinal science for the purpose of purifying the body.

The one who has given these things to us - *yopa karottam pravanam muninam* - let me go near to him. Speaking the name of Patanjali, in the first person, it says let me bow down my head with my folded hands to that Lord who has given all these three gifts to improve humankind - *Patanjalim pranjalir anatosmi*. That is the first stanza.

Then, after knowing the work of this Lord, the second stanza says what Lord Patanjali looks like, in what form he stands before us. To do any meditation first the format has to be in front of our eyes. The first question you ask is how he looks. *Abahu purusa karam* - from hand right up to the head having the shape of a human

being. *Purusa* is human; *karam* is shape.

Sankha cakrasi dharinam. In his hand what is he holding? *Sankha* is the conch, *cakra* is the disc which he holds in his hand. *Sahasra sirasam svaetam* - on top of his head he has got a thousand hoods of the cobra because he is, as I said, the incarnation of the greatest cobra, who is the seat of the Lord Vishnu. *Sahasra* is thousand, *sirasam* is head, *svetam* means white. *Pranamani Patanjali* - I bow down to that Patanjali.

The first stanza is regarding the work that he has done, what he has given to us; and the second one is about the form of the Lord, how he looks, as I explained. And its so appropriate, the question of religion does not arise at all because whatever is said is for everyone, for all human beings everywhere on this earth.

Q: By chanting this at the beginning of class does it help students focus on the deeper meaning of the *asanas*?

A: Of course, gradually it takes - the imprints have to go gradually; one cannot change the old imprints all of a sudden: the new imprints have to come to wash out the old ones. So naturally it takes time. Yet it brings the change. The very beginning is made when that

feeling of sanctification comes from inside, with the feeling of surrendering oneself, because nothing can be learned in this world unless you are humble, unless you have the humility to learn. So the moment you think of the Lord, at the beginning of doing a practice, you know that you are very small in front of that greatest soul. And once that is understood then the other problems which always arise while practicing, mainly concerned with the ego, will be affected. You know that you are coming down to learn something. And you can't learn anything unless you come down; if you think you are on the top and you know everything, then you are not a learner at all. In that sense, the chanting helps.

Q: Your book, *Yoga, a Gem for Women* is dedicated to your mother. She was a very saintly woman and she practised the *sadhana* of a householder. Is this yoga as valid as the yoga practised by you and your father?

A: The book is definitely dedicated to my mother, but I haven't written in the book that she was a *yogini*. Neither has she herself claimed that she was, but she had certain characteristics of a *yogini* in her. She was always dedicated to the work she was doing. I think we learned a great lot from her. Even this morning I was thinking that to a great extent we learned from her *pratipaksha bhavana*, of which *yama* and *niyama* is spoken, about how we have to think of the opposite of what we might feel like doing.

When we were young, suppose if somebody really troubled or bothered us, we used to feel why not fight for our right. But she used to tell us to be the other way; she said, Keep quiet, then they themselves will understand their mistake; why should we go and fight with them? I think that was a *pratipaksha bhavana* for her. So we used to be quiet when the other party was shouting for no reason; if we also started talking back, it would be just a quarrel. In that she has taught lots of things to us.

She was a dedicated person, always



Going into Uttitha Trikonasana

dutiful as far as the household was concerned. Whoever came, whether they were guests or we children as we were very small at that time - she did her duty with complete inner dedication and sacrifice.

Now the problem always is that we think there are different, distinct types of yoga. And that's why we think that this kind of thing, when it is done, is not yoga. But yoga has all pieces in it, whether it is the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali or what Guruji teaches; needs this kind of sacrifice; it needs the dedication; it needs the sense of duty. So there is a *karma*, there is a *jnana*, there is a *bhakti* - a devotion - in it; nothing can be done without that knowledge. You should know for what purpose you are doing something, whether it is leading you exactly to that end you want to reach. So a person who does even a household duty with that balanced mind, then he becomes a *yogi*. She had that balanced mind.

We all may be performing our duty, but how dedicated are we, that's one thing. How far do we remain in a balanced state; how much do we have the emotional balance within; how many times do we have that feeling of acceptance, whether it's a gain or loss. As a householder she has seen the poverty of earlier time and she has seen even that richness later when everything was available. But in both stages she kept herself in the same equal attitude of mind. She couldn't be called *yogini* unless she had reached that state, and she had.

I tell you, even at the time of death she had that balanced mind. Even now after so many years - 19 or 20 years - I remember everything, the way she left her body with so much calmness, such quietness. There was not a bit of feeling of attachment, that now I'm going to leave you people and what's going to happen? No she just calmly said, Look after everything, and I am going. And she left; she closed her eyes in a very calm and quiet manner. This kind of death cannot come to those who are, what you call, disturbed.

I think sometimes that I must put it in writing. You know what I told her just five or six hours before her death? I said, I haven't seen a death directly as such; I mean, you see that person after they are dead, but I've never seen a person dying. The night before in the

same hospital I saw a man dying and how he was gasping for breath and how much disturbance this person had - everything I saw I related to my mother. I never knew that just hours after seeing this death I was going to see the death of my own mother, which would give me just the opposite picture of it. And she really died very peacefully, very quietly, in a very neat manner; she folded her legs, she folded her arms, and she died.

The validity is not for us to decide, remember. The person who is dedicated can be called a *yogi*. This stands for Guruji also. If you think his *yogasana*, *pranayama*, etc., is valid, it is because he is completely devoted, completely dedicated; he is unified, with that which he is doing; and that's why that becomes a yoga practice.

Q: Many women live in the shadows of the men in their lives. Despite a very powerful father you seem very fulfilled within yourself. Can you offer any help to those who are searching for an identity, and I'm not speaking of the Women's Liberation Movement - this is above that.

A: You see, there is no question of dependence and independence: they are relative words. You might be with your father, you might be with your husband. The feeling of remaining in their shadows comes when there is a weakness in our own selves. This is very much a relative word, that we are depending on somebody or we are independent of them. When it is about a society, when it is about a family structure, we are dependent. We cannot say that we are absolutely independent. And we should not be either because it's a family, it's a society. You live for others, too, as you live for yourself.

But when you demarcate dependence and independence, I agree that dependence comes when your nature externalizes you, in the sense that you remain dependent on somebody when the need is external to you. When you internalize yourself when you look internally you are not dependent on anybody. The more you look outside to seek a sort of support, you are farther from being one, from being yourself within. And that's why you want to depend on

somebody. On the other side, when you look within, go deeper inside, you know that that support which you want is already existing within you. You have it. In fact, it is not a support, it is you yourself who are there. And if that is understood, this question need not arise.

How the mind raises these questions, I'll tell you. You think you are dependent when you have external needs. It could be something like the need for monetary help, emotional support, or psychological support, etc. Whenever fear comes, you think you need somebody to take away your fear, somebody to soothe your feeling of isolation, etc. But if you look deep inside you recognize that you are definitely an isolated person. You are one unit. So that again stands in relationship to that which we feel: the more you remain attached exteriorly, remain with the exterior world, the more you want support, you want to be dependent on somebody. Otherwise you can be independent.

Even if it comes to the question of what you call Womens Lib, that is a fancy idea, you understand? We are liberated: how far do we want to be liberated? We have to understand that. What do you mean by liberation? You are already liberated if you know what you are doing, how you are doing it for yourself. If that is known, you are not then dependent on somebody else.

And as I replied to you previously, even if you do your duty for somebody, when you offer it to them, you are doing it to cleanse yourself. When you do something for your family, if you think there is dependence, it is just a duty.

In fact, you should do that to cleanse yourself, what Patanjali calls as *citta prasadana*. The very cleansing of the mind comes in that process of helping others, of doing duty for others. So if you do it only as a duty, you are showing that your mind is externalized. But the same duty, though you have done for the others physically, from outside, when you look inside, you know that you did it for your own sake. If that feeling comes, then I don't think this question of dependence has to arise.

So even if you think I am dependent on my father, as though I am under his shadow, it is not bringing me any darkness. (Laughter from the audience) If that shadow is bringing some darkness then I have to worry about it; on the contrary it is giving more and more freedom, its giving more and more light. So I must consider myself fortunate. Instead of saying that I am under the shadow of my father, I would say that I come under the light of my father. (Applause from the audience). ☺

First published in the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference magazine, Toronto, August, 1993.



Adho Mukha Svanasana

Victoria YM/YWCA

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

January to June, 2001



LEVEL I

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Mon.	4:00 - 5:25pm	Jo Anna Hope
Mon.	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ann Kilbertus
Tues.	7:00 - 8:30pm	James Currie-Johnson
Wed.	9:00 - 10:25am	Lauren Cox
Wed.	6:00 - 7:25pm	Chris Lea
Thurs.	8:30 - 9:55am	Linda Benn
Thurs.	4:30 - 6:00pm	Leslie Hogya
Sun.	10:30 - 12:00pm	Ty Chandler

LEVEL II

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	10:30 - 12:00pm	Lauren Cox
Tues.	5:30 - 6:55pm	Leslie Hogya
Wed.	4:30 - 6:00pm	Chris Lea
Wed.	7:30 - 9:00pm	Ty Chandler
Fri.	9:00 - 10:25am	Linda Benn
Sat.	9:00 - 11:00am	Marlene Miller
Sun.	9:00 - 10:25am	

LEVEL III

Day	Time	Instructor
Thurs.	10:00 - 11:55am	Shirley Daventry French, Linda Benn
Thurs.	6:00 - 8:00pm	Ann Kilbertus, Leslie Hogya

LEVEL IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	5:30 - 7:25pm	Shirley Daventry French

NOON YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tues.	12:00 - 1:00pm	Wendy Boyer
Wed.	12:00 - 1:00pm	Chris Lea
Thurs.	12:00 - 1:00pm	Gwynneth Powell

GENTLE YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tues.	10:30 - 11:55pm	Robin Cantor
Tues.	4:30 - 5:25pm	Wies Pukesh

SIXTY AND BETTER

Day	Time	Instructor
Wed.	10:30 - 12:00am	Leslie Hogya
Fri.	10:30 - 12:00am	Linda Benn

SPECIAL NEEDS YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Wed.	4:30 - 5:55pm	Shirley Daventry French & Ann Kilbertus

'THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY' YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Fri.	4:45 - 6:15pm	Wendy Boyer

EARLY MORNING YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	7:00 - 8:30am	Chris Lea
Wed.	7:00 - 8:00am	Ty Chandler

YOUTH YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Sat.	9:30 - 10:30pm	Chris Lea

Registration:

At Victoria YM/YWCA, 880 Courtney St.
Register at main desk on the lower level.
Phone: 386-7511

Message from the President

by Leslie Hogya

Since my return from Thailand, I have been delighted to see and hear all that the Yoga Centre is doing and has done. The culmination of this was seeing the October Assessment Weekend run so smoothly. I want to acknowledge and thank all those who worked hard to make it all possible. A special thank you to Ty Chandler and Robin Cantor who did the bulk of organization. All the people who volunteered to be students also need to be acknowledged. It was not an easy day, beginning in Backbends and ending up with repeating Headstand and Shoulderstand four or five times with as many teachers.

The enthusiasm and warmth of our community came



Salamba Sarvangasana

shinning out at its best. Thank you all. And I want to add my congratulations to our Victoria teachers who took and passed the Junior Intermediate Assessment!

This is the time of the year to recognize all who work for the Yoga Centre. The list keeps growing. The Annual General Meeting will be held Friday January 19, 2001 at my home, 50 Cambridge Street. The Board for this past year was comprised of many new and some long time members. Rosemary Barrit was the Vice President and ended up acting in my place for almost five months when I went to Thailand. She had a lot to learn, and it was such a help to have her volunteer for this challenging position! Martha Chick took on the job of Secretary. She got us organized with binders for minutes, new files at the Y, plus she has done lots of typing for many of our activities. Connie Barker took on a newly created role of Membership Secretary. This job used to be divided up among several people, so it is a bigger responsibility and she had to overcome the problem of incompatible programs on her computer. Ted Mather continued as Treasurer, but was also out of town a lot, so Chris Lea assisted him and does most of the bill paying and deposits. A new position was filled by Britta Poison who is in charge of Publicity, and is defining and expanding this job as she learns more about us. Weis Pukesh took another challenging job and is expanding it, she is in charge of Programs. Jim Rischmiller has been on the board many years and was a Past President. He helped us get on-line this year with our own web page. Linda Benn has also been on the Board for a long time. Linda coordinates the Y program, and is Liaison to the Teachers Group and Scholarship Committee. Yvonne Kipp continues to be our representative from Cortes Island. Gwynneth Powell, while not officially on the Board, is on the Newsletter Committee and comes to the Board meetings to keep all sides informed of newsletter business.

We also have a new volunteer Rachel Ray, who is updating and expanding our web page. Thank you all for your commitment, your time, and energy.

We need you! We need you to renew your membership. We need new board members! We need someone to learn the Treasurer's job, as Ted is out of town a lot. We also need someone who has a computer and would be willing to answer emails our new web page generates.

There are many people working for the Yoga Centre that could use help. We have a fleet of volunteers on Wednesdays at Special Needs class. There is another group under Karen DeLisle who takes care of mailing out hundreds of newsletters. There are people like Ty Chandler who answer up to four and five phone messages a day from our voice mailbox, the people who take care of sales, and our library. There's the Friday Night Gathering crew, who have been more organized than ever thanks to Robin Cantor. They help set up and clean up after our gatherings.

If you love yoga and like being part of this community and would like to help out in anyway call me or leave a message for me through your yoga teacher. My name is Leslie Hogya, and as your Centre President, I can be reached at 383-6301. ☺



Victoria Yoga Centre Society

Annual General Meeting

Friday January 19th, 2001

6:00 pm Meeting

7:00 pm Potluck

At the home of
Yoga Centre President Leslie Hogya
50 Cambridge Street
Victoria BC

Please forward nominations
to Leslie at 383-6301

all, of course, are welcome

Things Must Have a Purpose

by Ingelise Nherlan

Such was the answer of a hardworking businessman when I asked him how he kept his exhausting schedule and still managed to be kind, relaxed, funny and happy. As long as things have a purpose, he said, I can handle anything.

Purposefulness as been defined as: having a vision of a desired result and persevering until the result is attained. An ability to concentrate on the task at hand; get back on track if distracted and finish what is started. Being clear not vague. Making meaningful decisions based on clear thinking and fully expecting to reap the fruits. (Do some Sutras ring a bell?)

To those of us desiring and aspiring to be yoga teachers certified in the Iyengar method there is a clear purpose: To follow the direction of the Master in whose name we choose to teach. Not only in asana practice but also in our ability to teach with pure intent and in this process to bring our own being into bloom.

Will a certificate on a wall do that? Of course not, but if it is desired and earned, then it's purpose is pure.

One might argue that certification is non-spiritual in

Sri B.K.S. Iyengar

The B.K.S. Iyengar certification mark is a registered trademark. It denotes the teacher's authenticity and commitment to the Iyengar system of Patanjali's Ashtanga yoga.

The teachers of this system are guided by the genius of the living master B.K.S. Iyengar. His understanding of the science of yoga has brought him renown for his ability to convey with accuracy the concepts of the classic tradition of Hatha Yoga.



Salamba Sirsasana

nature. Centuries ago when a handful of disciples followed a master day in and day out for a lifetime, there was hardly a need to certify. These wandering seekers (so I read) lived a life, which dictated: stay in one place and you will become attached. Carry water; chop wood; receive a meal; move on. They hardly had a wall to hang anything on. Even in 1977, when I attended my first intensive in Pune we were barely 20 students. The word intense took on new meaning. The last thing on my mind was receiving a certificate for my awakened body/mind.

The Iyengar Yoga family has now grown to cover the globe and many sincere teachers and students have never studied at the Institute; never been near the

Master teachers there. The purpose of certification is clear: To ensure *as best is possible*, an undiluted, unpolluted, ongoing quality of Iyengar's life's work, which in addition, benefits thousands of people beyond his teachers.

The certification of Junior Intermediate Levels I and II, in October 2000 in Victoria B.C. was yet another example of the depth of commitment of all who chose to be there. All who attended must have had a purpose, a deep reason for being there, since a day at the beach is infinitely more relaxing.

Shirley and Derek once again opened their home so we, whose duty was as assessors, could be made easier and more productive. Shirley offered a welcoming atmosphere and Derek joined us for dinner and cooled our overheated brains with some good storytelling. In spite of everyone's intent, we were too tired for the hot tub when we finished work late evening. Alas!

Thank you to all volunteers: the students who did yet another Sarvangasana, the timer who called a welcome 5 minutes, the drivers who shuttled us to and from ferry/airport, the cooks who gave us soul food, the good Samaritan who did a couple of timely Starbucks runs, and to all other behind-the-scene good fairies.

I honour the teachers who are giving so much of themselves and others in deciding to grow as Iyengar teachers. We all benefit from their devotion. Congratulations.

Summa Summarum:

Ignorance is voluntary misery and since we all realize that in yoga we have to know a lot to know a little, to seek Gururji's teaching, in my view is wise indeed.

Besides: to rest is to rust.

And so we all press on.

Purpose enough for me. ☯

The Victoria Yoga Centre

is pleased to announce:

An All Levels* Workshop

with

Ingelise Nherlan

February 9, 10 and 11, 2001



Ingelise is one of Canada's most experienced teachers. She was awarded a Senior Intermediate Teacher's Certificate by Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar and has studied in India many times. In addition to weekly classes, she teaches workshops throughout the country. She introduced the Iyengar method to her native Denmark and is currently instrumental in certifying new teacher's throughout Canada.

*In this workshop, Ingelise will focus upon continued refinement of techniques for consolidation in practice. For this reason, six months experience with yoga in the Iyengar tradition is necessary for those attending.

at the YM-YWCA

Friday	6:30-9 pm	\$130
Saturday	10 am-1 pm & 3 - 5 pm	\$160
Sunday	10 am-1 pm	

Fees

Yoga Centre Members
Non-Members
(includes membership)

cheques payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre

To register call Rosemary Barritt 598-2851



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcomes you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



with Jessica Sluymer

Date: Friday, Jan. 26

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

Practice from 6 to 7pm
Potluck dinner & talk follows
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Light On Certification A View From The Mat

by Ann Kilbertus

Junior Intermediate Certification...nothing to get excited about I told myself. I will just be demonstrating and teaching a few poses which I have been focusing on intensively over the last year. What is it in my mind then, that builds this low grade performance anxiety? I'm not sure I know the answer to this, but will keep on walking forward. In fact, by the end of the whole examination weekend, the anxiety had transformed into a surrender of sorts, and that is when I think any of the skills I have developed in teaching were able to come through more clearly.

The process of working towards this certificate intensified about a year ago when the syllabus was circulated. At that time, some of the Sanskrit names on the pages were foreign to me. Perhaps I had attempted some of the poses at different times, but not with any real depth of understanding.

The work began on my mat at home with *Light On Yoga* nearby. This was reinforced with the wisdom of Shirley Daventry French who brought her deeper understanding of the poses to our Level 4 class on Monday night. In addition, peer teaching opportunities at Teacher's Meetings, and later on in Monday night classes, helped with further exploration of these *asanas* which were now becoming less foreign.

In the early part of the year, a weekend workshop was held with Shirley and Ingelise Nherlan. All this input helped to consolidate and deepen my understanding as I returned to the mat, again and again. Never have I applied myself to something with such concentrated effort.

The process of certification provided an external impetus to deepen the ongoing work of practice and study. Getting a certificate, for me, was secondary to this. However, witnessing my steady work brought a

feeling of surprise, in a Winnie the Pooh kind of way: "Oh my, I really do love this subject!"

The take-home, written component of the examination, had me poring over all the *Light On* texts with amazement that after all these years, there was so much more to discover.

The two hour practice component of the exam was very demanding, however, I found that after the first ten to fifteen minutes that the asanas began to work on my mind and I could take my attention more deeply within.

And finally, the teaching component: twenty minutes in the morning and twenty minutes of inversions in the afternoon. It was here that the prayer I've heard Shirley refer to, "Please God, let me show what I know," came into my consciousness. It was a stressful situation, coupled with the fact that use of every minute was so crucial. The question period after the assessment, as well as the wrap up at day's end, (where we were asked: "If you could have done one thing differently what would it have been?"), became an opportunity to fill in the gaps of knowledge where nervousness had placed a veil.

We are very fortunate here in Victoria to have a centre of energy and community to support the process of working towards an assessment. My deepest gratitude goes to Mr. Iyengar, Geeta, and Prashant, for continuing to provide Light on the never ending depths of the subject of yoga.

I bow to Shirley Daventry French for her support, depth of teaching, and sense of fun along the way.

In addition there are many others without whom this whole process could not have happened:

A big thanks to my teaching colleagues and fellow students with whom many an hour was spent in preparation.

To the assessors who volunteered their time, energy, and understanding.

To the volunteer students who smiled up at us as they repeated *Urdvha Dhanurasana* after *Urdvha Dhanurasana*.

To the organizers, timers, cooks, billetters, drivers, and others who gave so willingly of their time and energy.

And finally to my husband Michael, who has been patiently and steadily there as yet another pile of yoga books appeared at the bedside for evening study. ☯



Sept/Oct editor Grig Sly recovers after finishing his issue. March/April editor Gwynneth Powell may be reached at gwynneth@islandnet.com

Junior Intermediate Assessment Syllabus

*This list includes a few poses of review from the Introductory I & II syllabus;
and the required asanas from Level I & II of the Junior Intermediate syllabus.*

Standing Poses:

Ardha Chandrasana
Virabhadrasana III
Parivrtta Trikonasana
Parivrtta Parsvakonasana
Parsvottanasana
Prasarita Padottanasana II (reverse namaste)
Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana I & II
Urdhva Prasarita ekapadasana
Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana

Twists:

Marichyasana III
Ardha Matsyendrasana I

Back bends:

Salabhasana
Bhujangasana
Dhanurasana
Urdhva Dhanurasana
(supported & unsupported)
Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana
(support & unsupported)
Bhekasana
Purvottanasana

Forward bends:

Janu Sirsasana
Upavistha Konasana
Paschimottanasana
Maha Mudra
Ardha Baddha Padma
Paschimottanasana
Kurmasana

Inversions:

Adho Mukha Vrksasana (hands to side & forward)
Sirsasana (eka pada, parsva)
Sarvangasana (I & II, eka pada)
Halasana

Balancings:

Lolasana
Eka Hasta Bhujasana
Dwi Hasta Bhujasana
Tolasana

Other Asanas:

Baddha Konasana
Malasana I
Paryankasana (includes Supta Virasana)
Ubhaya Padangusthasana
Urdhva Prasarita Padasana
Savasana
Supta Padangusthasana I, II, III
Padmasana
Matsyasana (in Swastikasana & Padmasana)
Akarna Dhanurasana I
Jathara Parivartanasana



Reflections on a Jedi Moment

by Ty Chandler

At a teacher's meeting in the early spring, a task was put forth to the group - who would organize the Junior Intermediate Assessment in October of 2000? I remember looking at my 'things to do' list and thinking, "Well, it's not happening until the fall, and maybe Gwynneth and I could do it together!" We had a Jedi moment. We chewed the thought. We nodded. We chose to accept the mission - Assessment 2000! A moment later, Robin put her hand up as well, and thankfully so because Gwynneth would later decide to go back east for a few months.

We organizers sat down over Vietnamese noodles with Leslie to clarify the schedule of events for the weekend. Soon, the very person who was answering all of our questions would be leaving for Thailand, but summer was coming and we could put the assessment on hold until September.

After Labour Day, Robin and I were making calls and having meetings and, despite their own workloads, Shirley, Marlene and Linda made themselves available whenever possible. And Robin's experience from being assessed was also very helpful. The countdown was on! I was beginning to feel a bit nervous. I would try to keep in mind how those going for assessment must be feeling.

A few glitches appeared - how could they not?! I was missing flight times and numbers because the phone company could not get my service hooked up in my new home. The student volunteer list was changing shape every other day and things continued to alter themselves right until the Sunday of the assessment.

I was so relieved we had a timed practice at our Monday night class because it gave me a chance to clear up some of my doubts. Is my enunciation of Sanskrit understandable? Am I giving them enough

time between poses? Which stopwatch should I use?! And how do I keep my attention on the time while watching such a beautiful and inspiring practice?

On the Friday night of the assessment, the real Timed Practice took place. During the first 15 minutes of that practice, there were many difficult balancing poses such as *Adho Mukha Vrksasana*, *Virabhadrasana III*, *Utthita Padangusthasana I and II*, *Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana*, and *Urdhva Prasrita Eka Padasana*. The energy in the room was electric. There were many shaking bodies, but beneath the nervous quivers, the tonic effects of the poses kicked in, and what eventuated were strong and mature practices that reflected years of understanding and dedication.

Throughout the weekend, the Victoria Yoga Centre community came together as cooks, drivers, timers and cleaners. There were many reliable and dedicated people whose pooled resources proved our community's capability of hosting an event such as a National Assessment. One of the main reasons it was possible to hold the assessment in Victoria was because of the abundance of Level Three and Four students.

For me, the experience was rich and inspiring and filled with moments of new learning. Moments such as listening and watching the assessing panel question the assessee after they finished their instructional segment, my personal exchange with a senior assessor on the way from the airport, observing my own teachers jump through the burning rings of fire toward their certification, the terrible beauty of donating my body to the assessment, and realizing that as a student teacher, I am looking forward to my own assessment.

Now that I have a better understanding of what is involved in organizing an event such as this, I would like to thank who gave all of themselves to the process and to extend my congratulations to those who achieved certification. I would also like to thank everyone who helped make this a successful weekend.

May the Force be with you. ☯



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
Welcomes you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



with Swami Padmananda

Date: Friday, Feb. 23

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

Practice from 6 to 7pm
Potluck dinner & talk follows
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Everyone is welcome to join us.

The Journey Has Begun

by Lauren Cox

*"It is good to have an end
to journey towards.
But it is the journey that matters
in the end."*

It was not unexpected. We were given notice years ago. Twenty-nine page booklets were distributed by Regional Reps across the country in April 1999, with a table of contents listing prerequisites, applications for Junior Intermediate I & II (which will be abbreviated to JI I/II for the remainder of this article), marking sheet instructions for the assessors, the marking sheets themselves, guidelines to the hosting community, responsibilities, reading lists, syllabus of poses for JI I/II, and on and on. May 1999 brought a revised edition. In January 2000 another package arrived with instructions on registration procedures as well as more revisions on the syllabus for JI II certification and guidelines relative to JI I & II syllabus.

Preparations began. Shirley Daventry French hosted a workshop in April for those of us on the island as well as the mainland who were eligible. Ingelise Nherlan and Leslie Hogya assisted as observers and timers. We went through the syllabus to clarify and prioritize. We set up the agenda to meet our needs.

I would not make it as an actor. I soon experienced a sense of floundering whenever we "rehearsed". Our first rehearsal being that weekend, I taught and came away feeling inadequate. I had no juice! It happened again and again. Opportunities to teach made me aware of inadequacies, of challenges unmet. I confessed to feeling weak and unsure after teaching one Monday night. I did not like this sense of looking incapable. I voiced my doubts to Shirley. I was on the wait list only, I wasn't committed. We agreed to postpone the assessment for me until the next one in Toronto. Relief! Yet somehow tinged with regret. This was short

lived - candidates cancelled. I was informed by e-mail at 10 pm on October 3.

I was next on the wait list with only three weeks to go!

Was I interested?

I swallowed, dug deep and decided to go for it.

*"Success comes from good judgement.
Good judgement comes from experience.
Experience comes from bad judgement."*

It was time to let go of the past. If experience comes from bad judgement, then I had been there and done that. And if experience brings on good judgement which leads to success, then I was on my way!

The Monday before the assessment weekend arrived, I felt happy and relieved - it was finally going to take place. Just a few more rehearsals. The nine candidates would meet together on Friday night for the timed practice. At that time we would be told which day to arrive for assessment. Five to be assessed on Saturday and the remaining four on Sunday.

As I headed off on my bike on Sunday to join Ann, Marlene and Linda, I went by a patch of borage and cheerful calendula flowers. I wheeled back and picked a bouquet to present to my friends. As I handed each of them a sprig, I cheerfully chanted, "Borage for courage!"

We brought yoga props into the chapel - our designated room to spend the day while awaiting our call. We drew lots and one by one went off to the yoga lounge to teach our poses. We coached each other, became students for each other, critiqued each other, provided support for each other and welcomed each other back with big smiles and big heart at the end of our allotted time.

I had drawn the auspicious number three. Number two had already returned to the chapel and I hurried to the lounge only to be turned back because they were not ready for me. I explained to the three that I was too

keen and was turned away. Our laughter hadn't even subsided yet when Shirley entered the room to call on "the eager beaver". The last thing I remember as I left the chapel was the boisterous cheers from the squad. What a send off!

I entered the room with a sense of confidence I hadn't had during the "rehearsals". This was the "REAL THING". Stepping forward I greeted the students with a sincere, "Good morning" and began.

I have been told that the purpose of yoga is not to feel good. The past few months provided me with obstacles that made me feel uncomfortable and confused. This is common before one begins to make changes. (Believe me, the thought of early retirement to avoid these changes comes to mind now and again!) But I do have a hard taskmistress who has learned well from her Master. In turn, she has taught me well; I've heard her lectures and her words stay in my mind. We cannot run away from ourselves and our destiny.

Shirley, you have indeed trained your students well. Yoga has provided me with the strength, stamina and courage to keep on going. My practice has sustained me and will continue to do so in future endeavors.

Thank you to all those involved for another opportunity to learn and grow. Thank you to all my family and friends. A special thank you to Guruji, whose brilliance and genius in the art of teaching is our source of inspiration.

The journey has begun. ☺

The Victoria Yoga Centre

proudly announces

www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca

everyone welcome!





*"To be in touch
with our path of
evolution, our
dharma, we
have to practice
svadhyaya, self-
study, one of
the niyamas. To
practice this we
have to learn
and give
ourselves
opportunities to
study ourselves.
Asana and
Pranayama are
the basic
foundation
practices for
this, but then
we have to
apply these
realizations to
our external
life."*

~ Felicity

The Victoria Yoga Centre

Presents

An Intermediate Level Iyengar Yoga Workshop

With

FELICITY GREEN

March 23 - 25, 2001

Friday 6:30 - 8:30pm

Saturday 10:00 - 1:00pm, 3:00 - 5:00pm

Sunday 10:00 - 1:00pm

Location: Victoria YM/YWCA

Fee: Yoga Centre Members \$150

Non-members \$180 (includes membership)

Registration: Yoga Centre members - January 15

Non-members - February 6.

Make cheque (in Canadian funds) payable to:

the Victoria Yoga Centre,

c/o Linda Benn, 698 Rockridge Place,

Victoria, B.C. V9B 6K1.

Refunds: Less 10%, given only if space can be filled.

Felicity Green is a regular visitor to Victoria. She has studied extensively and often with Mr. Iyengar in India. Swami Radha has also contributed to her personal yoga and teaching style. Trained as an Occupational Therapist, Felicity teaches yoga workshops internationally, offers teacher training and provides residential study opportunities at her Lopez Island retreat. We are fortunate to offer you this opportunity to experience Felicity's precise and compassionate teaching.

Commentary on Co-organizing

by Robin Cantor

Planning for Junior Assessment took me back to my own assessment in Winnipeg (Oct. 99). How excited and nervous (heavy on the nervous) I was! It was a bonus to be in my former hometown and on familiar ground. I was so grateful to all the behind-the-scene people who make my weekend as stress free as possible. However I was so absorbed in my own self (small s) that I wasn't aware of all the silent runners and happenings weaving about until after the weekend. Then, I was in total awe of what a remarkable job they had done.

When I took on the responsibility of co-organizing the Junior Assessment with Ty Chandler, I vowed to myself I would provide the same kind of service I was blessed with.

There was a time in another life B.Y. (Before Yoga) when I wanted to do all the work, as all the praise would come to Me (capital M). With age, experience and acquiring some wisdom, A.Y. (After Yoga) I've learned that key element to organizing is to delegate as much as possible. This gives me the freedom to oversee, trouble shoot and fill in as necessary. As well, many people can take pleasure in being of service to others.

Fortunately our yoga community is abundant with supportive members. Volunteers were happy and eager to assist in some way. Delegating was an easy task. Volunteers escorted assessors from the ferry and airport. The assessors were lovingly fed three home-cooked meals a day. All the assessors paperwork, photocopying and office supplies awaited them at the Y along with ten volunteer students and a timekeeper each day. The floors were cleaned daily and numerous attempts were made to keep the washroom stocked.



Friday evening, the candidates performed their timed *asana* practice.

I arrived at the Y early Saturday morning with my enthusiastic squirrel-like energy (a carry over from another life), darting around and bursting with excitement - not a good thing when people want to remain calm and focused.

I realized that the choice of a number of donated timers was of no use to me without the opportunity to figure out how to use them. I settled for Shirleys vibrating one. First because it sort-of worked and second, because I felt it would be less disturbing to the candidates for me to call out when their time was up.

All you had to do was remember to hold it (the vibrating timer).

Thanks to Martha Chick, I was able to quickly settle and get the task of timekeeping under control. Martha once confided to me that she too had this squirrel-like behaviour that can ruffle people's energy. Fortunately, Martha did not bring hers with her that morning. She remained calm, quiet and smiling, as most of you know her to be.

Sunday followed the same format as Saturday. Candidates drew lots again as to their order of who would teach three assigned poses for twenty minutes at a time. Their nervousness seemed to settle after a few minutes and then pick up again towards the end as they became concerned about whether they would finish in time. The assessors moved around the room taking notes and writing comments. There were times when I found myself holding my breath in anticipation. Each candidate was questioned about their teaching immediately afterwards. Finally it was all complete and everyone went home to await their results.

Shirley graciously hosted the assessors. They worked non-stop from Friday until Monday. The wonderful volunteers escorted the assessors back to the airport and ferry.

Sunday followed the same format...and everyone went home to await their results.

On Monday, two little elves arrived at Shirley's house to cleanup and do laundry. Our part was over.

Ty joins me in expressing gratitude to our superb team who put in a splendid effort to make the weekend such a smooth, flowing event. A special thank you to the five assessors who worked so many long hours throughout the weekend. And a big, hearty congratulations to all our newly certified Junior Intermediate teachers.

It has been an honour to serve. ☯

Coming June 1 – 3, 2001

Salt Spring Retreat

**Think about coming.
Treat yourself to a weekend
of fun, fellowship, yoga,
quiet, delicious food.**



*Details next issue.
Reserve this weekend on
your calendar!*

Volunteers For The Junior Intermediate Assessment Weekend

October 27th - October 29th, 2000,
Victoria, BC

Sine qua non –
Without whom nothing

Assessors

Shirley Daventry French
Marlene Mawhinney
Marie-Andree Morin
Mahyar Raz-Khorzad
Ingelise Nherlan

Event Coordinators

Robin Cantor
Ty Chandler
Li Milne
Ty Chandler
Coreen Lowen
Celeste Steindl

Chefs

Weis Pukesh
Jan Clarke
Gwynneth Powell
Leslie Hoyga
Robin Cantor

Timekeepers

Martha Chick
Robin Cantor

Billeting

Li Milne

Elves

Karen Dayton
Ty Chandler

Students who volunteered their bodies to science:

Jan Clarke
James Currie Johnson
Gwynneth Powell
Chris Lea
Pip van Nispen
Louie Etting
Betsy Williamson
Jeanette Merryfield
Leanne Mogerman
Nancy Searrie
Weis Pukesh
Doug Hart
Coreen Lowen
Julie Stauffer
Connie Barker
Melissa Worth
Rosemary Barret
Lindsay Schroeder
Celeste Mallet
Keiko Alkire
Ted Mather
Martha Chick
Ty Chandler

Every effort has been made to ensure this listing is complete. For any who might have been missed we offer our apologies and, of course, our appreciations.



An Unusual Opportunity

by Corrine Lowen

When asked if I would be a student for this assessment, I was very excited at the opportunity to observe and participate. Many of Canada's most respected and dedicated senior teachers would be in Victoria as assessors. The teacher candidates for assessment are also dedicated and very competent individuals who had devoted much time and yoga energy to achieving success on this day. I knew that being a part of this process would be a great learning opportunity for me. I anticipated the day with a sense of excitement and curiosity. And I wondered - how would my body respond to the type of practice that the assessment promised to be?

I attended the Saturday session when five teachers were being assessed. For the morning session, each individual teacher was given three specific poses to teach. These poses were assigned 15 minutes before the teacher's assessment session. Upon entering the yoga studio, the teacher had 20 minutes in which to teach the three poses. Time was strictly kept and not allowed to go beyond. This was followed by a 10 minute session during which the assessors had an opportunity to ask

the teacher questions about the *asanas* they taught. At the end of the session, the next teacher arrived with new poses and the process repeated through each of the candidates. After a two hour lunch break, the format was repeated in the afternoon.

Because of the nature and purpose of the assessment format, the poses were not given in any particular order. And so I found myself at 9 o'clock on Saturday morning doing *Urdhwa Dhanurasana*, only the second pose of the day! I often feel challenged by this pose and would not generally do it as my second pose in a morning practice. I think I was a little surprised to find that I was capable to get up on my first try. This pose was assigned three times on Saturday morning to three different teachers. Each time it was repeated I noticed a remarkable improvement in my ability to get up and hold the pose and I wondered what exactly to attribute this to - was it the effect of simple repetition in my own body or was each successive teacher giving better instructions? What was making the difference? Each teacher taught the same pose from a slightly different perspective using slightly different props. I concluded that the slightly different details from each instruction had a layering effect in my brain and body. Each time I did the pose, my body was more prepared to accept the

challenge and my mind incorporated a few new nuances. It was a unique and enlightening experience.

In the afternoon session, all the poses were inversions. Headstand and Shoulderstand were included in each group of three assigned poses. This time, we students had five opportunities to be instructed in Headstand and five opportunities to be instructed in Shoulderstand. In the inversions repetition seemed to have less of an improving effect on my pose than they had in the morning session. I was more sensitized to the details (words) of instruction. My attempts to exercise these details had various effects on



the lift I was able to achieve. Sometimes I struggled and othertimes was quite comfortable. I found that unfamiliar details or instructions I had not heard before were more difficult for me to incorporate into my inverted poses.

Being a student at an assessment is an unusual opportunity to build awareness in poses. The experience was enriched by the questions and observations of the assessors in the period at the end of each teaching session. I am grateful to have had an opportunity to participate in this important process. I salute the all successful candidates and the assessors for their hard work and dedication to the integrity of the Assessment 2000. ☺

Assessment 2000

by Marlene Linda Miller

The past year has been concerned and focused on the Junior Intermediate I/II Assessment in Victoria. I was fortunate enough and very grateful to have been extended the Level I certificate by Mr. Iyengar when at the Institute in Pune in 1997, and I have since been able to take part in the certification process here in Canada from the assessor perspective. When it came time to step onto the other side and be a candidate for assessment, I was concerned with how I would do. The preparation involved, of course, the practice of the poses on the syllabus. Instructing students in these poses and discovering what instructions were clear and those that were not followed. Would I ever be able to do *Bhekasana* and teach it? What about the strength in my arms and upper body to do the balancing poses of *Lolasana* and *Dwi Hasta Bhujasana*? And would I ever remember the name of *Urdhva Prasavita Padasana*?

By grace I am a yoga student and teacher in the Victoria area with Shirley Daventry French as teacher/mentor. She gave graciously of her time and expertise, and I availed myself of workshops and opportunities to practice and teach in her presence to receive feedback.

I am also grateful to the Victoria yoga community, the classes I regularly teach, the Monday night class that is attended by myself and other teachers, and the monthly teacher practices and meetings where we critiqued each other's work. All helped me come to the point of feeling prepared - although still doubting my success. As the weekend of October 27th arrived, I was spending increasingly longer periods at my altar. I remembered Shirley's words, "Let me show what I know." Then my prayer, "Please let me honour my teachers: Mr. Iyengar, Geeta, Swami Radha, and Shirley, and", with shyness, "honour myself." I closed with a plea to Divine Mother to keep watch on my speech, that I speak only what is necessary.

The assessment weekend arrived and I thought, "Well if I do not pass I will still have Junior Intermediate I



The
Victoria Yoga Centre
Warmly invites you to a
Yoga Centre
Community Meeting

featuring a discussion of the question:

**"What would it take
to establish our own place?"**

**Date: Saturday, Jan 27
9:00 - 11:00 am**

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

All Yoga Centre members are encouraged to join us.

All teachers are expected to attend.



and will still be able to teach." Friday evening was the practice. The week prior, at Monday night timed practice, I was so nervous I fell out of *Virabhadrasana III* and trembled with my heart pounding unmercifully throughout. But on the evening of the 27th, I found myself to be focused and concentrated although quite tense.

I was not to do the teaching until Sunday. I did not sleep well Friday. On Saturday, I felt lost about what to do with myself. I was still tense, realizing I was fearful that I did not do well. I reviewed a few poses that I thought I would be given to teach, and finished with a restorative practice. The rest of Saturday was spent tidying and cleaning my home as this has a centering quality for me.

Sunday arrived. At the Victoria Y I joined the other teacher candidates. When we congregated in the chapel a most wonderful spontaneous happening occurred. As each of us were given the poses to teach, we worked as a team coaching each other. The one who was to teach explored their demonstrations and instructions with us. For example, someone gave an instruction to "Move the spine," and one of us asked, "In which direction?" At the end of our teaching

session, each of us were asked questions by the assessors. When the candidate returned to the chapel we pounced on her wanting to know, "How did it go?" and "What questions were you asked?" A great sigh of relief came before the questions were repeated and then the answer given. Invariably, this was followed by laughter from all of us.

The whole assessment process has been most rewarding right from the beginning. I would

like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Shirley, the Victoria Yoga teachers and community, and to my students. All have been generous and supportive in many ways. And thank you to the assessors for the giving of their knowledge, time, and effort in our Canadian certification system, and to our teacher, Guruji, B.K.S. Iyengar, the guiding Light. ☯



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

*is pleased to offer scholarships
to the following two workshops*

Ingelise Nherlan

Feb. 9 -11

(please apply by Jan. 15)

1 scholarship @ \$100.00

Felicity Green

March 23 - 25

(please apply by Feb. 20)

1 scholarship @ \$100.00

Apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee

Please supply a current phone number and address.

A Volunteer Student's Perspective

by Gwynneth Powell

It was about two years ago the decision was made that the Junior Intermediate Assessment for National Certification of Iyengar Yoga Teachers would be held at the Victoria Yoga Centre. I was excited that some of our teachers would be assessed for this higher level certification and I knew then that I wanted to support them during their assessment by being a student. The main requirement to be a volunteer student at any of the assessments is that one needs to be able to perform the *asanas* on that particular syllabus with a certain level of ability. In the many months that followed, the Level III and IV classes became a venue for our teachers to focus, with increasing intensity, on the Junior Intermediate Syllabus.

There were new poses to learn and many that we needed to start practicing on a more regular basis.

Most of our classes were spent upside down, bending over backwards or with our legs entwined in Full Lotus (or inclined that way) while we did different variations in this position. Most often, Shirley Daventry French taught the two weekly classes I attended, but she would consistently have Ann Kilbertus, Lauren Cox, Linda Benn and Marlene Miller teach at different times since they would be the actual candidates at the upcoming assessment. Having a captive audience was advantageous

and many changes began to take place over the months in the emerging clarity of the teachings they presented.

I had long heard that being a volunteer student was not a simple task. The candidates are assessed on how they teach six poses, chosen by the assessors, three in the morning and then three during the afternoon segment of inversions. In reality, the assessment is neither a workshop nor is it a practice. As students, the whole day is spent performing *asanas* with virtually no sequencing and it is crucial to be practiced with the poses that you may be called upon to perform. The commitment I made as a volunteer student was to support the evolution, training and certification of teachers. As our assessment liaison greeted us that morning, she thanked us up front for dedicating our bodies to science.

One of my self-appointed duties that day was to remain

calm. I was most relieved to be a student on the first day because four out of the five candidates were from out-of-town which meant it would be easier for me to be detached. However, I observed my nervousness come into play when the fifth candidate came into the room. It was hard for me to remain calm and devoid of emotional involvement because she was one of my teachers. I had seen her work so hard over the years as she prepared for this very day; I was there to see her sweat and perhaps even doubt herself at times. I had the utmost confidence in her abilities and, as the clock ticked on, the strength of her demeanor shone through.



Urdhva Mukha Svanasana

We performed *Urdhwa Dhanurasana* within the first ten minutes that morning and numerous backbends followed. And as you may have heard, not one twist followed a backbend! However, we did have breaks between each of the candidates and so could do whatever recuperative poses we felt we needed at that time. In the afternoon, we repeated Headstand and Shoulderstand, with most of the variations, over and over and over again.

I'd like to thank all those who ensured that the weekend ran smoothly, including Leslie Hoyga, who came in especially to lead us through *Savasana* at the end of the day. I feel fortunate to have been able to be part of this process and I would do it all over again if given the chance. I plan to one day submit an application for candidacy in the Introductory Assessment and this has been an invaluable learning experience for me. As a second-year student teacher it is now exceedingly clear that every pose I teach is an opportunity to prepare for that day. Back in our Thursday morning class, I began to wonder if we would ever study the Introductory Syllabus again. But there was no need to worry - shortly after assessment was done, Shirley arrived with some delightful workings for *Utthita Parsvakonasana*. ☉

Congratulations

to all the teachers who successfully
completed Junior Intermediate Levels I & II

Linda Benn (Victoria)

Lauren Cox (Victoria)

Ann Kilbertus (Victoria)

Marlene Miller (Victoria)

Linda Shevloff (Hong Kong via Victoria)

Vicki Catchpole (Comox)

Teddy Hyndman (Edmonton)

Claudia McDonald (Vancouver)

Jo-ann Sutherland (Saskatoon)



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcomes you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



Our guest will be announced

Date: Friday, April 20

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

Practice from 6 to 7pm

Potluck dinner & talk follows
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Junior Intermediate Assessment

October 27-29, 2000

Victoria, BC

by Linda Benn

I have just received the letter stating that I have been awarded the Junior Intermediate Level II teaching certificate. I am relieved and delighted and humbled.

Mostly I am grateful to everyone involved in supporting these processes that improve the quality of our teaching and practice. The five assessors, Shirley Daventry French (Victoria), Ingelise Nherlan (Vancouver), Marlene Mawhinney (Toronto), Mahyar Raz-Khorzad (Toronto) and Marie-Andree Morin (Montreal) travelled long distances and gave up at least 5 days of their time. With only their expenses paid, they put in long hours each day of the assessment. The responsibility of staying focused, balanced and compassionate must be a challenge to maintain.

Fortunately, I know that Shirley and Derek French are generous hosts, offering their home to all the assessors for the weekend. Volunteers from the yoga community did everything possible to make the assessors welcome and comfortable. Robin Cantor, Gwynneth Powell, Wies Pukesh and Leslie Hogya prepared dinners, lunches and breakfasts.

Ty Chandler and Robin Cantor were the event organizers and also took on the duties of timing the practice and teaching sessions. Ty Chandler and Karen Dayton took on the task of putting Shirley's house back in order on the Monday following. Many others in our community assisted at the assessment and transported people when needed. Finally, I must thank the volunteer students who became the objects of our nervous and fast paced teaching. The sequences of poses necessary for assessment could not have been easy on their bodies and nervous systems. I hope that they were able to do a restorative practice to put everything back in balance.

I learned a great deal about myself and about teaching Iyengar Yoga during this process. This knowledge and confidence will be reflected in the quality of classes that the nine candidates offer in our respective communities across western Canada. ☯

Upcoming Assessment Dates:

Introductory

June 15th -17th

Halifax

October 19th - 21st

Vancouver

Junior Intermediate

January 19th - 21st

Toronto



**Rest well earned:
Viparita Karani**



Radha Yoga Centre

January & February Events

Season Opening Bhajan Party

Sunday, January 14, 2001

Come at 7:00 pm for tea and cookies. At 8:00 we will proceed to the prayer room and sing joyful spiritual songs to invoke the Divine in many aspects. Ask Siva to help overcome your obstacles. Invite Mother Mary to help us learn compassion. If you have a favourite spiritual song, come and teach it to the group.

No charge

Divine Light Invocation Workshop

Sunday, February 18, 10:00 am-4:00 pm.

The Divine Light Invocation is an ancient spiritual practice given to Swami Radha in India with the instruction, "Teach it to everyone." This powerful healing practice can change your life as you learn to identify with your highest potential, the Light within.

(Bring Lunch) \$40.00

The Power of Choice

Thurs. 7:30-9:30 pm, 6 weeks - \$66

Explore the Kundalini system using the spiritual practices taught by Swami Radha. In this session we will focus on speech and its potential to reveal and transform the mind.

Discover the power of choice to help you put your ideals into practice in daily life.

Open both to beginners and continuing students.



Swami Radha's Initiation Anniversary

Sunday, February 4



Swami Radha was initiated by her Guru, Swami Sivananda, in February 1956. She returned to Canada, wearing an orange silk sari and with only 25 cents to her new name. Each year on this anniversary, Radha Yoga Centre Victoria honours the life she began on that day.

9:30-10:30 - chanting Mantra and reflection on the meaning of beginnings.

11:00 am-5:00pm - the prayer room is available for private reflection. Call to book a time.

7:30-8:00 pm - Come and sing Swami Radha's favourite spiritual songs.

8:00-9:00 pm - Satsang with a tape of Swami Radha's own reflections on the meaning of initiation.

No charge.



Winter Class Schedule

The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga®

Mon. 5:30-7:00; Wed. 7:30-9:30
pm; Thu. 10:00 -11:30 am
6 weeks at \$60

Unlock the deeper meanings of the classical yoga poses. Hidden Language applies symbolism and reflection to bring about the harmonious integration of body and mind.

Basic Hatha Yoga

Tue. 7:30-9 pm; Wed. 5:30-7 pm
6 weeks at \$48

Saturday Drop-In 10:00-11:30 am
\$8 per class

Learn our gentle approach to the ancient poses of Hatha Yoga in a quiet and peaceful setting. We will practice poses you can bring into your day to help you relax and keep body and mind in shape.

Radha House Victoria • 1500 Shasta Place (off St. Charles, south of Fort) • 250-595-0177

YOGA CALENDAR

JANUARY 2001

- 19 Yoga Centre AGM: 50 Cambridge St.
- 19-21 Junior Intermediate Assessment in Toronto
- 26 Friday Night Gathering with Jessica Sluymer
- 27 Yoga Centre Community Meeting: What Would It Take To Establish Our Own Place?

FEBRUARY 2001

- 9-11 Workshop with Ingelise Nherlan
- 23 Friday Night Gathering with Guest Speaker Padmananda
- 24 Teachers' Meeting

MARCH 2001

- 23-25 Workshop with Felicity Green

APRIL 2001

- 20 Friday Night Gathering
- 21 Teachers' Meeting

MAY 2001

- 2-6 Workshop with Geeta Iyengar at UBC in Vancouver
- 25 Friday Night Gathering "Big Big Practice"
- 25 Teachers' Meeting

JUNE 2001

- 1-3 Salt Spring Retreat
- 15-17 Introductory Assessment (Halifax)

JULY 2001

- 16-21 Summer Intensive

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society, c/o Connie Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.

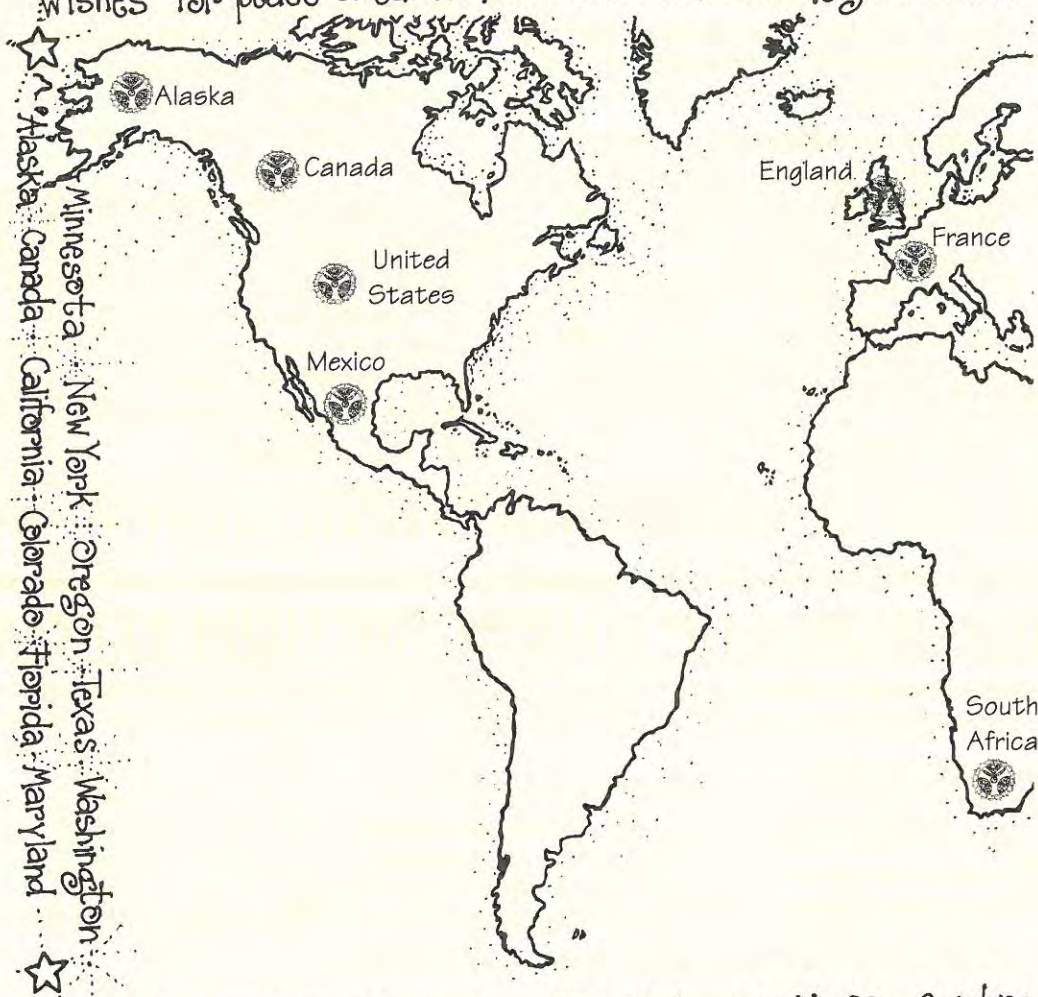


VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

Unit 592, 185 - 911 Yates St.

Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

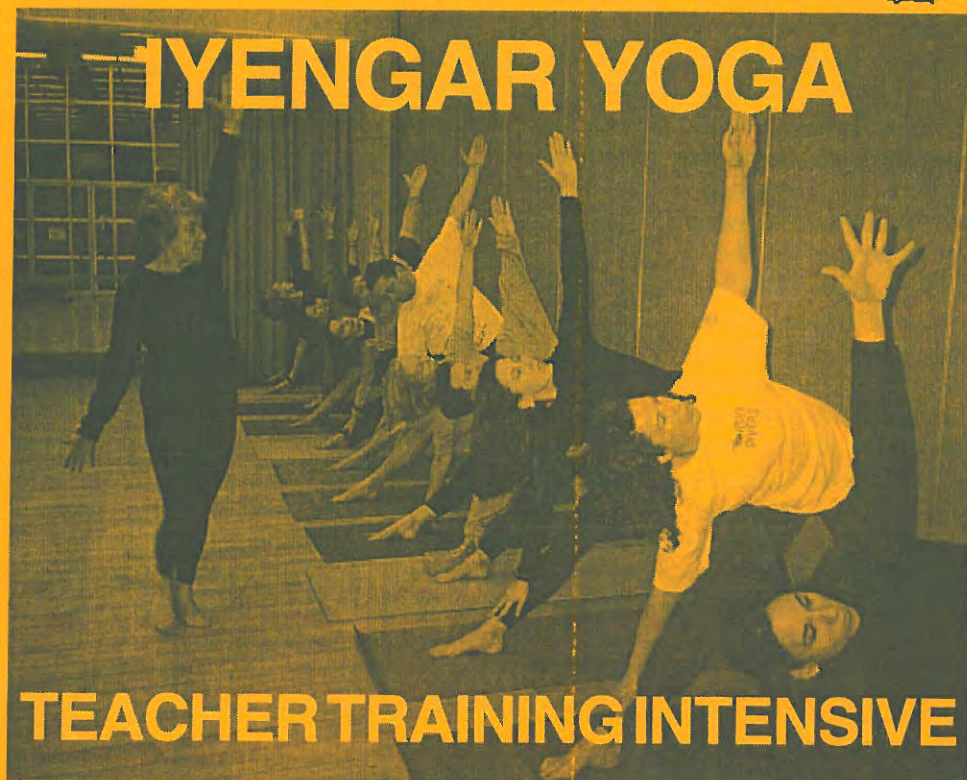
wishes for peace on earth from the Victoria Yoga Centre



wishes for peace on earth from the Victoria Yoga Centre



The Victoria Yoga Centre
and the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria
are pleased to announce an



July 16 to 21, 2001

with

Shirley Daventry French • Leslie Hoya • Ann Kilbertus • Linda Benn

• Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama •

• Yoga Psychology and Philosophy • The Art and Science of Teaching •

Fee: \$470.00 + GST

For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre, 766 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC, V8S4X5

Phone Enquiries: Ann Kilbertus (250) 598-0976 or Linda Benn (250) 478-0757

Email: lbenn@islandnet.com or wq556@victoria.tc.ca

SUMMER OF 2001

Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training Intensive in Victoria

July 16 to 21, 2001

The Victoria Yoga Centre, in association with the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria, is pleased to present its thirteenth annual yoga intensive. Our 2001 intensive will provide an opportunity for teachers, student teachers and serious students of Iyengar Yoga to refine their practice and teaching skills under the guidance of four experienced teachers. Shirley, Leslie, Ann and Linda are all certified Iyengar Yoga teachers, actively involved in the growth of Iyengar Yoga in Canada. For those teachers preparing for certification, this intensive will add to your confidence and skills.

The first requirement for a teacher in the Iyengar tradition is a well-established personal practice. This intensive will offer daily classes in asana and pranayama, and include both practical work and discussions on how to teach, teacher / student relationships, purpose and use of basic props; working with back and other special problems. Seminars will include Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and their relevance to the development of asana and pranayama as spiritual tools. Classes will be held in the well-equipped Yoga Studio of the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria that is centrally situated in one of North America's most beautiful cities.

Prerequisite: Applicants should have practiced Iyengar Yoga for a minimum of two years.

PROGRAMME

Monday, July 16 to Friday, July 20 inclusive

9:00 am to 12:00 noon	Asana
12:00 noon to 2:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 to 4:00 pm	Seminar
4:00 to 5:00 pm	Pranayama

Saturday, July 21

9:00 to 11:30 am	Asana
11:30 am to 12:30 noon	Closure

Tuesday, July 17, 6:00 pm

Informal Dinner Meeting: Questions, answers and discussion on teaching.
(Cost of this dinner is not covered by course fees)

Thursday, July 19, 6:00 pm

Celebratory Indian Banquet (The cost of this banquet is included in course fees - Significant others are welcome to attend at an additional cost)



THE TEACHERS



*Left to right:
Leslie Hogya, Shirley Daventry French, Ann Kilbertus*

Shirley Daventry French is a long time student of the Yoga Master B.K.S. Iyengar and a respected teacher of his method of Yoga. She has been teaching for twenty-nine years and gives workshops nationally and internationally. Shirley has studied in India many times with Mr. Iyengar. Shirley's teaching is precise, insightful and integrates the philosophy of yoga with the practical work of asana and breathing. She is a senior training teacher and assessor in Canada.

Leslie Hogya has been teaching yoga in Victoria for twenty-seven years. She has been to Pune, India, to study yoga four times, most recently in January, 2000. Leslie is actively involved in training teachers where, in addition to her extensive yoga training, she also draws from her experience as a school teacher. Leslie is President of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society and a past chairperson of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association, C.I.Y.T.A.

Ann Kilbertus is an Occupational Therapist and an experienced yoga teacher. She has been studying with Shirley Daventry French since 1985. Ann has travelled to India to study with B.K.S. Iyengar and his daughter Geeta, three times, most recently January, 2001. She is active in Victoria's teacher training program as well as the national Professional Development Committee. (C.I.Y.T.A.)

Linda Benn is coordinator of the Victoria 'Y' Yoga program which offers 30 classes of Iyengar Yoga per week. She is on the Victoria Yoga Centre executive and is part of the Teacher Training Committee. Linda has been studying yoga with Shirley French and many other senior teachers since 1980. She teaches at the 'Y', in the community and at her home studio.



Linda Benn

ACCOMMODATION

The Residence at the Y has a limited amount of accommodation for women. Bed and breakfast will be available with members of the local yoga community. As a popular tourist centre, Victoria has a wide selection of hotels and motels.

Y Residence - Special package for six nights: \$100.00. This is a dormitory style accommodation with four or five persons per room with shared bathroom. Prices include tax. A \$20.00 deposit should accompany your request for accommodation. Extra nights are available on request. Reservations are recommended.

REQUEST FOR HOUSING IN VICTORIA - IYENGAR YOGA INTENSIVE - JULY 16 TO 21, 2001

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Email _____

Please find me Bed and Breakfast accommodation in a private home. ☐ \$25.00 per day
(Please make payment directly to host on arrival)

Please reserve a room in the Y Women's Residence (July 15-21) ☐ \$100
Send a separate cheque payable to YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria

Non-refundable deposit is enclosed ☐ \$20

TO REGISTER A deposit of \$150.00 will reserve a place in this course. Individuals who apply for scholarships (Yoga Centre members) and teacher trainees need to register and submit the deposit. US participants, please send cheques or money orders payable in Canadian funds. Payment in full is due on June 10, 2001. Refunds, less an \$50.00 cancellation fee, will be given if notice of cancellation is received by June 10. After June 10 refunds will be given only when the space is filled by another student. Balance of payment must be paid by due date, or your space will be lost. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

REGISTRATION FORM

Iyengar Yoga Intensive - July 16 to 21, 2001

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____ Email _____

Are you an Iyengar Yoga teacher? _____

Briefly describe your yoga experience. _____

☐ Deposit of \$150.00 enclosed

☐ Full payment of \$502.90 (\$470 + Goods and Services Tax) enclosed

Make cheques payable to YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria, and mail to:
Iyengar Yoga Intensive, c/o Victoria Yoga Centre, 766 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC V8S 4X5

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER

March/April 2001

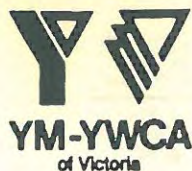
Please Subscribe



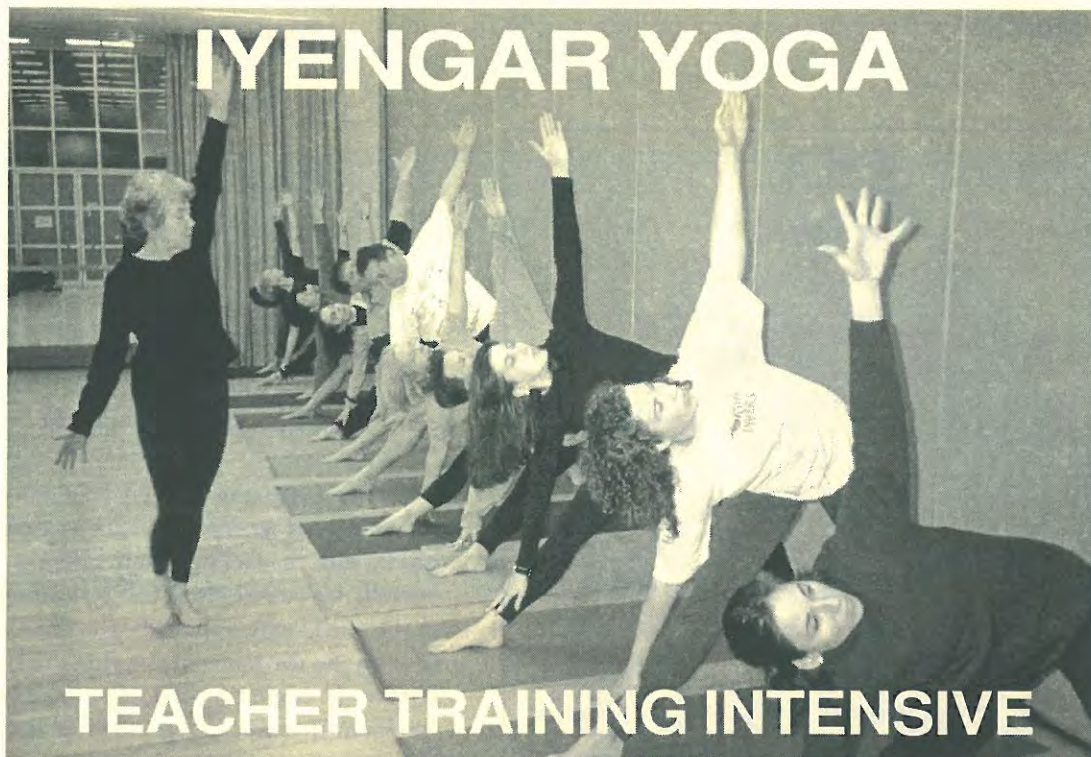
Lord Patanjali, to whom we chant the invocation

Geeta Iyengar,
*in an interview conducted by
Margot Kitchen at the '92
Canadian Intensive in Pune, India*

"We chant so that at the very beginning that feeling of sanctification comes from inside, with the feeling of surrendering oneself, because nothing can be learned in this world unless you have the humility to learn. So the moment you think of the Lord at the beginning of doing a practice, you know that you are very small in front of that greatest soul. Once that is understood then the other problems which always arise while practicing, mainly concerned with the ego, will be affected. You know that you are 'coming down' to learn something. And you can't learn anything unless you come down; if you think you are on the top and you know everything, then you are not a learner at all. In that sense, the chanting helps."



The Victoria Yoga Centre
and the YM-YWCA of Greater Victoria
are pleased to announce an



July 16 to 21, 2001

with

Shirley Daventry French • Leslie Hogya • Ann Kilbertus • Linda Benn
• Daily classes in Asana and Pranayama
• Yoga Psychology and Philosophy • The Art and Science of Teaching

Fee: \$470.00 + GST

For further information contact:

Victoria Yoga Centre, 766 St. Patrick Street, Victoria, BC, V8S 4X5
Phone Enquiries: Ann Kilbertus (250) 598-0976 or Linda Benn (250) 478-0757
Email: lbenn@islandnet.com or wq556@victoria.tc.ca

Editor: Gwynneth Powell

Newsletter Committee: Lauren Cox, Caren Liedtke,
Greg Sly, Neil McKinlay, Shirley Daventry French

Layout & Production: Marion Stoodley- Page Perfect
Design & Type

Cover Drawing: Lauren Cox

Photography: Douglas Fraser, Ty Chandler, Leslie Hogle,
Gwynneth Powell,

Typing: Nancy Poole

Advertising: Carole Miller

Distribution: Keiko Alkire, Rosemary Barritt

Membership/Mailing List: Constance Barker

Printing: Hillside Printing & Copy Centre

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA or visit our website at www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca

Deadline for next issue: March 15, 2001

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any of our material, except that copyrighted by the author or artists. When reprinting, please credit this Newsletter and send us two copies of the publication containing our material. Copyright material is only available with written permission.

CONTENTS:

REFLECTIONS

Shirley Daventry French p. 4

FROM THE EDITOR

..... p. 8

SITTING FOR THE INVOCATION

Geeta S. Iyengar p. 9

FLUCTUATIONS OF THE MIND

Traci Skuce p. 10

RECITING PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS

James Currie-Johnson p. 12

WHY WE PRACTICE

Kelly Murphy p. 13

FINDING A STATE OF CONTENTMENT THROUGH SANTOSA

Ty Chandler p. 14

INTRODUCING YOGIC PHILOSOPHY TO NEW STUDENTS -OBSERVING SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH

Gwynneth Powell p. 15

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A WONDERFULLY NURTURING YOGA WEEKEND?

Nancy Searing p. 18

A PLACE TO HANG OUR MATS

Rosemary Barritt p. 20

THE WALL OF WONDER

Leslie Hogle p. 20

HAVE STICKY MAT - WILL TRAVEL

Leslie Hogle p. 22

THE FIFTH LIMB OF YOGA- PRATYAHARA

Yvonne Kathleen Kipp p. 24

LIFE BECOMES THE PRACTICE

Lynda Crawford p. 26

YOGA ON A BUDGET OF TIME AND DISCIPLINE

Douglas Fraser p. 28

WHO DOES WHAT- YOGA CENTRE 2001

..... p. 31

RECOGNIZING LIBERATION THROUGH AHIMSA

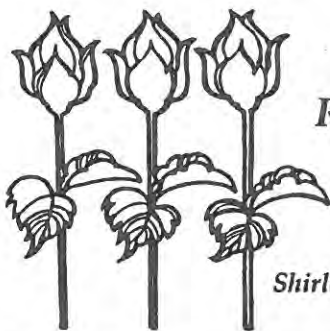
Ty Chandler p. 32

GRAMMAR FOR CLARITY AND PURITY OF SPEECH

Wies Pukesh p. 32

ADHITA THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Glenda Hingley p. 34



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

Yoga is going through another surge of popularity. This is good, but it is also causing two problems. The first is a great demand for teachers, and second a great demand for space. Throughout North America yoga classes are overflowing.



Requests keep coming in for teachers for classes at recreation and other centres, for this group or that group. In addition I get a lot of calls from people who would like to have private lessons, a need which I cannot satisfy. To be honest I do not like private lessons with the exception of students of mine who want help with a sticking place, illness or injury that is difficult to address in class; or others who practise regularly on their own but live in an area where there is no teacher. Then I will do my best to find a time for them. However, in common with most of the trained yoga teachers I know, I am already teaching more than enough with local classes and out-of-town workshops plus the extra demands of national certification and training teachers for assessment.

The other day I got an Email offering me a "University Degree Today". I did not have to be satisfied with a mere bachelor's or master's degree but could have a PhD from a "prestigious non-accredited university" requiring no tests, classes, books, or interviews. Well

that would certainly save a lot of time and trouble! Why didn't I think of this before? Derek and I laughed as we tossed it into the wastebasket. Sad how everything can be debased, and apparently academia is no more immune from such trivialization than Yoga.

From *Yoga Journal* to the back page of Victoria's *Monday* magazine, on the internet and in thousands of brochures distributed all over the place, there are innumerable self-proclaimed experts in Yoga. Many of the claims are so grandiose and narcissistic that it's hard to believe anyone takes them seriously and actually studies with them, but since they manage to keep going it is apparent that somebody does.

If what you require is a yoga teacher, it is easy to find one. There are a lot of them out there, some of whom are well versed in yoga and its practice, many of whom are not. My husband is a physician and one of the first adages he must observe is to do no harm. Am I making too much fuss? Are these unschooled teachers doing any harm? Physicians are often dealing with life and death situations, one can hardly compare this to yoga teaching. Why not? According to yogic texts the practice of yoga is a matter of many lives and many deaths and needs to be approached systematically, with constant reference to the source of the teachings, constant reflection, constant discrimination and constant vigilance. Undisciplined yoga practice can cause harm. Read Gopi Krishna's book *Kundalini – the evolutionary energy in Man*. While few yoga teachers would go to that extreme they are often messing around with powers and practices which they do not understand and which, when used improperly, can destabilize students on many levels. Flexibility of the body has to be developed hand in hand with strength, stamina and balance of mind.

According to seers and sages, the gift of a lifetime is not easily acquired; nor the body and mind which are the primary spiritual tools for life's journey. What we do with this present lifetime will influence future lives. And even if you believe this is a once only, make it or

break it experience, according to most spiritual traditions, your handling of this lifetime will play a vital role in your afterlife. Anyone who really believed this would seek a skilled guide for this spiritual journey; someone trained by an expert and tempered by experience who has walked a good distance along this path, who steadfastly continues to work on themselves, learn from their experience and refine their own knowledge. Such credentials are not easily or quickly acquired.

Most people entering a yoga class for the first time are not seeking a spiritual guide and have not the slightest idea that yoga is spiritual practice. They are much more likely to be looking for relief from stress or a painful back, or to acquire a little more flexibility because their stiff joints are interfering with their tennis or golf. In the same way that many of my husband's patients came to him seeking a way to remove their pain without making any significant changes in their lives, few yoga students are ready initially to accept responsibility for their predicament. They may know that they will learn to invert themselves and stand on their head or shoulders, but will not expect to have their entire lives turned upside down which is what will happen if one opens up the Pandora's box of yoga. Yoga is a revolutionary process which will challenge your most cherished beliefs, and is not to be undertaken lightly.

A good teacher, a well trained teacher, working within a certain tradition under the guidance of a Yoga Master will take you to that place where you have to make a choice to either back off and get out, or have courage and embark on a quest which will last your entire lifetime. A yoga teacher must not be dependent on having you as their student. Their fulfilment must come from their own yoga practice, leaving them free to teach yoga to their students unadulterated by the need to entertain them or, worse, to hold on to them. Needy teachers will create a dependency to complement their own. According to B.K.S. Iyengar, teachers must adopt the following attitude: "If students

come say: thank God now I can teach! If students do not come say: thank God now I can practise!"

In a recent interview about yoga therapy, Guruji speaks of assessing the courage of a patient to see if they are ready to tackle their problems and face the inevitable pain and discomfort which this will entail. If not, he gives them pleasing asanas until such time as they develop confidence and tolerance. Then he can work with them and "attack the disease directly". In the same way, those of us who follow Mr. Iyengar's tradition of yoga must also assess the calibre of our students. We must allow them time to assess us and decide whether they can trust us or not, whether they want to venture further down this path or not. If this is not what you want, better to get out quickly because in my experience after a while even though you may decide it is time to bale out you will find you have no parachute and the only choice is to keep going. As the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes put it so succinctly: *Some follow the Gods willingly: the rest are dragged!*

All of this brings up the problem of how to find an authentic teacher. Most organisations who have approached us and whom we were unable to help eventually found someone and scheduled classes. Alas, rarely do they seem to care much about the credentials of the teachers they employ or check references.

We, of course, are not the only yoga group in town. There are adherents of many traditions working under the guidance of a Master and certified by him or her. There are also excellent teachers who are uncertified because their particular method has not established certification. This was the case with Iyengar Yoga in Canada until 1997. Now, because of the many false and misleading claims which abound about yoga, and the misuse of their names, it is becoming more and more common for Yoga Masters to implement some means of identifying who is trained in their method. However, the work required to acquire these credentials varies immensely. It is important for potential students, and even more important for potential employers of

teachers, to check out what exactly was required to earn any particular certificate in yoga.

To pass an assessment and become a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher takes many years of time and commitment, but some yoga teaching certificates have as much value as the PhD's mentioned at the beginning of this article. The training we offer at the Victoria Yoga Centre takes three years and first you have to become proficient and knowledgeable in Iyengar Yoga before being admitted as an apprentice. With some yoga teachers' courses you can walk in off the street knowing nothing about the subject and be awarded a certificate in next to no time.

This sad state of affairs is due to ignorance of Yoga; a obstacle which will only be overcome when ignorance is replaced by knowledge. This requires better public relations to educate the public. When a Canadian group was studying in India in 1997, Geeta told us unequivocally that we have to speak up and remove this ignorance, particularly where Mr. Iyengar's work is concerned. In her words: *Is it not your duty?*

The second chapter of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is entitled *Sadhana Pada*. *Sadhana* means practice, and the purpose of yoga practice is spiritual emancipation or liberation. The first sutra of this chapter states: *tapah svadhyaya Isvarapranidhanani kriyayogah*. As translated by B.K.S. Iyengar this reads: "Burning zeal in practice, self-study and study of scriptures, and surrender to God are the acts of Yoga". *Tapas* – burning zeal in practice. *Svadhya* – self-study and study of scriptures. *Isvara pranidhana* – surrender to God. *Kriya Yoga* – the Yoga of Action! Nothing wishy-washy about this, is there?

The next sutra tells us that the practice of yoga reduces afflictions and leads to *samadhi* (illumination). *Samadhi* is also the final step of the eight-fold path of *Astanga Yoga* described by Patanjali later in *Sadhana Pada*. The name *Astanga Yoga* has been used by several Yoga Masters to describe their style of yoga: notably Baba Hari Dass (the Guru of the dedicated people at Salt

Spring Centre). These days it is commonly thought to apply to the teaching of Pattabhi Jois, but *Astanga Yoga* is a generic term belonging to all who follow the precepts of Patanjali and is equally applicable to the teaching of B.K.S. Iyengar.

Mr. Iyengar's guru was the esteemed T. Krishnamacharya, and among his many pupils he inspired three great contemporary Yoga Masters who have become well known in the West: B.K.S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois and T.K.V. Desikachar. In the same way that many people use Mr. Iyengar's name in their write ups with little knowledge or experience of his method and without his approval, so it appears to be with Pattabhi Jois. There are reputable teachers of his form of *Astanga Yoga* trained by him and his direct pupils, but there are many others who have simply added *Astanga* or *Power Yoga* (a term used by some exponents of Pattabhi Jois' method) to their claims of expertise. It takes many years to become a good yoga teacher, even at an introductory level, and it is simply impossible to be a good teacher of more than one system of yoga.

Iyengar Yoga, *Astanga Yoga*, *Power Yoga*, *Hatha Yoga*. Many yoga centres offer classes in all of these, sometimes with the same teacher. Something for everyone! How confused those students must be who take a class in Iyengar Yoga one day, *Power Yoga* the next, and top it all off with the ubiquitous *Hatha Yoga* (another term widely misused and misunderstood in the West).

I know little about Pattabhi Jois' and Desikachar's systems and how they have interpreted the teachings of Krishnamacharya other than hearsay. A student of mine once asked me, don't you want to take a class in *Astanga* (meaning the yoga of Pattabhi Jois)? No, I don't. I have more than enough on my plate for this lifetime in trying to deepen my knowledge of the teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar and his interpretation of Patanjali's *Kriya* and *Astanga Yoga*. If I change from system to system I will be left with nothing, at least nothing of value. It is too easy and too tempting to

dismiss a teacher and change streams when faced with one's own shortcomings.

This leads me to the third sutra of Patanjali's *Sadhana Pada* where he lists five afflictions which disturb equilibrium. They are *avidya* (ignorance), *asmita* (ego or pride), *raga* (attachments), *dvesa* (dislikes), *abhinivesah* (clinging to life). In the fourth sutra he goes on to state that *avidya* or ignorance is the source of all the others. I began my practice of yoga in ignorance, complete ignorance. At that time there were only two yoga teachers in Victoria. Their experience in teaching was limited but they were sincere practitioners. My first teacher, Jessica Tucker, did not hesitate to encourage us to move on when we had learned what we could from her, and thereby I found my way to Swami Radha and Yasodhara Ashram and from there to Pune and B.K.S. Iyengar. For me the time for shopping around is long past.

For anyone who reads these reflections who is interested in yoga but not yet committed: beware and be wary. More than your body and mind, Yoga concerns your very Self. For those who are just thinking of becoming a teacher: choose and stay within a tradition which ignites your passion and enthusiasm. For those who are just beginning to teach: be patient. Remember that at the beginning of his distinguished career, Mr. Iyengar's classes consisted of one or two students. And should you have none – say, thank God now I can practise! ☯

Upcoming Assessment Dates:

Introductory Syllabus

June 15th -17th

Halifax

October 19th - 21st

Vancouver



**Visiting teacher Ingelise Nherlan
in Uttanasana**

The Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association
invites you to attend the
Annual General Meeting.

Come see and participate as matters affecting
you as an Iyengar practitioner/ instructor are
considered at the AGM

May 7 at UBC 9am - noon

Campus location to be announced

Cost \$35.00

Please send with your conference registration.

phone sheri for more information (250) 537-0842

From the Editor

by Gwynneth Powell

Opportunities arise in our lives in varying degrees that pull us toward or keep us away from people, objects, thoughts and emotions. We might come to understand that when we allow ourselves to be pulled and pushed by our desires and our aversions, it is hard to find balance or stability within. Yogic philosophy suggests that how we react to these desires and aversions is the source of our discontent. The yogic path is a way of taking responsibility for our lives with awareness. The Yoga Sutras support us to keep true to our course of self-growth; they guide us in what to look for in order to become keen observers and they teach us to practice making choices that lead toward contentment.

Although Patanjali wrote the yoga sutras down over two thousand years ago, they continue to offer insight as we persist with our longing for happiness. However, many are overlooking the sutras and consequently, may be missing out on what might otherwise serve well as a life manual. One of the reasons for this is a lack of interest is due to, quite simply, ignorance of what the sutras are about. For those of us not drawn to learning new languages, it is easy to become overwhelmed at the sight of a foreign alphabet and phonetic pronunciation, and Sanskrit is no exception. And if the language barrier is not an issue, then it may be the endless challenge of personal identification and application. To get the most out of the sutras, to begin to understand their depth, one must approach them with the aspiration of self-study.

This March/April 2001 issue of the newsletter crosses the barrier of language by presenting the work that James Currie-Johnson originally prepared for the Sutra Recitation Group. His work has been edited so that only the English appears. The intent is to offer the clarity of each sutra (from the second chapter*) as it translates into a form that every reader can understand. And in helping to bridge the gap of how one can apply the teachings to their own lives, you will find stories by authors who used the support of the sutras and their yoga practice to gain insight into their own personal struggles. From Lynda's article on how she overcame the emotional hold of a family illness, to Ty's story of how she sets a foundation in her asana practice that invites contentment, there are many articles of blatant truth and inspiration contained in these pages. When one is able to get even a slight glimpse of how the teachings can illuminate a path toward contentment, this can mean the difference between delving and not delving into the guidance the sutras offer.

If you would like to familiarize yourself with Sanskrit pronunciations, the Sutra Recitation Group meets informally Mondays at 7:45 pm (come to the yoga lounge ten minutes early to find out what room to come to). There's a handout to help you follow along and remember, we all struggle. All are welcome and there's no fee.

*In keeping with the theme of this issue's focus on practice, I have skipped the first chapter of the sutras and gone directly to the second chapter, which deals specifically with the 'practice' of yoga. ☯



Working from the
foundation up in headstand
(*salamba sirsasana*)

Sitting for the Invocation

by Geeta S. Iyengar

The following transcript was originally published in Yoga Vaani - 80th Birthday Commemorative Volume XIV No. 4 (55) in honor of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar. It is reproduced here with permission of the publisher: Yoga Vaani and the B.K.S. Iyengar Yoga Association of Australia. The transcript itself was prepared from Geetaji's General Class held at the Sydney Convention in 1996.



Sit Straight.

Fold the palms in front of the chest.

Bring the thumbs near the sternum bone.

The bottom of your palms at the bottom of your sternum bone.

Keep the chest in lifted position.

Back erect – that brings the attentiveness from within.

If the spine is dropped, you remain in a sleepy state or dreamy state.

You are to be in a wakeful state.

Lift your chest upward; lift your spine upward

Dorsal into the body and move your chest from the armpit region to the front.

Keep the head in a straight position, no tilting.

Close your eyes completely.

Bring your upper eyelids down.

Let the front portion of the brain remain parallel to the back of the brain.

Centralise the body so that you don't tilt.

Lift the trunk upward from the bottom of the spine.

Keep the sides of the navel free from tension.

As the eyes are closed, look within.

Draw the eardrums in.

The back of the eyes go in and the eardrums go towards the centre.

Where that energy meets and from that region, (from the centre of the brain), allow the brain cells to recede and be quiet in that state.

Keep the tongue resting on the lower palate.

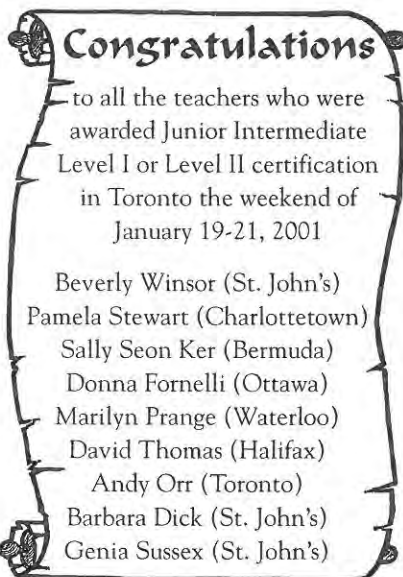
The mouth cavity, throat, free from tension.

In order to remove that tension, keep your mouth slit open as if you are going to say the prayer.

A slow soft inhalation, a slow soft exhalation, to bring the stability within yourself.

Remain silent, quiet, humble from within, watching your breath before you offer your prayers.

I will be reciting first and then you will be following, so remain silent for a while. ☯



Fluctuations of the Mind

by Traci Skuce

A few weeks back, I had a brainstorm. I don't seem to be reading Patanjali's Yoga Sutras as diligently as maybe I should be, so I thought what a good idea it would be to discuss them with someone, even across cyberspace. It would give me the push I need to dive deep, or at least wade up to my knees, in yogic philosophy.

When the opportunity arose to explore this process in an article I thought- *I hardly know the sutras*. But I decided to dip my toe in so here I am.

My relationship to the sutras over the years has, at best, been tepid. I have checked out various translations from the library. Invariably, I leafed through the copies, maybe read the introductions and with good intention placed them in a pile at my bedside. They sat there, deserted for a love affair with some novel until they were due back at the library.

This summer at the Teacher Training Intensive, inspired by Shirley Daventry French and Linda Benn, I bought Mr. Iyengar's book, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Again, I skimmed through it, drawing out the odd verse and reading the explanation. Then you can imagine where it went and stayed unopened for months — in the pile of books by my bedside.

Recently, on a tidying-up-kind-of-day, I sifted through my pile and pulled Mr. Iyengar's book from it. I was between novels and decided to embark, once more, on a sutra-journey. With great zeal I read the preface, then the prologue. I embraced Mr. Iyengar's inspiring words; I found his explanation of Patanjali and the sutras touched a place deep within me, a well that needed water.

I committed myself to reading the Introduction the following day. Then prescribed myself a sutra a day. But for one reason or the other, my enthusiasm broke. Intention is one thing, as we all know, commitment quite another.

Think of asana. I'm not sure how long it took before I committed to a daily practice. But it did take time. First I bought a mat, then a book. For a while, I pulled out

my mat, did a downward dog or two, then I'd roll it up, pat myself on the back and get on with "more important things".

I found excuses not to practice every day — *I've got a small child, I've got to do the dishes, etc.* Yoga is funny though — it begins to interfere with our habits, our excuses. After a while, the excuses dry up. Asana has become as essential to my daily life as breathing (and pranayama is *another* commitment story).

I'm beginning to understand on a deeper level, that philosophy permeates asana. This is not a treadmill-in-the-gym practice. Yoga doesn't end after class, or after your practice at home. I've known for a while that you carry it with you, braid it into all things that you do. For years, I've listened to Shirley interweave the sutras into her teachings. The only one I remember, by heart, is chapter I, verse ii; *Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind*. And I realize as I write this, that that is why I waiver in my commitment to the Sutras. As my mind flips from one thought to the other, so do I — flipping from one page to the next in search of some drive-thru philosophy.

I know commitment is deeper than that, I know myself well enough to know it takes some prompting to get there. I decided I would commit to this article as well as promote an on-line sutra support group. Every two weeks or so, we'll pick out a couple of sutras and discuss them via e-mail. If you are interested please e-mail me at righteousbabe1_98@yahoo.com. Until then, I'll plow through the introduction again and revive my enthusiasm. ☺

YOGA IS COOL: YOUTH YOGA

A challenging, creative and fun class
for girls and boys aged 10-14

Saturday Mornings 9:30-10:30

at the YM/YWCA (downtown)

info: 386-7511

A Special Opportunity for Canadian Iyengar Yoga Students

Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference, 2001

honoured guest and teacher

Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar



May 2 - 6, (May 2, 8am - May 6, 1pm)

UBC Conference Centre, University of B.C.

- 5 days of learning from "the source"
- Pranayama and Asana classes taught by Geeta Iyengar
- Talks and forums for students and teachers, classes with Canadian senior teachers
- Medical Forum with Dr. Iyengar • Gala Banquet

Registration: Cost \$535.00 For all classes, talks, forums and the "gala"

Mail to: CIY Conference, c/o Bay 1, 96-33rd Street East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7K 0S1

Accommodations

Hotels with conference rates are: Holiday Inn (604) 879-0511, Plaza 500 Hotel, (604) 873-1811

Coast Vancouver Airport Hotel (604) 263-1555, YWCA Hotel (604) 895-5830,

Other accommodation information: Hostel International (604) 224-3208, B&B's (604) 683-2000 or www.tourism.vancouver.org Others: 1-(800)HELLO BC or www.HelloBC.com

Billing contact Wende Davis, wldavis@telus.net

Please bring your own props. (3 blankets, 2 belts, 1 mat, 1 wooden block.)

Props can be pre-paid & ready for you Call 1(877) 731-7099.

A minimum six months of instruction in Iyengar Yoga is recommended.

The CIYTA website (see 'AGM' link) offers the full brochure available for downloading
<http://members.home.net/smithcg/>

Note to Students:

If you have health questions, ask your teacher to help you draft a question. It would be ideal if the two of you were present for the forum.

Send questions to Leslie Hoya:

leslie_hoya@yahoo.com

Because of time constraints, not every question will be addressed.

General Inquiries?

Contact Franklin Schryver at 604-986-3811 or email yogamoves@home.com

Victoria area: Call locally for General Inquiries to Leslie Hoya 383-6301

Registration inquiries: Jo-Ann Sutherland Phone 306-665-8133 or email jns.yoga@sk.sympatico.ca

****CIYTA AGM May 7th (see as this issue)**

Reciting Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

by James Currie-Johnson

A while ago I began to practice reciting the sutras with other yoga students. We use the audiotapes called *PatanjalaYogasutra* by Pandit Sri. S.T. Nagaraj. This is the recitation of the entire 196 sutras in the original Sanskrit commissioned by B.K.S Iyengar. Using the tapes as teacher as well as a handout, we are able to read along as we recite a chapter, line by line, in Sanskrit. We then turn off the tape and read the English translation of that chapter. Presented here is the translation of the handout we use. Different translations and a good thesaurus helped in coming up with a concise document.

Thank you to B.K.S. Iyengar for his extensive study of the sutras. The following translation is highly indebted to his *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

Chapter Two "Practice"

1. Self-discipline, self-study and devotion to God are the steps to yoga.
2. Yoga relieves suffering and brings perfect bliss.
3. Suffering arises from ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion and the desire to cling to life.
4. All suffering, no matter how difficult, springs from ignorance.
5. Ignorance mistakes the temporary for the permanent, the impure for the pure, pain for pleasure and the relative for the absolute.
6. Egoism views one's ego as the source of awareness.
7. Attachment dwells on self-gratification.
8. Aversion dwells on unhappiness.
9. The desire to cling to life is subtle and found even in wise people.
10. All suffering is to be overcome before it becomes severe.
11. The practice of meditation quiets the effects of suffering.

12. The cause of our suffering is our past actions, in this life or previous lives.
13. So long as the cause exists, it will give rise to rebirths, either a long or short life, or the experiences of happiness or unhappiness.
14. Happiness and unhappiness result from good or bad deeds respectively.
15. The sage regards all experience as tinged with sorrow.
16. Future sorrows can and should be prevented.
17. The sorrows arise when we mistake the temporal for the spiritual.
18. Yoga practice is meant to elevate nature and bring about liberation.
19. The energies of nature are changeable and can be transformed into spirit.
20. Our spiritual Self is pure awareness and unchangeable.
21. Nature provides us with the means to have spiritual freedom.
22. The Self is free of the passing effects of nature.
23. The contact of the Self and nature reveals their respective purposes.
24. Otherwise the difference between the Self and nature will be ignored.
25. When ignorance has been destroyed the Self becomes free.
26. Awareness of the Self removes ignorance until no trace of illusion remains.
27. This supreme knowledge is gained in seven stages.
28. Yoga practice burns away the impurities and reveals the glory of this knowledge.
29. The eight parts of yoga are Ethical Vows, Observances, Postures, Regulation of Breath, Withdrawing the Senses, Concentration, Meditation and Perfect Bliss.
30. The Ethical Vows are promises to abstain from harming others, from falsehood, from theft, from incontinence and from greed.
31. These universal vows are unconditioned by one's place, time or class.
32. The Observances are purity, contentment, self-

discipline, self-study and devotion to God.

33. To be free from thoughts that distract one from yoga, thoughts of an opposite kind must be cultivated.

34. Cultivating such opposite thought shows that it is our own impatience, greed or anger that give rise to violence. The result is endless pain and ignorance.

35. When one abstains from harming others then any hostility from others disappears.

36. When one abstains from falsehood then one's capability increases.

37. When one abstains from theft one attains great wealth.

38. When one abstains from incontinence one feels spiritual energy.

39. When one abstains from greed one gains powerful knowledge.

40. Purity protects the body and brings spiritual relationships with others.

41. Purity also brings cheerfulness of mind, the power of focusing and self-control.

42. Practicing contentment brings great happiness.

43. Practicing self-discipline corrects mistakes and kindles the sparks of divinity.

44. Self-Study leads to the realization of God.

45. Devotion to God leads to perfect bliss.

46. Practicing Posture is staying in a firm, steady position with ease.

47. Posture is perfected by relaxation of effort and meditation on the infinite.

48. Then one is no longer troubled by conflict. Unity is achieved.

49. After mastering Posture one is ready to practice Regulation of Breath.

50. Three phases of breathing are exhalation, inhalation and retention. All are regulated with precision.

51. Another phase transcends the first three and appears effortless and non-deliberate.

52. Then the veils that cover the light of knowledge are removed.

53. The mind gains the power of Concentration.

54. Withdrawing the Senses and drawing them inward

allows them to serve the Self.

55. It is then that the senses are mastered and the mind is liberated. ☯

Why We Practice

by Kelly Murphy

In his most recent book, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*, Jack Kornfield retells a Swedish story about a princess betrothed to a fearful dragon by her parents.

Frightened for her life, she consults a wise woman who gives instructions. She is told to marry the dragon and, on their first night together, wear ten gowns, one on top of the other.

The wedding and feast take place, as determined by the princess' parents. Later, in the royal chambers, the princess explains to her husband that she must carefully remove her garments before being with him. And, she adds, he too must remove his attire. He agrees.

"For every layer I remove, you too must remove one." The princess bride watches as her husband removes his first layer of outer scaly skin. He has done that periodically before and so he knows the pain it causes. But the princess removes successive gowns and so the dragon must claw more and more deeply to remove layers of scales. By the middle layers he is weeping in agony. And the princess continues, gown by gown to disrobe.

With each new layer, the dragon's skin is softer, more tender, lighter. Finally he removes the tenth layer and he becomes a man, a prince whose eyes sparkle like a child's, released at last from the ancient spell which had trapped him in dragon's armour. He and his bride are left to enjoy their pleasures.

Clearly this mythic story is not about a journey into the light. The story illuminates the forces of our individual lives, which trap us in patterns difficult to

recognize and tougher still to break through.

When we come onto our yoga mats, daily, we are continuing to remove layers of scaly armour built up over years by habits of mind and body. We slough off the scales to reach the pink, tender places within. Stripping away is a pathway to purification. We become known to ourselves as the dragon was known by his bride.

We are advised and inspired by our 'wise ones' who teach the means of liberation in classes and workshops. Ultimately, rendering the knowledge into action is the way to discover our true nature. It is often an uncomfortable, even painful path. We are forced to confront our whole selves, scaly and wanting.

There is a way to be fully ourselves, to reach past the darkness. And that is why we practice. ☯

Finding a State of Contentment Through Santosa

by Ty Chandler

In yogic philosophy a *niyama* is a rule for self-purification. The second of the five *niyamas* is *santosa* (contentment). In *The Light on Pranayama*, Mr. Iyengar writes that contentment reduces desires, makes one cheerful and gives balance of mind. This *niyama* continues to present big lessons to me. Coming from years of competitive training and a culture that insists that I measure myself against external standards, lack of contentment within myself has, at times, been painfully obvious.

When I think back to my beginnings in *asana*, and also to what I see happening in the beginner classes that I teach, the practice is more external, there is a lot of looking around to see how we measure up with others. It's not

uncommon to hear (audibly or in one's own mind), "wouldn't it be nice to be that flexible" or "I wish I had that strength"

When we allow the mind to be active in this way it reinforces discontent. The mind seeks contentment through whatever it perceives as pleasurable, in this case, the pride or recognition of being the most flexible or the strongest. We are therefore suffering in our own minds by the self-imposed pain of inadequacy when faced with the inability to perform an *asana* at a certain level.

With almost ten years of practice now, I am becoming more comfortable and detached as I watch these thoughts come and go. The sooner I can return my focus to being in the pose, I feel happier, have lighter energy and I enjoy the practice. As I bring *santosa* into my daily life, I realize it is not a passive state, but rather one that requires a lot of work in active refinement. With certain things I over-do, and with many things I under-do, I am left feeling fragmented, alienated and unhappy. The more honest I am with myself in putting forth my best effort, I create the possibility ...

Baba Hari Das says, "No one can have everything. You have to be content with what you have and what you get. Running to get everything is like a deer who runs after a mirage and dies with thirst." ☯



Practice...Practice...Practice



The
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcomes you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



Guest Speaker: Leslie Hogya
"The Magical Kingdom of Thailand"

Date: Friday, April 20

YM-YWCA Yoga Lounge

Practice from 6 to 7pm
Potluck dinner & talk follows
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Introducing Yogic Philosophy to New Students...Observing Shirley Daventry French

by Gwynneth Powell

"This may be the moment of enlightenment
and you don't want to miss it!"

-(Shirley Daventry French on holding longer in
Prasarita Padottanasana)

We live in a culture that is desperately searching for the meaning of life beyond the material. Some are drawn to yoga for purely physical reasons while others are attracted because they know that yoga is deeply rooted in the spiritual. Where some are fascinated by the physical, they may eventually realize that the spiritual aspect makes perfect sense to them, yet still others are answering an inherent call that comes from within. Regardless, people are searching and yoga not only offers relief from physical ailments but it also offers a path inward for those who are interested.

With new students in *asana* class, there is so much to learn on the gross level that the physical body becomes the primary focus. I often notice that the beginning students I teach are tentative of the new places they are taking their bodies to. And when I draw comparisons of how we work in *asana* to how we work in our relationship to life, I sense that many of them are eager to consider that connection. However, I struggle with how to communicate the philosophical teachings of yoga more effectively. I had the opportunity to attend Shirley Daventry French's "Going Deeper 2000" workshop as an observer. The workshop was open to all levels and I was eager to pay close attention as to how and when she brought yogic philosophy into her teaching.

From the very beginning, in preparation for the invocation to Patanjali, Shirley spoke about why we invoke. She told the students that Patanjali was a sage in India over two thousand years ago who had written on three subjects: Grammar, Ayurvedic Medicine and

Yoga. She explained that *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* were succinct aphorisms and, (in so many words), that they were guidelines to teach one how to live a life that is pure. In helping her western listeners to better grasp the idea of the *sutras*, she drew a comparison to Christianity's Ten Commandments.

After the invocation Shirley opened a discussion that challenged her students to think about why they were at this workshop and what 'going deeper' meant to them. She listened to the different desires and expectations, some wanting more depth on the physical level and others wanting more depth spiritually. She spoke of how one of her first teachers, Norma Hodges, described 'going deeper' as moving from comfort to newness. I believe Shirley wanted them to see that in *asana*, we can use the physical to tap into the spiritual. Without mincing words, she put the responsibility onto them, "I can give you certain things, but it's up to you what you do with them, whether you use them to go deeper or not."

Beginning with *Tadasana* Shirley explained how to balance the body's weight on the tripod of the feet. Pausing there, she prepared the students mentally by telling them that momentary awareness is relatively easy, it is in the maintaining of that awareness that is the challenge of yoga. She then referred to the *sutra* where it is written that maturity is gauged by progress that is maintained. Culminating the one hour in *Tadasana*, Shirley had one final question for them, "Now,

where is the stillness?" Giving her students a base from which to ponder this question, she quoted from *The Bhagavad-Gita*, "He who knows the action in inaction and the inaction in action is wise indeed."

During her introduction, Shirley forecast that as we get ready to take the next step, fear is often present. She carried this concept forward as she spoke of *samskaras*, the well worn grooves that we easily fall into, perpetuating old patterns and therefore keeping us stuck and unable to change. She brought this notion to the physical level and inspired all to keep the back heel down in *Virabhadrasana I*. She encouraged the students to create new pathways by working harder and focusing on the required actions to move to a new place. "Change is possible," she reassured them.

Working further into this *asana*, Shirley took the time to explain why we call this the warrior pose. She told the ancient story about Sati, having been so humiliated

by her father that she threw herself to her death. Her husband Siva, being angered at Sati, tore a hair from his matted locks and threw it down. From Siva's hair, the fierce warrior Virabhadra sprang up to carry out Siva's revenge. So, as the students prepared to come into *Virabhadrasana I*, Shirley told them to keep in mind the battles they wanted to fight in their own lives and to remember, just as Virabhadra needed all his tools, so must the yogi maintain all the principles of the *asana* to carry it out.

There were many opportunities for Shirley to instill in the students a sense of duty. For example, when some students lowered their arms between the left and right sides, Shirley used this situation as a teaching tool to bring awareness to how the mind works. She asked them, "So, which



Shirley Daventry-French adjusts posture for *Pranayama*

voice *was it* that told you to take your arms down?"

To come into *Supta Padangusthasana I, II and III*, Shirley explained that in order to ensure the leg on the floor remained grounded, the students would need to reflect on *Kriya Yoga* (the yoga of action) as well as the aspects of self-discipline and self-study (*svadhyaya*) as practiced in *Astanga Yoga* (eight-limbed yoga).

In discussing practice as a way to refine the body and mind as a spiritual tool, Shirley referred to the process of getting to know your self. To practice mindfully, one must find one's own nature. She encouraged them to ascertain if they are the type to give up easily (therefore needing to push themselves with self-discipline) or if they were the type to jump straight to the finished pose without first building the foundation (therefore needing to practice self-restraint).

In *Savasana* on the first day, self-study was brought up again and this time she asked the students to go beyond their personality to answer such questions for themselves as, "why am I here", "what is the purpose of this life's journey", "can I use my abilities to know my true self" and "what aspect is it of myself that remains constant?" She closed the first day of the workshop by saying that yoga *asanas* open pathways that allow us to roam more freely around our inner universe.

On the second day of the workshop, Shirley spoke of the eight limbs of *Astanga Yoga* and went over each limb. To draw a parallel of how we use the *yamas* (personal discipline) and *niyamas* (ethical discipline) to establish a moral foundation, she again used the Ten Commandments of Christianity as a reference point. She touched on the *yama*, *satya* (truthfulness) and how we need to practice it not only in word and deed, but to meet the challenge by practicing truthfulness in our thoughts as well. Using the *yamas* and *niyamas* as tools to begin self-study, the *asanas* then become more than exercises. She warned that *pranayama* (breath control) needs to be practiced in a non-violent way otherwise one can easily disturb the nervous system and also

cause harm to the lung tissues. She explained *pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses) as not "switching off" but "switching on" and she made mention of *dharana* (concentration) and *dhyana* (meditation). The eighth limb, *samadhi* was described, not as "enlightenment", but rather as an effortless state of heightened awareness, unconcerned with outside distractions.

In preparing for their final *Savasana* of the weekend, Shirley expounded upon another *yama*, *aparigraha* (non-greed) by telling her students to take only what they need in terms of blankets and bolsters. She then imparted thoughts to savor as they entered *Savasana*:

- "A yogic state of mind is a mind that learns something from every experience, good or bad."
- "If you didn't learn what you needed to learn then life will present you with another opportunity to learn what you need."
- "It's a great gift to have a birth in this grand, abundant country...that we don't need to spend the whole day fetching water...so we can do our spiritual work of looking within."
- "Without gratitude, we are never given more...and that is an absolute law."
- "Practice *Savasana* regularly so when you need it, the imprint is there and it is familiar when you come to it."
- "As you divest yourself of your commitments and responsibilities, let the space be filled with awareness."
- "Know that healing is a process not a miracle."

The depth of Shirley's investigation into her own life, which has set her firmly on the yogic path, is apparent through her teachings. Where I, myself have often questioned how and when to introduce students to the world of yoga beyond *asana*, Shirley stands fearless in her introduction and approach to yogic philosophy.

I am both humble and grateful to have had the opportunity to sit by with note pad and pen to observe Shirley. The forthrightness of Shirley Daventry French is refreshing, making her teachings palatable to many by initiating a course of physical, mental and spiritual assimilation. ☺

Interested in Participating in a Wonderfully Nurturing Yoga Weekend?

By Nancy Searing

Have you given any thought to attending the Salt Spring Retreat 2001? This annual retreat, led by Shirley Daventry French is an appropriate venue for all students of Iyengar Yoga from the beginner to the teacher. The Salt Spring Retreat is held at the Salt Spring Centre, the home of a spiritual community lead by Baba Hari Dass. The Centre is located on a large sanctuary-like property, with a lake, a stream, a meadow, and trails through old-growth forest to explore. There are also organic gardens that supply much of the food for many of the absolutely amazingly delicious vegetarian meals that are provided cheerfully three times a day for the workshop participants. No dishes!!! No cooking!!! No phones to answer - just lots of opportunity to practice asana and pranayama with one of Canada's senior teachers. Victoria Yoga Centre teachers assist Shirley for the weekend. Shirley's considerable knowledge and skill are imparted in a sometimes challenging, yet always clear, concise and careful manner. All participants are requested to follow a commitment of silence from 10pm until after the early morning pranayama practice, which Shirley leads. This pranayama practice is a further opportunity to deepen the yoga experience of going within and connecting with the inner, silent self.



The yoga studio emanates a serene and inviting atmosphere with natural light, hardwood floors and a stained glass window. Meals are served in the bright and sunny dining room. The decks and lawn also provide a wonderful outdoor setting for eating meals. Accommodations are shared, or participants wanting to get further away from it all (or save a few dollars) can camp in the fields. Pamper yourself with massage,

reflexology, or an incredible Ayurvedic Swedan massage, all offered by local bodyworkers. Lift your spirits on Saturday evening by joining in the chanting and singing lead by the aspirants of this spiritual community. Treat yourself to this exceptional opportunity to relax and rejuvenate through yoga. Enjoy the company of others with the same intent. All

you need to bring is an open heart and a commitment to study and practice yoga. See you there! ☯

YOGA VIDEO NIGHT – BRING YOUR OWN POPCORN!

Students of yoga and friends....
Come and be inspired by watching
Yoga Master, B.K.S. Iyengar in action.

No line-ups, it's enlightening and it's FREE!

Friday, March 2nd 7:00pm – 8:30

Friday, April 6th 7:00pm – 8:30

In the Yoga Lounge at the YM/YWCA

Call Chris for information 592-2079

The Victoria Yoga centre is pleased to present

The 2001 Retreat at the Saltspring Centre

with Shirley Daventry French

June 1 - June 3, 2001



*Pranayama, asana, chanting, sauna,
delicious vegetarian cuisine!
Shared accommodation in a
beautiful, tranquil setting*

Expert yoga instruction for all levels
with Shirley Daventry French.
Shirley is a senior student of B.K.S.
Iyengar and has studied with him many
times, most recently at the 25th
Anniversary of the Ramamani
Memorial Institute in January 2000.

Registration

Begins March 17th for Yoga Centre Members.

Fee: \$295.00

March 27th for non-members.

Fee: \$325.00

Please make cheques for the full amount
payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre
and mail to:

Lauren Cox

1174 May St.

Victoria, BC V8V 2S5

For more information phone Lauren
at (250) 382-3287 or Robin at (250) 382-4111

A Place to Hang Our Mats

By Rosemary Barritt

One definition of yoga is union, and that is what I felt at the Community Meeting on January 27th where about thirty of us gathered to talk about opening a centre of our own. Every one there was united in a common wish for a tangible physical location for the Victoria Yoga Centre. There was certainly no lack of energy or enthusiasm at the meeting. Although we are at the beginning of a long process, with facilitators Nathen Bernshaw and Corrine Lowen leading us, we put forth our collective ideas on how to turn a dream into reality.

The question put to us by Corrine and Nathen was "What are all the ways we can effectively expand Iyengar Yoga classes, deliver and maintain the strength of our community, and move into a new centre?"

We have a long-standing relationship with the YM/YWCA going back to the late 60's and we would continue conducting classes with them. But the number of people wanting to register for Iyengar Yoga classes is consistently greater than space at the Y allows. So, as an organization we want to meet that need. With our own space we can offer more weekly classes, plus expand our ever-popular weekend workshops where local teachers and guest teachers from Canada and other countries broaden our knowledge.

We are very fortunate in Victoria to have so many experienced and certified teachers. As a student myself I have benefited greatly from the collective wisdom. While teaching within Mr. BKS Iyengar's guidelines, each teacher passes on the Iyengar method in their own unique way.

A centre dedicated to Iyengar Yoga would fulfill the Victoria Yoga Society's mandate, to encourage the physical, mental and spiritual growth of its members and other interested members of society at large by the study and discipline of yoga.

I left the meeting with a very positive feeling and look forward to being part of the process of establishing a place of our own. If you'd like to be involved in this project, we need ideas, time, successful skills in business, and ideas of how to generate revenue. All are welcome to come to the next facilitated meeting on Saturday, February 24th at 9am (yoga lounge open from 8-9am as a practice space before the meeting). ☯

The Wall of Wonder

by Leslie Hogya

The beauty of the workshop method developed by The Institute for Cultural Affairs Canada, is that it gets everyone involved in the decision making process. At the January 24th meeting, one of the things Nathen Bernshaw did to bring us together was to look at the history of our yoga centre. He put up a long sheet of paper with a time line upon which everyone was invited to indicate, with an "X" when his or her relationship with yoga at the Victoria YM/YWCA began.

This became the Wall of Wonder. Nathen then asked for events and highlights of our history. Swami Radha was a major influence in the 70's. After Shirley Daventry French and Derek French took the Teacher's Course at Yasodhara Ashram, it was Swami Radha who encouraged them to launch our informal gatherings at the French's home. These Friday night discussions would continue regularly for years to come, and were the forerunners of our present Friday Night Gatherings. We became 'The Victoria Yoga Centre Society' when the workshops Shirley was organizing began to make money and it became necessary to legally incorporate ourselves under the Societies Act.

One of the highlights in the 80's was B.K.S. Iyengar's visit to Victoria. During that first historic visit, Swami Radha and Mr. Iyengar met and forged a friendship. It is the influence of these two great teachers that motivated and continue to inspire the further development of The Victoria Yoga Centre.

A few years later that highlight was followed by a low period. Volunteers receded, attendance was low and for a while it was only Shirley and Derek, and Jim and Jennifer Rischmiller who were at the helm literally keeping all aspects of the society afloat. Even publishing the newsletter, which at that time was *every* month.

Many events took place between then and now as we find ourselves trying to come to a decision of how to meet the demand for classes and to increase physical space to accommodate waiting lists for workshops. If and when we do move into our own space, I want to make sure this wall of wonder comes with us, as a way to honour the commitment and work that has produced and shaped this unique community. ☯



I would like to announce that Ty Chandler has completed her three years of teacher training. No one can doubt the commitment that Ty has to the study and practice of yoga. She has quiet strength, intelligence and joy of life that is motivating and infectious. By the end of the third year Ty even was able to appreciate the process of writing papers. She also has taken on many and various responsibilities to support Iyengar Yoga. Ty is registered to attend classes at the Institute in Pune in June and July this spring. She is at a point in her practice and understanding where she will soak up the knowledge available from Mr. Iyengar, Geeta and Prashant.

Linda Benn, Teacher's Group



The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

Welcomes you to the
Victoria Yoga Centre Society's



Friday Night Gathering



BIG BIG Practice

Date: Friday, May 18

Fairfield Community Place
1335 Thurlow St.
Garry Oak Room

Asana practice from 6 to 7:30 pm
Bring your own props if possible
Potluck dinner follows
(please bring your own plate/cutlery)

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Have Sticky Mat – Will Travel

by Leslie Hogya

I recently had the opportunity to live in Thailand for five months while my husband was on a teaching exchange with the University of Chulalongkorn in Bangkok. We also spent some time in the United States upon our return to North America.



Welcome Home, Leslie

For some toddlers, travel without a favorite stuffed animal or blanket is impossible. For me, I need my purple mat. Although I travel light, I usually make it a priority to include my sticky mat. I don't take a lot of clothes with me when I travel, just a few basics in limited colours. I also take some things that are nearly worn out so that I can leave them behind, replacing them with souvenirs. This was handy on my latest trip abroad.

The days that are most challenging are the ones that involve extensive hours of travel. On long flights, I try and move about as much as I can. As I walk around I scout out spots where I can do a few stretches, including the leg actions of some of the standing poses, as lifting the arms would be too conspicuous. When I'm in my seat, I do every conceivable arm action from *Garudasana* (Eagle) to *Gomukasana* (Cow Face) and I even manage the arm position of reversed namaste from *Parsvottanasana*. I also do a limited *pranayama* practice.

As traveling upsets routines, and schedules are thrown out the window, having my mat helps me set up my space to practice yoga wherever I find myself. This helps both in a very practical, physical way as well as psychologically. My mat and a belt are all I need to practice away from home because other props can usually be improvised from what is found in most hotels or guest rooms.

It is important to practice *sauca*, cleanliness, and sometimes I don't know how clean a floor or carpet is, so my mat gives me a clean surface on which to practice. All the standing poses can often be done with only a mat and I like having the mat for inversions; it provides sure footing when kicking up into *Adho Mukha Vrksasana* (Full Arm Balance). It not only provides a clean surface on which to practice, but also just enough cushion for the head in *Salamba Sirsasana* (Headstand).

Salamba Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand) is the one pose that really calls on my ingenuity. Most rooms have a blanket, even in the tropics. And if not, there's often a rock hard pillow. This item may not be comfy for sleeping, but it's often just right for Shoulderstand. If not, I can always do a supported pose off of a chair, or even the bed, depending on what's available.

Most other poses don't really require much in the line of props. And even a towel or blanket or even my own clothes folded neatly might serve in a pinch. There have been times that I have done *Salamba Sirsasana* with my jacket as a barrier between my clean hair and the floor.

More recently, I made a shorter trip to Vancouver for the weekend and ended up "matless" at my friend's house. My feet slipped on the floor as well as on the carpet, so standing poses were not an option. There were no empty walls, and the pillows were very nice for sleeping, but too soft for practice.

I was grateful for the variety of poses I could call upon. I began by spreading my towel down and started



With a little help from a suitcase

with reclining and supine poses, such as *Supta Padangusthasana* (Reclining Foot/Big Toe Pose) then *Ardha Navasana* (Boat), *Salambasana* (Locust), *Dhanurasana* (Bow) and *Bhekasana* (Frog). I then went onto twists and forward bends. And, as I ended with a Supported Shoulderstand off the couch, my hostess emerged in her nightgown on her way to grind the coffee.

Being without props encourages me to explore poses in a new way or even poses I might neglect. One of the most important yoga items I travel with on longer journeys is B.K.S. Iyengar's classic work, *Light on Yoga*. This book continues to be an inspiration. It not only provides reading material while waiting in airports, but I can always delve into those harder poses at the back of the book. Many of you have noticed that the photos show Guruji doing the asanas without the use of props.

Traveling provides me with plenty of opportunities to practice yoga philosophy. *Ahimsa*, non-injury, can be practiced with smiles and I can say a kind word to the

people who are performing difficult and tedious jobs. I can be accepting of others' cultural traditions and I can practice *santosa*, contentment. After all, if a plane is delayed, what is the point of getting upset?

As one wise philosopher said, "Wherever I go, there I am". No matter how exotic the locale, isolated the beach, remote the mountain trail, I am still there with my mind, my perceptions, my emotions. I can work to refine myself in all aspects. I can reflect on the yoga sutra in chapter I, verse 33 which says to practice friendliness, compassion, joy and indifference to the various people and situations I encounter. I am thankful for yoga, which never ceases to provide me with the tools I need to explore my Self, no matter where I venture. ☺

THEY'RE HERE!

NEW Victoria Yoga Centre Society T-SHIRTS

2 styles women's or unisex
2 colors white or grey
4 sizes S-M-L-XL

*all shirts have the VYC logo on
left chest with VYCS printed around
bottom of sleeve

*the WHITE ONLY styles have the
BKS Iyengar quote across upper back
"An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory"

\$20 (incl. Tax)

mail orders will have an extra charge

Call Britta at 250-381-3389 to place your order

All Proceeds To Benefit The Victoria Yoga Centre

The Fifth Limb of Yoga- Pratyahara

by Yvonne Kathleen Kipp

Svavisaya asamprayoga cittasya svarupanukarah iva indriyanam pratyaharah
Withdrawing the senses, mind and consciousness from contact with external objects,
and then drawing them inwards towards the seer is pratyahara.

-Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, BKS Iyengar (1966) Chapter II, verse 54

Pratyahara is the fifth limb of Astanga Yoga, the eightfold path described by Patanjali in the second chapter of his yoga sutras. It is necessary to have experience and wisdom to penetrate the true meaning of this level of practice. After applying the first two limbs, *yama* and *niyama* and working steadily to perfect *asana*, which leads to the deepening practice of *pranayama*, the *sadhaka*, practitioner, must face directly the withdrawal of the senses from the external-*prakrti*, nature, to the internal-*purusa*, the soul. Although the practice of renunciation is woven throughout all the limbs, *pratyahara* is the first limb that deals directly with *vairagya*, detachment. When one reaches this level of maturity, then *vairagya* becomes the only way to go to the heart of the truth.

In order for the yogi to take the path to a deeper level of exploration, practice and renunciation must interface and blend. *Pratyahara* is to accept who you have become, who you are now. Let go of the old tapes that catch and loop you back through your sense memory to the past. The dance of old patterns will hold you fixed in tightness and tension. The future is also important as is explained in sutra II.16, *heyam duhkham anagatam*, "The pains which are yet to come can be and are to be avoided".

The *sadhaka* acts with the prayerful *abhyasa*, practice, of *asana*. At the conjunction of *abhyasa* and *vairagya* penetration is made and the work may deepen. You may feel closer to essence, your own internal voice. With *svadhyaya* *Isvara pranidhana*, the *sadhaka* goes forward with prayerful action.

Abhyasa and *vairagya* are the two wings that are necessary for the ordinary soul to lift off and fly towards

the ultimate, the great Mysterious, the Divine. In sutra II.54, Mr. Iyengar describes the foundation of the path of renunciation: "As a bird cannot fly if one of its wings is cut off, so is it in the case of the *sadhaka*. The two wings of yoga are practice, from *yama* to *pranayama* and renunciation, from *pratyahara* to *samadhi*. For flight both are necessary, then the yogi dwells in his soul, perceiving all things directly, without the intervention of *citta*; the conscious faculty."

From practice it is possible to come to know, in the moment, our basic goodness to trust in the practice and to cultivate this basic trust. Trust is knowing that there is a spark of the divine in us all and to start there.

Once established in the trust of what we are doing in this work, we face renunciation. Renunciation is not just a matter of giving up something in life. As an example of this negative view, I grew up in a crazy family situation with much of the dualism centered around the interpretation of Roman Catholicism and how to live this way in everyday life. For years my father would throw the whole household into chaos when he decided to give up smoking for Lent. This resulted in much tension for all of us who shared his life. He was caught up in the gravity pull of the sensory world and worked at the gross level of attention merely repressing a desire for a short period but not working at the root level to weed out the habit and free up the energy for soul work.

Renunciation is a level of connection with an inner knowing; trusting one's own inner voice. This voice is one of discernment, is wise to duality, knows aligned from non-aligned, full from empty, expanded from compressed, tense from calm. For the inner journey to

be established, the pursuit of the Holy Grail in Arthurian Legends, one way is to search for truth in every moment. This calls for all senses to be alert and discerning in order to find balance and alignment; for all incoming data to be assessed, brought to balance with insight, and come to a state of readiness with even breath and intelligence in all cells. The ultimate illusion, as told in the *Mahabharata*, is the illusion of Heaven and Hell. Seek perfection now and start with where you are in *Tadasana* (Mountain Pose).

In the synchronizing of body and mind in the practice of yoga there is the place of finding the truth, the precise truth, your truth in the moment of action. In that moment there is an understanding that leads to the next moment coming out of a gentleness and appreciation of the world where there is nothing to destroy, nothing to be gained personally. As Mr. Iyengar writes in his translation of sutra I.16, "If through *abhyasa* we activate and purify our energy, through *vairagya* we disentangle ourselves from involvement in even the subtlest manifestations of the phenomenal world. The creation of energy alone, without control or restraints, cannot lead to freedom."

In Chapter VI of *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Isherwood Translation) Arjuna says:

Restless man's mind is,
So strongly shaken
In the grip of the senses
Gross and grown hard
With stubborn desire
For what is worldly.
How shall he tame it
Truly I think
The wind is no wilder.

Krishna replies:

"Yes Arjuna, the mind is restless, no doubt, and hard to subdue. But it can be brought under control by constant practice (*abhyasa*) and by the exercise of dispassionate discrimination (*vairagya*)."

In *Light on Yoga*, Mr. Iyengar describes the pose *Supta Kurmasana* (Tortoise). "This pose is sacred to a yogi. While describing the qualities of a *sthita-prajna* (one who is stable of mind) to Arjuna, the Blessed Lord says: 'When, again as a tortoise draws its limbs in on all sides, he withdraws his senses from the objects of sense, and then his understanding is well-poised.' (*The Bhagavad Gita*, II.58.) In this pose the limbs are withdrawn and the body resembles a tortoise. The mind becomes calm and composed and one develops equanimity whether in sorrow or in joy. The mind will gradually become free from anxiety amid pains and indifferent amid pleasures, while the emotions of passion, fear and anger will loosen their hold upon the mind."

When you are true to yourself and your basic practice you start to see more clearly what is good for you and what is not helpful. When you work with grace and equipoise in the world as a human being your basic instinct and trust in the practice are pure. Yes, there will be *klesas*, obstacles, questions of morals and ethics. By working from a basic place you can overcome these obstacles. Even if you judge your practice to be less than perfect, (and who doesn't!), keep on, keep on. In 1997, at the Canadian Intensive, Mr. Iyengar spoke of the necessity to practice with precise attention to minute details. What is happening to the skin of the big toe in *Virabhadrasana I*? How do you move from the back diaphragm when rising from *Supta Virasana*?

In self-exploration sooner or later we come to the dark side. When we move deeper into ourselves we have to face the shadow side of the soul. How do we deal with mind and memory that longs for further experiences? How the memory incites the mind to bypass the intelligence to go directly to the senses, gratification, the old familiar loops of sensory gratification, the old imprints.

During the dark days of winter a person once commented about how much happier they were living in Victoria as opposed to (where I live) a small, storm

blown rock like Cortes Island. "There is so much to do in the city. I can change my mood with so many activities: shopping, movies, restaurants, playing, running in the streets talking with everyone I meet." How do we break the old loop of using distractions to repress our fears and our reluctance to sit with ourselves in the dark?

The teachings urge us to see renunciation as a positive form of disengagement not a sterile rejection. Mr. Iyengar translates sutra II.54 that *pratyahara* is the friend that releases you from the snares of the external world, and leads you toward happiness in the delight of the soul.

For his gift of these teachings to us; for making this wisdom of the ages so available, may I say deepest thanks and praise to Mr. B.K.S Iyengar for his brilliant books; *Light on Yoga* and *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, both of which were used as reference throughout this article. ☯



The Victoria Yoga Centre

Is pleased to offer scholarships for the following two workshops:

Saltspring Retreat

June 1-3 two @ \$150.00

Please apply by May 1

Intensive

July 16-21 one @ \$300.00

one @ \$200

Please apply by May 15

Apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee and give to your teacher or mail to:

Scholarship Committee
Victoria Yoga Centre Society

Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St. Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

All applicants must supply a current phone number and address. For additional information contact Maggi Feehan at 598-1987 or Wendy Boyer at 598-9321.

Life Becomes the Practice

by Lynda Crawford

Chitta - mind Vritti - turbulence
Nirodhah - supression or restraint

This is certainly a case of the *vrittis* if ever there was one: Last year proved to be a stressful year as a family trauma hit us squarely and suddenly. My daughter, Tiffany returned home from England to temporarily stay with us on Salt Spring Island, taking some time out before moving on with her busy life in the fast lane. She was enjoying Island life, writing a book, and we were getting on remarkably well. Such has not always been the case; there had often been 'sparks' between us. She said I had changed (mellowed), I said she had, but I think we both are just older, wiser, more open, and tolerant. We have great love for each other. I credit my 8 years of yoga practice to changing many of my interior and exterior perspectives.

Tiff is a fit active, self assured, intelligent woman of 26. One night in February she woke up in the night with severe pain from back spasms. It was alarming and I took her to the hospital emergency in the morning. The doctor on call barely examined her and thought perhaps she was doing too much exercise and suggested she rest. He prescribed muscle relaxants. I helped her learn some yoga *asanas* working with the gentle restorative ones. It helped for a while and then one morning in April she appeared swollen from head to toe; all her joints extremely painful and it seemed that her glands were also affected.

This phenomenon was so swift, so devastating, suddenly she could hardly move and every movement was very painful. We quickly found excellent medical help, a rheumatologist in Vancouver, who diagnosed Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS). AS is a disease much like Rheumatoid Arthritis affecting about 2% of the population. If not brought into remission, there is danger of the spine fusing and joints becoming deformed.

I decided then that we could have FEAR or FAITH. I chose faith and began working from the yoga toolbox to find ways to deal with all the emotions that began to

well up and wash over me, especially at night when the mind would not cooperate and be still and the *vrittis* came out to get me. When sleep is elusive, it is hard not to let yourself go down that dark and twisting road. I tried to BREATHE, I really did, lying in *Savasana* and willing my attention back to the breath, but the black bubbles of fear kept trying to surface.

Now I am going to make this shocking admission. I wanted to give up on yoga. I didn't want to be inside myself. That really sounds odd as I write it, I thought that I would rather run and run or go to the gym and lift weights until my muscles hurt. Or alternatively, just curl up in a ball and sleep it all away.

I have been working through the Iyengar Teacher Training program with my teacher on the Island, Sheri Berkowitz, and the assignment for the month was: Read the *chitta vrittis* and ponder the activity of each *vritti* in your life and make notes on what is relevant.

What can I say? Yoga has a way of poking the right thing under your nose at the right time. I decided to share my story with the yoga community. Of course, I did not give up on yoga. It was a momentary 'lapse of reason' or a 'dose of *vrittis*'. I've invested heavily (and I don't mean money) in yoga and cannot live without its' influence.

I was at the tail end of a rotten cold when I ventured back to class. I hadn't practiced, I had a bird fluttering its' wings in my chest, even pecking at my heart and I hadn't had a good nights sleep for ages. And when a fellow student asked me a simple question, I burst into uncontrollable tears, my congested sinuses working overtime. I had seen this kind of emotional upset in students before -it could never happen to me- but here I was in a class and 'losing it'. I excused myself, went outside to try to get a grip, and returned blubbering and puffy eyed. I had disturbed our small class.

I was quietly and expertly directed into *Supta Badda Konasana*, Sheri placed a tissue over my hot eyes, then an eye bag, then a sandbag moulded to the top of my head. The tissue became a huge cool blotter for my eyes and the dark eye bag blocked the world out for the five minutes we stayed in the pose. My equilibrium gradually returned or should I say that the *vrittis* left me at some point soon after. We continued with some vigorous

standing poses and my body surprised me by responding in an amazing way. I felt light and strong and yes, balanced at last. Flip to page twenty of *Light on Yoga* (BKS Iyengar) and there it is: "Yoga is the method by which the restless mind is calmed and the energy directed into constructive channels" That's not all, it's become so much more meaningful to me now. How about this: The problem of controlling the mind is not capable of easy solution, as borne out by the following dialogue in the sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Arjuna asks Sri Krishna: 'Krishna, you have told me of yoga as a communion with Brahman (the Universal Spirit), which is ever one. But how can this be permanent, since the mind is so restless and inconsistent? The mind is impetuous and stubborn, strong and willful, as difficult to harness as the wind.' Sri Krishna replies: 'Undoubtedly, the mind is restless and hard to control. But it can be trained by constant practice, *abhyasa*, and by freedom from desire, *vairagya*. A man who cannot control his mind will find it difficult to attain this divine communion; but the self-controlled man can attain it if he tries hard and directs his energy by the right means.'

For me yoga is like a big jigsaw puzzle without edges. When you first begin you are handed a tiny piece of it. Gradually a picture emerges as it grows, and the desire to see more grows, before you know it you are hooked. Yoga becomes life; life becomes the practice.

My daughter has a good attitude, she has a great support system, I know now that we can ride over the waves of grief, denial and anger to find acceptance. We had wonderful medical and alternative healing systems at our disposal and within three months the remission was remarkable. Tiff has now moved to Vancouver to pursue a career in Broadcast Journalism. Yoga has become a vital part of the plan to sustain healing of body and mind for both of us. Salt Spring Island is known as the Healing Island and we have faith in that notion. It is a green and peaceful corner of the earth and anyone who has ever been lucky enough to spend time here certainly carries away a little bit of its' nurturing energy with them.

If anyone has any knowledge of dealing with AS please email me at: crawford@saltspring.com 

Yoga on a Budget of Time and Discipline

By Douglas Fraser

Time is on budget with two young children (Pamela 5 and Emma 18 months), a puppy, new job and home in the suburbs, home cooked meals and 2 working parents. Given that my wife, Michelle, and I do not see our kids all day, evenings and weekends take on a sacred nature. So when to get to yoga class? Fortunately, in our home, the living room has the allocation of yoga space, and that is always there, when I get to it.

To set the record straight, I must present my history of yoga. When I was a student at UVIC in 1993, I did a term of yoga as part of my recovery from a ruptured achilles tendon. There was another term about two years later at the YMCA. And then another one three years after that in 1998 but somewhere in this term I lost motivation; I missed my family and it was dark out and I wanted to be at home eating dinner in the suburbs, so I stopped going.

Soon thereafter, I did a personal development program I bought a book called *Ayurveda: The Science of Self-Healing* (Dr. Vasant Lad). I read it deeply then moved onto an ayurvedic cookbook. When my daughter and I both came down with eczema (and



Douglas and Pamela in Vrksasana

conventional medicine had not been successful), I ventured to a Naturopath which eventually lead me back to yoga and my present zeal. "Dr. Peter" gave me the best Treatment Plan imaginable: bed by ten, a strict schedule and a minimum twenty minutes of yoga per day.

I think about my Naturopath's prescription daily and when I follow it, I am at peace with my world. I have made great progress on the "Strict Schedule" and "Bed by Ten" but I was procrastinating on the yoga, always with so many excuses: "it's too cold", "the TV is on", "I'm full from dinner", "I just want to zone out". Then I had a great idea and I signed up for a yoga class during my lunch hour. I attended the Tuesday Noon Yoga for a term and then continued into the next term, adding a second class on Thursdays. Noon yoga had the motivation of a teacher and classmates yet there was no impact on time spent with my family. In fact, Michelle signed up for the Thursday noon class with me.

After telling this story to one of my teachers, she asked me if I would write about it...and I was inspired. I knew if I put pen to paper, I would have to be honest with myself in analyzing my level of discipline in yoga and thus my progress. I wanted to write the article because, quite simply, when I commit the time and mental space to yoga, it feels great. But I feared what people would think: would readers expect me to be a more accomplished "yogi" than I am, would they be dismayed with my struggle for discipline?

I came face to face with my fear at a News Year's Eve social (yes, I stayed up past 10pm). There I was, chatting with a couple over dinner and they wanted to know why I did not eat potatoes. (Hmmm, do I tell them? Why not, it might provoke conversation and enhance the evening.) "I do not eat potatoes because I follow the Blood Type Diet" and down the path I went. I had just began saying that I was originally interested in following the Yogic Pakriti Type Diet, and that was it, it was out, I owned a yogic cookbook! It turned out that this couple also took yoga classes at The Victoria Yoga Centre. When they found out I had bought a bolster, strap, mat, had allocated yoga space in my living room and was writing an article for the VYC Newsletter

(I had sheepishly mentioned that), I was typed as a serious student of yoga. It was clear that to these folks I did *appear* to have great yoga knowledge.

But to set the record straight, here and now, regardless of all of my books, instructions, props, videos, dedicated space and a keen family, what lacks is my "Strict Schedule" and for that reminder, I am grateful to my naturopath.

My home yoga practice, starting in December 2000, normally starts with Viparita Karani. At times when I am barely able to muster the discipline, let alone decide on which poses to practice I do Surya Namaskara; a set of vinyasa timed to be completed in my thirty minutes allotted for that day. Urdhva Mukha Svanasana is also popular as it loosens my lower back. When practicing at home, it is at times a "family affair". Pamela does yoga with us, asking us to put on the Yoga Kids video. Emma climbs on top of us in Viparita Karani and Roberta (the 40 pound puppy) lies underneath us in Adho Mukha Svanasana. They are all enthusiastic, active and love just being with us at home. I practice Virasana daily; a very useful pose, as it is my preferred posture for changing Emma's diaper.

The pose that I relax into, feel great release and don't continually try to adjust is Supta Baddha Konasana. Apparently Mr. Iyengar holds some poses for 30 minutes



YOGA....a family affair

to gain insight; this would be such a pose for me. Since we have a bolster and strap, and the help of the handout *Ten Postures to Quieten and Calm Body and Mind* (by Derek French MD, Shirley Davenport French and Lauren Cox), this pose has been a welcome addition at home.

How do I enjoy Noon Yoga on my lunch break? In my "maytags" as I call them. I am fortunate that my work clothes are loose enough to permit yoga. This saves me the ten minutes of getting changed and the extra time is often well spent chatting with the teacher at the end of class. Because I work on computers, my mind can be very "digital", outside of my body and lacking the ability to bring back focus. I am grateful to the balancing poses such as Virabhadrasana III and Vrksasana, which help me get my mind off of "end-user" email replies, outstanding alerts and software test results. So as I arrive to class and perform the simple, symbolic act of emptying the pockets of my maytags, I leave the outside world and its concerns behind.

I am somewhat a creature of the Noon Yoga standards of Tadasana, Trikonasana and Parsvakonasana. I find Virabhadrasana I and II most satisfying when my thighs are feeling strong. I struggle with Dandasana since my low back does not bend and in Savasana, I admit to having fallen asleep too many times. Knowing this is not the intention, I am reminded of not getting to bed by ten the night before.

Before yoga I did lots of high impact aerobics, cycle-commuting, some soccer and running. I am still interested in all of them but once I discovered that I could get energized from Halasana, and that Navasana had great long-term strength and control possibilities, I was amazed.

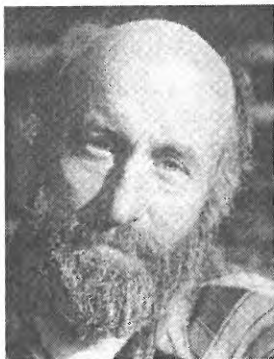
So, what's next? I need to be more committed about my home practice and patient in working to maintain my strict schedule, bed by ten and time with my family and myself. I place my stake in the yogic sand and say this is where I am and this is where I want to go. I can measure my personal progress from this.

-Author's Note: I do not speak Sanskrit. All asana terms were referenced from books. ☺

2001 *Victoria Yoga Centre Society Directors*



Constance Barker
Membership Coordinator



Ted Mather
Treasurer



Leslie Hogya
President



Doug Hart
Volunteer Coordinator



Amanda Mills



Jim Rischmiller
Past President



Linda Benn
Y/Teachers'/Scholarship Liaison



Martha Chick
Secretary



Rosemary Barritt
Vice President



Wies Pukesh
Program Coordinator



Britta Poisson
Publicity Coordinator

Who Does What – Yoga Centre 2001

President, Leslie Hoya – 383-6301

Oversees all committees

Vice President, Rosemary Barritt – 598-2851

Secretary, Martha Chick - 595-5415

Newsletter:

Editors:

Neil McKinley 595-4348

Caren Leidtke 595-4348

Lauren Cox 382-3287

Shirley Daventry French 478-3775

Gwynneth Powell (Liaison to board) 382-1412

Greg Sly 727-7499

Staple / Mailout:

Keiko Alkire 477-9918

Rosemary Barritt 598-2851

Advertising & Publicity:

Advertising: Carole Miller 721-3477

Publicity: Britta Poisson 381-3389

Teachers:

Teachers Training: Linda Benn 478-0757

Teachers Group: Rotating Chair

Finance Committee/Membership

Ted Mather 384-9210

Chris Lea 592-2079

Membership: Constance Barker 480-3983

Sales:

James Currie-Johnson, books & tapes: call yoga line
386-YOGA

Caroline Sophonow, mats: 598-3122

Communication:

Christine Dimofski: 370-9938 (voice mail box)

Wies Pukesh: 370-7494

Program

Ann Kilbertus 598-0976

Lauren Cox 382-3287

Leslie Hoya 383-6301

Wies Pukesh 370-7494

Friday Night Gatherings:

Robin Cantor 382-4111

Wendy Wimbush 381-5559

Bonnie Ship 384-9347

Scholarship Committee

Linda Benn, Maggi Feehan, Ty Chandler, Wendy Boyer

Library

Maggie Feehan (books) 598-1987

Linda Benn (tapes) 478-0757

Volunteer Coordinator

Doug Hart 380-1724

Web Page

Rachelle Roy

Melissa Worth 519-4779



Using props in Janu Sirsasana

"The AGM reports will follow in the summer issue.
If anyone needs information before that, please
contact Martha Chick at 595-5415 or email:
martha.chick@bcferries.com"

Recognizing Liberation Through Ahimsa

by Ty Chandler

In yogic philosophy a *yama* is a collective name for a universal moral commandment. The first of five *yamas* is *ahimsa* or non-violence. In *The Light On Pranayama*, Mr. Iyengar defines *ahimsa* as, "Withdrawal from the infliction of any type of injury, whether physical or mental, in thought or deed. When hatred and animosity are abandoned, an all-embracing love remains. The yogi is ruthlessly truthful and honest with himself, and whatever he thinks or speaks turns out to be true. He controls his desires and reduces his wants, so that he becomes richer without stealing and things come to him without his asking."

I find this *yama* fascinating because when *ahimsa* is respected the other *yamas* 'fall' into place. *Satya* (truth) is spontaneous; *asteya* (non-stealing) is obeyed as the individuals' desires become under control, *aparigraha* (non-covetousness) is respected as things come to him without asking, and as desires are controlled then *brahmacharya* (continence) may be observed.

Ahimsa was the first *yama* I explored in asana practice. I became aware of over-doing and how this harms me through exhaustion, soreness and injury. Instead of honoring my limitations, working with awareness and enjoying the practice, each practice was becoming a contest to do better than the last time. In keeping with my long history of competitive sports I was maintaining this environment with myself, which was something I came to yoga to dismantle. I am now noticing in *asana* that when I have become quiet, and stop trying, striving, and relax into the pose, how this un-doing enables me to open and go deeper without struggle or injury. I have also become more aware of how I practice under the direction of different teachers and their natures. I watch for both under-doing and over-doing because, as Mr. Iyengar says, under-doing is *ahimsa* as well.

The observance of *ahimsa* resonates to every corner of

my life, from the harmful effects of too much coffee down to a single negative thought. Vigilant attentiveness to maintain a non-violent nature could be many lifetimes of practice. But by becoming aware of *ahimsa* I now can make conscious choices for non-violence and this reveals a sense of freedom to me. As one practices *ahimsa*, the purified self emerges and begins to recognize liberation.

Baba Hari Das says, "To refrain from causing pain to any living being, including oneself. Every action, word, or thought that causes pain to another - any thought containing anger, greed, lust, or attachment - is a form of violence. With perfection of *ahimsa*, one's nonviolent nature and peace radiates to other." ☯

"...Grammar for Clarity and Purity of Speech..."

(*Light on the Yoga Sutras of Pantanjali*, B.K.S Iyengar, translation from the invocation to Patanjali)

by Wies Pukesh

During the 1999 "Going Deeper" workshop it was immediately apparent that I was most interested in Shirley as a "teacher": What does it mean and what does it take to be a teacher? I went - with an open mind to the 2000 workshop to see what would catch my interest most.

There were many facets during the weekend that were significant to me, for example, Shirley's use of the philosophical side of yoga. It's clear that Shirley is at ease with the philosophy and is able to masterfully weave it in and between the asanas in a manner, which makes the philosophy palpable to everyone. Students were genuinely fascinated by what she had to say. Another aspect that grabbed my attention was the ability of Shirley to pinpoint students' tight areas and to manipulate their bodies in such a way that they were then intentionally working on their tightness instead of avoiding it. A beautiful example of this art and skill was

shown close to the beginning when the students were doing *Tadasana* lying down, feet against the wall and arms overhead. Shirley adjusted certain students in such a way that the diaphragm would visibly relax and the spine stretch upward.

But what peaked my interest most this year was the use of language while giving instructions. As I myself am starting to teach level two work, I am on the look-out for more arsenal for instructing. So, I jotted down those instructions that are not in my repertoire. And then I started wondering about the people that came up with these instructions. To be able to realize subtle directions of movements in the body is one thing, but then to articulate this is a whole other dimension. Often while being instructed as a student I discover that I am already implementing the instructions intuitively. It must take an incredible amount of concentration to figure out what is actually going on and then put words to it. The next step is to find a way to put it into words so the majority of students are able to understand what you mean. As Shirley said during the workshop: There are "anatomically correct" ways of referring to the different parts of the body, but do the people grasp what you are saying? For example, "sitbones" is much easier to understand to most than "ischial tuberosities". And to make teaching even more complex, there are times when a student needs a different instruction than what seems to work for the rest of the class. A visible fumbling in the pose or a blank expression on the face might be an indication that that this student did not follow you. Some students become overwhelmed by the amount of instructions given. To realize this and then to work on rectifying it takes sensitivity and a skill in altering your language use in such a way that those students may also participate fully. Then there are students who need special instructions in order to address some specific problem in their body. Again the right language is essential in these cases. An example of this during the workshop occurred when Shirley instructed a student to do with his upper arms and shoulders what one does when doing the "butterfly stroke" in swimming; this

instruction was given while doing *Adho Mukha Svanasana*.

I understand now at a "deeper" level why *Patanjali*, the noblest of sages, also gave us grammar for clarity and purity of speech. We try with words to convey that which is actually tactile. And often I do get the feeling that it is much easier to adjust someone manually than to find the right words to achieve change. But I also understand that the student will probably learn at a deeper level by trying to find the adjustment him/herself. There is also a paradox here: ultimately we try, through language, for the student to find one-pointed-ness or silence. This is why I have never fully appreciated language: it is so often used to stay away from silence. But during this workshop it became clear to me how important language is and how important it is to use it responsibly. In no other species is language as developed as in humans. It's one of the last things to evolve in the human being. It is also one of the first things to be affected when one is devolving: as when one is drinking alcohol. Stress affects language, as in myself language disappears when I am nervous, and other people start talking a mile a minute. I think we were given speech to close those gaps of misunderstanding, of feelings of separateness from each other. Since yoga is all about union, we as teachers need to develop the "right" language so the student is able to understand and act upon it in order to become a more unified self.

I end this paper by relating a Sufi story of the "inimitable *Mulla Nasrudin*" to illustrate the effect the right use of language may have:

A man had fallen between the rails and people were crowding around shouting at him: "Give me your hand!" before the train would run him over, but the man would not reach up. The *Mulla* leant over and said: "Friend, what is your profession?" "I am an income-tax inspector," gasped the man. "In that case," said *Nasrudin* "take my hand!" The man immediately grasped the *Mulla's* hand who hauled him to safety. *Nasrudin* turned to the audience and said: "Never ask a tax man to give you anything, you fools!" ☯

Adhita* the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter

by Glenda Hingley

I love to read. When I was very young, almost all of my Christmas and birthday wishes were for books. In high school, I constantly read ahead of my class – it was fun! In university, I faltered a little. It was difficult to keep up my recreational reading and still do the required scholastic reading. But still I loved to read. When we were first married, I amazed my husband by having two or three books on the go at once. Although I confess that I have slowed down a little in the intervening 26 years, reading is still a large part of my life and when I get interested in a new subject, I consume reading material at an alarming rate.

When I decided, after three years of classes, to begin a daily yoga practice, it was only natural for me to gather reading material to help in my quest for knowledge. Of course, I asked for books as gifts and I started buying all of the yoga magazines. I was in reader's heaven! But magazines aren't published very frequently and rarely focus on Iyengar Yoga in its purity. And the books, as wonderful as they are, don't always have the answers I am looking for. The Internet is still a bit sketchy where yoga is concerned, and searching for a single topic, for example, the *yamas* and *niyamas*, can take hours online.

Finally, when a friend from class asked me a question about yoga I automatically thought about an article in our very own newsletter. After I lent her my copy, I dragged out the small stack of newsletters I had faithfully read and stored away. While I remembered much of the content from previous readings, I found that many of the articles had new meaning since I had established a home practice and therefore had a different perspective.

When you read something in our newsletter, it doesn't need to be interpreted or checked with a teacher. The content of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter is

always true to Iyengar principles and the teaching we receive in class. And this bi-monthly publication often has articles written by Mr. Iyengar, Geeta or Prashant! So, I began to leaf through the pile and found dozens of pieces that were thought provoking, inspiring or had immediate implications on my practice. I felt they deserved to be reread.

My pile of newsletters has now moved into my yoga space and is stacked carefully beside my fast becoming dog-eared copies of classics such as *Light on Yoga* (1966, BKS Iyengar) and *Yoga a Gem for Women* (1983, Geeta Iyengar). Now, when I have a few extra minutes during my practice, I sit in *Baddha Konasana* or *Upavistha Konasana* and reach into the pile for a short read. Many times a review of a workshop or a teacher training paper will give me new ideas for my own practice or reinforce something we have recently learned in class. And naturally, when I needed to know the style rules for submitting this article, I looked those up in the newsletter as well (July/August 2000 issue)!

For anyone looking for some reading material, either inspirational or practical, I highly recommend digging into your own pile of old newsletters or borrowing them from our library. You may be pleasantly surprised at what a wonderful reading adventure is awaiting you.

* *Adhita* means to learn from. Translation source: the *Cappeller Sanskrit/English Dictionary*, on line ☪



The Victoria Yoga Centre

is excited to announce
the birth of our website
www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca
...created by Rachelle Rey

We welcome your feedback or suggestions to be directed to Linda Benn at lbenn@islandnet.com



Radha Yoga Centre

Coming Events

Yoga and Reflection

Saturday, March 17 10:00 am-4:00 pm

How many times have you wished for guidance in making a decision or overcoming a problem? Using the ancient yogic practices, we will each explore a personal issue, seeking clarification through contact with our intuition. Practices will include hatha, mantra and karma yoga.

Bring lunch; tea provided

Fee: \$40.00

Divine Dance

Sunday, May 27 9:30 am-2:00 pm

There is a rhythm to which the whole Universe dances. Modern physicists know it as the dance of particles. Ancient yogis knew it as the Dance of Siva, and saw dance as a form of prayer. In this workshop, we will learn a prayer dance and reflect on its meaning. No dance experience or talent needed.

Bring lunch; tea provided

Fee: \$30.00

*Please phone to register in advance
for workshops: 595-0177*



Swami Sivananda Radha



Join us every Sunday for

Morning Meditation

9:30-10:30 am

Chant a mantra and reflect, to begin (or end) your week with a renewed connection to your personal ideals and inner Light.

Evening Satsang

8:00 - 9:00 pm

A time of renewal and inspiration as we honour the Light, chant a mantra and read from Swami Radha's work. Come at 7:30 pm to sing spiritual songs before Satsang. If you would like to add someone's name to our prayer list, please call 595-0177.

There is no charge for Meditation or Satsang.

ascent magazine

Canada's yoga magazine, presenting the thoughts and reflections of today's spiritual leaders

To subscribe:

e-mail: subscriptions@ascentmagazine.com

phone toll free: 1-800-661-8711

For story and art queries:

e-mail: editor@ascentmagazine.com

regular mail: Box 9, Kootenay Bay, BC, V0B 1X0

YOGA CALENDAR

MARCH 2001

2 Yoga Video Night 7-8:30pm
23-25 Workshop with Felicity Green

APRIL 2001

6 Yoga Video Night 7-8:30pm
20 Friday Night Gathering
with Leslie Hogya
21 Teachers' Meeting

MAY 2001

2-6 Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference
with Geeta Iyengar
7 CIYTA AGM at UBC in Vancouver
18 Friday Night Gathering
"Big Big Practice"
25 Inspirations from India: An evening
workshop with Ann Kilbertus
(details in next issue)
26 Teachers' Meeting

JUNE 2001

1-3 Salt Spring Retreat
with Shirley Daventry French
15-17 Introductory Assessment (Halifax)

JULY 2001

16-21 Teacher Training Intensive

SEPTEMBER 2001

15-16 Going Deeper An all-levels workshop
with Shirley Daventry French

OCTOBER 2001

12-14 Anatomy Workshop
with Julie Gudmestad

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Constance Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.

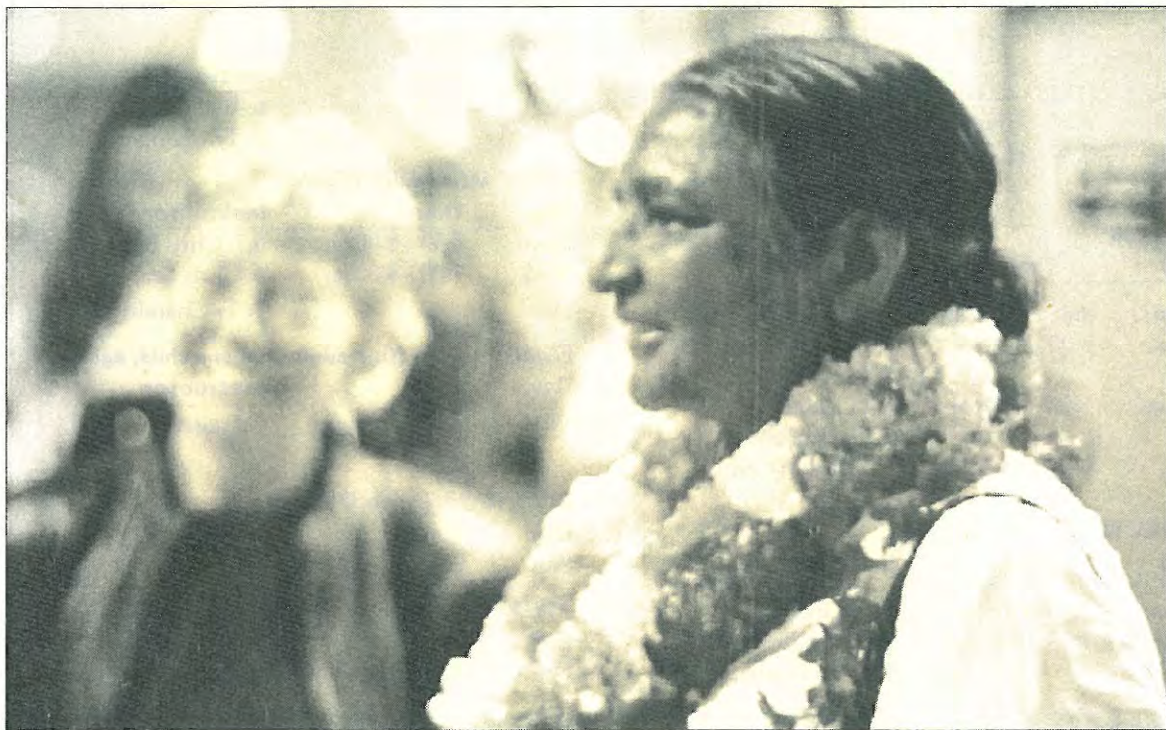
VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



July/August 2001

Please Subscribe



Victoria YM/YWCA Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Term VI: July 3 – August 5

Term VII: August 7 – September 2



Important Note:

There will be no regular Y yoga classes during the
Teacher Training Intensive July 16-21

Yoga Teacher Training Intensive July 16-21 (fully
registered) Shirley D. French, Leslie Hogya, Ann
Kilbertus & Linda Benn. Information: 478-0757

LEVEL I (Introductory)

Day	Time	Term & Instructor
Mon.	10:30 - 12noon	6, 7: Leslie Hogya
Mon.	7:30 - 9:00pm	6: Linda Benn 7: Chris Dimofski
Tues.	9:00 - 10:30am	6, 7: Wies Pukesh
Tues.	5:00 - 6:30pm	6: James Currie-Johnson 7: Celia Ward
Wed.	10:30 - 12 noon	6, 7: Gwynneth Powell
Wed.	6:00 - 7:30pm	6, 7: Chris Lea
Sun.	9:30 - 11:00am	6: Li Milne 7: Ty Chandler

LEVEL II

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	9:00 - 10:25am	6, 7: Chris Lea
Tues.	7:00 - 8:30pm	6: James Currie-Johnson 7: Celia Ward
Thurs.	5:30 - 6:55pm	6: Li Milne 7: Ty Chandler
Sat.	9:00 - 11:00am	6, 7: Robin Cantor

LEVEL III

Day	Time	Instructor
Thurs.	10:00 - 12noon	6, 7: Linda Benn
Thurs.	7:00 - 9:00pm	6: Ann Kilbertus 7: Yoga Teachers

LEVEL IV

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	5:30 - 7:25pm	6: Marlene Miller

NOON YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Tues.	12:00 - 1:00pm	6, 7: Wendy Boyer
Thurs.	12:00 - 1:00pm	6, 7: Gwynneth Powell

GENTLE YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Fri.	10:30 - 12noon	6: Wies Pukesh 7: Ty Chandler

EARLY MORNING YOGA

Day	Time	Instructor
Mon.	6:30 - 8:00am	6, 7: Chris Lea
Wed.	7:00 - 8:00am	6: Chris Lea 7: Ty Chandler

FAMILY YOGA (One adult plus one child, aged 4-7)

Day	Time	Instructor
Wed.	5:00 - 5:55pm	6: Lauren Cox

KIDS YOGA (ages 6-9)

Day	Time	Instructor
Sat.	10:30 - 11:30am	6, 7: Chris Lea

YOUTH YOGA (ages 10-14)

Day	Time	Instructor
Sat	9:30 - 10:30am	6, 7: Chris Lea

Registration & Information:

Victoria YM/YWCA, 880 Courtney St.
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1C4 Phone: 386-7511

Editor: Caren Liedtke

Newsletter Committee: Lauren Cox, Shirley Daventry French, Neil McKinlay, Gwynneth Powell, Greg Sly

Layout & Production: Marion Stoodley- Page Perfect Design & Type

Photography: Nancy Bleck, Susan Stewart, Linda Benn, Gwynneth Powell, Ty Chandler

Typing: Caren Liedtke

Advertising: Carole Miller

Distribution: Keiko Alkire, Rosemary Barritt

Membership/Mailing List: Constance Barker

Printing: Hillside Printing & Copy Centre

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA or visit our website at www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca

Deadline for next issue: July 23, 2001

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any of our material, except that copyrighted by the author or artists. When reprinting, please credit this Newsletter and send us two copies of the publication containing our material. Copyright material is only available with written permission.

CONTENTS:

REFLECTIONS

Shirley Daventry French p. 4

GEETA

Leslie Hogya p. 7

SERVING GEETA

Khairoon Quadir p. 9

BE TRUTHFUL INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

Linda Benn p. 10

PRANAYAMA: A PHYSICAL PRACTICE?

Corrine Lowen p. 13

IN OUR MAILBOX

..... p. 14

MONITORING

Sheri Berkowitz p. 15

MONITOR (THE DUTY)

Ingelise Nherlan p. 16

VALUED MOMENTS ON STAGE

Vicky Catchpole p. 17

MORE DIFFICULT THAN HELI-SKIING!

Dr. Roger Lake p. 18

THE YOGIC MIND

Corrine Lowen p. 19

INSPIRATIONS FOR LIFE

Melissa Worth p. 20

GEETAJI

Leslie Faber p. 21

MEETING GEETA

Chris Lea p. 21

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE

Nancy Searing p. 22

REFLECTIONS ON THE CHANCE OF A YOGA LIFETIME

Drew Perry p. 22

THE AMAZING THING

Athena George p. 23

THE GEETA EXPERIENCE

Rachel French de Mejia p. 25

GREETINGS FROM THE PRAIRIES

Sandra Stuart p. 28

GREETINGS FROM NEWFOUNDLAND

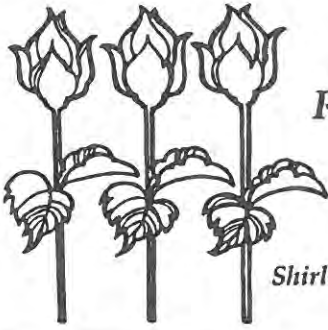
Beverly Winsor p. 29

CLOSING SPEECH

Marie-Andrée Morin p. 30

COMMITTEE REPORTS JANUARY AGM, 2001

..... p. 30



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

"Geeta has stated that her knowledge is a mere fraction of Guruji's. In a similar way, even the most senior teacher in our country knows only a fraction of what Geeta knows about Yoga and Guruji's work."



This statement was one of many I received from Iyengar Yoga students across Canada in response to the question: Why do you want Geeta Iyengar to come to Canada?

Last year as summer came to its close we were still awaiting news from Pune whether Dr. Geeta Iyengar would be coming to North America in the spring 2001. It was a long time since we had issued our invitations, and Canadians and Americans alike waited as patiently as we could for Geeta's answer. The Americans were going to hold a convention anyway, with or without Geeta. Ours hinged on her coming. If she did come we were going to hold a conference in Vancouver. If not, we would hold the 2001 Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association (CIYTA) in Newfoundland as originally planned. In the normal course of events it was the turn of a yoga community from somewhere in eastern Canada to host the 2001 meeting. A visit from Geeta would definitely not fall into the usual course of events.

The US convention was to be held in Pasadena, a community on the outskirts of Los Angeles. St. John's, Newfoundland is about as far away from there as you

can get in Canada. It would be asking too much of Geeta to travel not only from south to north (or vice versa) but from west to east (or vice versa) across six time zones. Vancouver has a sizable Iyengar Yoga community, is in the same time zone as Los Angeles and has a major airport easily accessible from anywhere in North America or the rest of the world, for that matter. And so it was decided, if Geeta came, Vancouver was where the Canadian conference would take place.

We continued to wait until one Sunday afternoon towards the end of summer, I received a request from Geeta to contact teachers and students across Canada seeking answers to the following questions:

- (1) Why do we want Geeta to come?
- (2) What do we want to learn from her?
- (3) What format would we like for a visit from her?

There was a proviso: she did not want us just to say that we loved her. I was to gather the replies and send them to her via e-mail as soon as possible.

I was encouraged. Geeta must be considering the possibility of coming or she would simply have said no. Quickly I got on the computer, wrote a letter, checked e-mail addresses and pressed the SEND button.

My experience of sending out mass appeals via e-mail or any other mail has not been encouraging. What usually happens is that I can rely on a few people to take the time to read and consider the contents and reply. Anything more will require a second letter, succinct and to the point, plus an effort on my part not to let my frustration and impatience show (something in which I do not always succeed).

This time my e-mail started to hum right away. Replies came streaming in. It was clear that Canadian students really wanted Geeta to come, and they answered her questions thoughtfully without delay. I went through the replies, editing to avoid duplication and sent the list to Pune. This time Geeta's response came quickly.

Geeta is coming! Across Canada we paused, took a collective deep inhalation and exhaled.

For the Americans, many of the arrangements for their convention were already in place. Not only had the

venue been chosen but also the date: May 10 to 15. For us some uncertainty remained: would she be here before or after this, and the date for our conference changed back and forth a few times before finally being settled as May 2 to 6. We had some considerable anxiety during this period about finding a suitable site, but were able to satisfy most of our needs with the Conference Centre on the attractive campus of the University of British Columbia. The only snag was that particular week fell between university semesters, and the residences would be being cleaned and refurbished. Despite our pleas, there was no flexibility on the university's part. The conference centre could provide a limited amount of accommodation for Geeta and those working on the conference. For the rest, accommodation would have to be found in hotels, bed and breakfast's, and billets with local students.

Suffice it to say that obstacles such as this were overcome one by one with the local Vancouver community doing an outstanding job.

Before coming to Canada, Geeta would be travelling around the States for a couple of weeks, starting in New York, visiting many cities and ending up on the West coast. I was told that as her proposed itinerary was quite crowded, she would like to find a quiet place somewhere with space to practice yoga where she could rest and recuperate before her schedule became even more demanding with a five-day Canadian conference followed by a six-day American one. As it happened, I knew just the place. My home is large enough to accommodate Geeta and her entourage, and contains a well-equipped yoga room. I made the offer, Geeta acquiesced, and the peace, beauty and fresh Pacific air were just what she needed and greatly enjoyed.

In Vancouver airport, Geeta's first point of entry into Canada, the president of the CIYTA, Donna Fornelli

of Ottawa, was on hand to whisk her from Canada customs in the international terminal to the far reaches of the domestic terminal where she would board the short flight to the Island. Late afternoon of Friday,

April 27th 2001, Geeta Iyengar stepped off the plane in Victoria to be met not only by Derek and I but a large contingent of members of the Victoria Yoga Centre, holding colourful bouquets of flowers including several garlands painstakingly woven by loving hands.

In Victoria's small airport, graciously Geeta spent time acknowledging the tribute being paid to her as Guruji's emissary plenipotentiary. When she left Canada – having fulfilled this role in exemplary fashion – we said goodbye not only to an ambassador but to an extraordinary, compassionate, articulate woman, an outstanding teacher whose knowledge, focus and brilliance had been abundantly in evidence each day of her visit to Canada.

My experience of her visit was unique, blessed by her presence in my home. Yet each person I have spoken to who was with her in any capacity had their own unique experience.



One incredible gift for me was being able to do my *asana* practice at the same time as Geeta did hers. She practised *pranayama* in private, but like her father, her *asana* practice was done in the open, sharing the space with the rest of us in the household. When it was important to withdraw her energy and concentrate on her own needs, she did so; but from time to time she intervened to help one of the others who was in need of some help. It was my good fortune to receive some invaluable adjustments and feedback about my practice.

Also like her father, Geeta is very gregarious, and when not practising we all took part in lively conversations and discussions about life and yoga — which for Geeta, are inseparable. It is no accident that the article by

Geeta which we chose to publish in the Canadian Conference magazine ¹ is entitled *Live Yoga*. In this article Geeta quotes Guruji: "Live yoga . . . yoga is the way of life. Breathe every breath with yoga." This is what Geeta does, live yoga every minute of her day. Not a moment is wasted.

An invaluable contribution to Geeta's stay in Canada came from a Vancouver student called Khairoon Quadir. Khairoon had cooked for Guruji on all of his visits to Canada, to his great appreciation and that of all who dined with him. During the winter I had stayed with Khairoon when I was in Vancouver to teach a workshop, and naturally we discussed Geeta's impending visit. One day Khairoon said to me: "If you like, I could come over to Victoria to cook for Geeta". *Would I!* Although I love Indian food and enjoy cooking it, it is not our regular diet, and would necessarily occupy much of my time and attention. I had been thinking about looking for someone locally to help, but here was an offer not to be refused from someone with proven talents in this regard. And so it came to pass that Khairoon took care of Geeta's culinary needs in Victoria as well as Vancouver, in the most loving and respectful manner. One of Khairoon's attributes is that having been told there will be six or seven for dinner she is unfazed when ten or eleven (or more) turn up — and all will be well and amply fed.

One day while Geeta was in Victoria, we went for a walk through the oceanside park just below my home. It was late Saturday afternoon. This rural park lies twenty four kilometres from downtown Victoria. Most of the afternoon's visitors had already departed, and the park was almost empty. As we went down the narrow path towards the beach a young family was walking towards us. It consisted of mother, father and child. We are friendly out here in the village of Metchosin and usually greet each other in passing. As I was about to do so, the woman inclined her head towards Geeta and said: "Namaste, Geetaji!" And Geeta replied: "Namaste". Who was this woman? I did not know her; she was not my student. When they had passed we all looked at Geeta and laughed, and she was laughing along with us. "Well, that's fame", I said.

Geeta did not seek fame, and eschews it when it is

thrust upon her. Our praises, as she told us in Pasadena, go in one ear and out the other. Echoing the sentiments expressed at the beginning of this article, it became clear to many people during her visit that the knowledge of even our seniormost teachers is a fraction of what Geeta knows. Similarly, Geeta reminds us constantly that her knowledge is a fraction of Guruji's. He is the genius behind all of the work we did with Geeta in Canada and the United States, and the credit belongs to him. This is true, but it is also true that a fraction of Guruji's vast body of knowledge is still an enormous amount.

Geeta's four days in Victoria passed in relative seclusion, and then we were off to Vancouver for the conference. Another wonderful time! Geeta's teaching



Dr Geeta S. Iyengar performs a puja to open the Third Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference, May, 2001.

was brilliant, her talks thought provoking, her medical forum masterful. She showed us so much in such a short time, I was almost breathless.

Time and time again, during the conference, people came up to me and said: "Now we understand why you keep going back to India!"

Having decided that this is what I want to do with my life, why wouldn't I make it a priority to return to Pune and the source of this work? However, first comes a responsibility to digest the information already gathered and transmute it from information into knowledge. Then it will become an integral part of my life and myself. Only through practice will this be possible, and to return to Pune without having made this effort would be merely greedy. For those who are prepared to make the effort there is no place on earth which offers a better opportunity for *yoga sadhana* or spiritual practice according to the sutras of Patanjali.

The second chapter of the sutras which is entitled *Sadhana Pada* begins: *Tapah svadhaya Iśvarapranidhāna kriyayogah* — burning zeal in practice, self-study and surrender to God are the acts of Yoga. *Svadhaya* or self-study is not limited to understanding our personality, our way of being in the world, but why we are here in this life in this body, what is the meaning and purpose of our life. Who are we really beyond all the external trappings with which we surround, disguise and hide ourselves? To this end *svadhaya* also involves study of the scriptures and spiritual writings as well as prayer and reflection.

Practice, self-study and surrender to the Divine. Thank you Geetaji for coming, for gracing us with your presence and teaching us this lesson so thoroughly. You have done your duty. Now it is up to us. ☉

Footnote

1. The Third Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference magazine is being given to all Victoria Yoga Centre members in place of the May/June newsletter. If you have not received your copy, contact your teacher. Non-members may purchase copies of this commemorative magazine at a cost of \$5 from your yoga teacher or phone the yoga centre at (250) 386-9642.

Geeta

by Leslie Hogya

Friday night, April 27th the Victoria Yoga community gathered at the Victoria International Airport to welcome Dr. Geeta Iyengar to our city for a few days needed rest. The air was charged with anticipation as we blocked the arrivals corridor. Even the commissionaires got caught up in our enthusiasm snapping pictures for us, instead of clearing us out of the way. The doors opened and there she was in her typical white sari, looking radiant. We beamed at her, and she beamed at us. We had nothing to say except welcome. She was ready to talk to us, but we were tongue-tied. We beamed for some long minutes and then we helped get her luggage out to the car for the drive to Derek and Shirley's home.

I had been out at the French's home nearly all day helping Khairon Quadir prepare food for her supper. I had not intended to return with them, assuming Geeta was ready for a quiet evening, but suddenly there was one seat belt too few in the French's car, so I found myself driving two of Geeta's entourage, Stephanie Quirk and Manuso Manos out to Metchosin.

Khairon had worked extraordinarily hard to prepare foods she thought Geetaji would like and would fit her diet preferences. The first dinner (as were all that followed) was sumptuous and when I helped serve it, Khairon and I were told to come and sit at the table with Geeta, Shirley, Derek, Stephanie (traveling with her from India), Gloria Goldberg and Manuso. Both Gloria and Manuso are from California and had accompanied Geeta on her trip across the U.S. and assisted her in every way.

I sat down and listened to the talk. Normally, I am outgoing and comfortable talking with others, but that dinner, I was in awe; I just listened. What could I say that Geetaji would want to hear? I didn't want to bother her with any nonsense.

The next morning was to be a day for Geeta to rest and practice. I arrived ready to chop more vegetables, and heard laughter and chatting from Geetaji's room. I had the conference magazine hot off the press under my arm, and timidly knocked at the door where the group had assembled. My comment, that they were in an intense *asana* session was greeted with laughter from Geeta, and when I returned an hour later to announce lunch, I said, "Oh, I see you are still in the same *asana*." This broke the ice for me, and from then on, I felt more at ease talking with her. Over those few days, Geeta's intense concentration, her hard work and dedication to yoga and her father, B.K.S. Iyengar, were apparent. I was also able to enjoy her sense of humour and was awed by her humbleness. When we met, and discussed conference details, I tried to think clearly and be organized so I didn't waste her time. Having had no experience with an event of this kind, I felt at times the whole thing was unreal, and I wasn't sure what I was doing to help it along. When we went over certain aspects of the program, Geeta quickly grasped the situation and came up with creative and viable solutions.

Each day with her was a gift. One of the highlights for me was practicing with the group in Shirley's yoga studio. Geetaji was there in *Virasana* when I arrived and rolled out my sticky mat. She occasionally stopped and helped someone with a problem, but basically we worked together in silence.

May 2nd, 340 spread out before me in the UBC gym. I was so excited, "Wow!" was how I prefaced my announcements. This was it! All the hard work of so many people was coming to fruition.

During the conference, I spent most classes walking around the massive gym through the students, checking their poses, making sure they were following what Geeta was saying. Geeta would say, "Keep your feet parallel to the edges of the mat." I would walk and see where the students did not hear or understand, and repeat her words again, or point to the foot, to indicate

they needed to turn out more.

I wanted to be a student and do the poses and hear her words as I performed the *asanas* and integrate the philosophy she was giving us. But I watched, I checked, I learned. In humility, I listened.

How could she see all 340 people at once? How did she know the adjustment a person needed at the back of the class? She noticed anyone who came out of a pose, and gave them assistance. She extorted us to practice *tapas*, *svadhyaya* (self study), and *isvara pranidhana* (devotion).

Geeta woke early each day to do her practices and stayed up late solving problems. Her idea of rest on the one afternoon off in Vancouver, was to go to India town and look at saris.

The conference was too soon winding down; the closing ceremonies were upon us. We planned them as they unfolded; none of us had been able to envision the end of the conference too clearly. I was trying to compose a speech, when I felt nearly speechless, and then the final prayers were said, and I asked Geeta if she would mind coming back on stage for people to come up to her one at a time for a final *namaste*. She graciously agreed, and the hundreds of participants waited patiently to have a moment with her.

As I said, I felt speechless at the end of the convention, and these words do not adequately express my feelings or experience. The entire week was inspired, inspiring. As I stood in front of my own classes after the conference, I wondered what I was doing there. Could I even see 20 people and correct them? What could I teach? On my mat, I wondered what I could practice. Yet, that is what she came to inspire us to do. Practice with humility, teach with devotion, live with integrity. Thank you, Geetaji, for blessing us with your presence. ☯

Serving Geeta

by Khairoon Quadir

It was a most prestigious honour to serve Geetaji and her entourage during her visit to Canada. I feel so blessed to have the skills of cooking and taking care with affection and that CIYTA entrusted these duties to me. Thank you, CIYTA!

Every task I performed for Geetaji, she accepted with appreciation. Every evening she would approach me wanting to know what would be the next day's menu, especially during the conference, because she wanted to make sure lunches were not too heavy. She loved my homemade yogurt, which I specially prepared for her. One vegetable curry, daal, rice and chapatti would suffice her palette. I topped the meal off with a small Indian desert or a bowl of fresh fruit (usually mango) with ice cream.

One evening during the conference Geetaji had some spare time. She expressed her desire for a drive to Main Street where Indian stores are located. We drove through and visited a few shops to examine the quality of goods in comparison with India, and then I asked if she would like to have some chai and Indian snacks at a nearby restaurant. Geetaji readily agreed. There were seven of us - Geetaji, her entourage, a few board members and myself. Geetaji ordered some kulfi and the rest of the crowd ordered different items. At the end I offered to buy some paan (Indian beetle

leaf wrapped around some sweet syrup, coconut powder, anis seeds, coriander seeds and beetle nuts). Geetaji said yes. She had it after her kulfi and said it tasted good.

I also had the pleasure of her visit to my home where she had her first evening meal on her arrival in Vancouver. Geetaji was accompanied by her entourage, some local board members and national board members. Altogether there was about fifteen of us enjoying a meal with laughter and light conversation.

This was my close encounter with Geetaji away from teaching yoga. She was kind, gentle, considerate and had a good sense of humour. Geetaji visited Canada in springtime when all the trees and flowers are in almost full bloom and the air is gentle and fresh. This enhanced the beauty of British Columbia and I think Geetaji was overwhelmed by it together with the warm welcome she received from us, the yoga community. ☯



Be Truthful Inside and Outside: Saturday Morning Pranayama with Geeta S. Iyengar

by Linda Benn

"The *Siva Samhita* discusses the four stages (*avastha*) of pranayama in its third chapter. These are: (a) commencement (*arambha*), (b) intent endeavour (*ghata*), (c) intimate knowledge (*parichaya*) and (d) consummation (*nispatti*)."

(*Light on Pranayama*, B.K.S. Iyengar, p16)

I was one of several people asked by Marlene Mawhinney to be a "note taker" at the conference. I am a habitual note taker at workshops. However, I have had prior experience of the density and intensity of Geeta's teaching and this would surely be a challenge.

Before and during the *pranayama* practice on Saturday morning, Geeta wove yoga philosophy throughout her instruction. I tried to catch the Sanskrit names, usually

with little success. However, I did remember her exhorting us to read the Introduction to *Light on Yoga* and also *Light on Pranayama* several times during the conference. With my rough notes in hand, it didn't take me long to find what I needed in *Light on Pranayama*.

She elaborated that in the *arambha* stage, when interest in the breath commences, the breath has no shape. From personal experience, the tendency is to try too hard, to be impatient, to lose concentration, to become fatigued quickly.

The second stage is *ghatavastha*. *Ghata* means a water pot, thus the physical body is similarly seen as a container. An unbaked water pot will crumble and wear away. However, if we bake the vessel, (the body), in the fire of *pranayama*, we begin to create stability in the body and shape to the breath. In *Light on Pranayama* (p9), Mr. Iyengar states that in this stage the five *kosas* are integrated. The five *kosas*, (or sheaths), are as follows: *annamaya kosa* - anatomical or food body; *pranamaya kosa* - physiological body;

manomaya kosa - objective awareness and feeling;
vijnanamaya - intellectual sheath, reasoning and judgment;
anandamaya kosa - sheath of joy.

Geeta said that in the second and third stages of *pranayama* practice, the breath, mind and intelligence show their presence and begin to communicate with each other. She said, "We all think we are intelligent."

Patanjali asks us to trace "root intelligence." Geeta said that when we only operate with objective intelligence, such as



that from books and our senses, then we are prone to fear complexes. She said that we have to come closer to our Selves. "Don't think that everything is perfect, then there is little chance for progress."

The content of the vessel will shape the breath. In *asana* we develop stability, knowledge, and sensitivity in the body. "Know the container and in the container find space." In *pranayama* learn to subjectively experience the breath and know that it has its own intelligence. The beginner asks, "How am I going to utilize this instrument, how to open the book, how am I going to read?"

What shape does the body take during *puraka* (inhalation), *khumbaka* (retention), or *rechaka* (exhalation)? How is the rest of the body affected? The energy created by *pranayama* is spread throughout the body, received by the cells.

Geeta said that during seated *pranayama*, if your body tilts forward, "you are doing from anxiety", your mind is in a hurry to the future. If you are lazy, then the trunk tilts back. If tilting to the side, the mind is wandering, thoughts pull you to the side. Later she talked about the difficulty of discipline, of following the rules of *pranayama* practice. She said that rigidity of the rules is required at the beginning, but eventually they will become a natural part of the practice. "You want it to be effortless at the beginning." She made the comparison of learning to drive on the right side of the street, eventually, with practice, one does it with no effort or resistance.

"At the third stage, *parichayavastha*, one gains control of the *gunas* (qualities) and realises the causes of his actions (*karma*) (*Light on Pranayama*, p16).

Nispatti avastha is the fourth stage of *pranayama*. The *sadhaka's* practice has ripened. Geeta said that this is the "fruit" of the practice. She said, "You may be blessed or not. Leave it. Don't do anything."

In *Savasana*, she instructed us to maintain the lift of the

chest. "Don't get sunk inside". But also don't hold yourself tight and hard.

"Let go in that manner.

Be silent within.

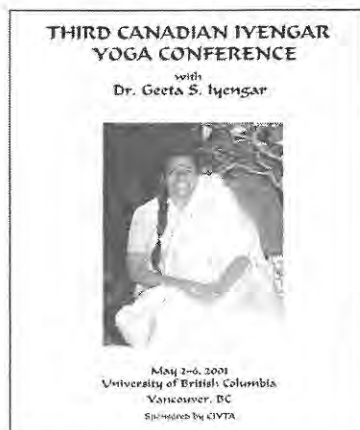
Mind dissolves into Self.

Observe that state.

Surrender to the Lord within." ☉

Order a Copy of:

the special tribute issue for
Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar
celebrating her recent visit to Canada



\$5.00 each, includes postage
10 or more \$3.50 each, includes postage

mail orders to:
Victoria Yoga Centre Society
Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria, BC V8V 4Y9

Please write 'Special Newsletter' on the envelope

GOING DEEPER

An Iyengar Yoga Workshop
with *Shirley Daventry French*

September 15 & 16, 2001



An opportunity for Level I, II, and III students to work with senior teacher Shirley Daventry French to explore yoga in a deeper way. Also an opportunity for teachers to observe Shirley.

Shirley is a long time student of BKS Iyengar and has been to Pune many times to study with him, most recently in January of 2000 to attend the Institute's Silver Jubilee Celebrations.

Founder of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Shirley has been the driving force in making the Victoria yoga community one of the strongest and most viable in Canada. Students from across Canada and around the world have studied with her. Now local students have the opportunity to learn from her in a workshop setting.

Saturday September 15

10:30-1:00pm

3:00-5:00pm

Sunday September 16

10:00-12:30pm

12:30- 1:00pm refreshments

1:00 -2:00pm debriefing for observers

Registration begins July 15 for Yoga Centre members and July 22 for non-members

Fees: \$85.00 Yoga Centre members
\$90.00 non members
\$60.00 observers (limited space)

Cheques payable:
Victoria Yoga Centre
c/o Wies Pukesh
3411 St. Matthews St.
Victoria, B. C. V8P 4K4

250-370-7494 or 386- YOGA (9642)

Pranayama: A Physical Practice?

by Corrine Lowen

There is a widely held notion that *pranayama* is a meditation practice. While this is not true, we do consider *pranayama* to be a practice of working with the breath. In *pranayama* classes with Geeta at the conference in Vancouver, I realized the importance of the physical aspect of *pranayama*, and how it must be attended to before one is ready to work with the breath.

Geeta told us that we must be completely attentive to the physical body and prepare it properly to receive the breath. In a similar way, we must harness the mind, keep it from wandering, and use it to communicate with the body. We use the mind to find out what the body is doing, where it is tight, where it is not opening correctly, where there is pain or discomfort. The mind gathers this information from the body, then it tells the body what to do, where to adjust, what to change to find the opening that will prepare the house so that the breath may enter.

In *pranayama* class Geetaji said, "Draw your attention to the opening of the chest. Draw your attention to the lift of the side ribs. Draw your attention to the root of the sitting bones. Draw your attention to the opening of the armpit chest. Draw your attention to the softness of the biceps. Relax the upper arm." Geetaji did not say draw your awareness to the breath. She said, "If the body is wrong or the mind

is wrong - the breath will go wrong."

This is why attention must be brought to the body and to the mind before we can really work with the breath. When we raise up the chest it is like drawing a line in the same way that a child draws a shape on a page of paper. Once we have created the shape, we can put something into it. Like building a house, we must build the house before we may enter. The chest is the house and we enter with the breath. We cannot enter the house before we have built it. This is the point of learning what has to happen in the body and the mind before we can really bring our attention to the breath.

The practice of *pranayama* is the practice of breath control (*Yoga: A Gem for Women*, p26). In Vancouver, Geeta taught us that this practice cannot begin from the level of the breath. We must begin with the body, creating a physical structure. We must still and calm the mind. Geeta reminded us, "I did not say bring your awareness to the breath. When the body is right and the mind is right, the breath will come." ☯



In Our Mailbox



14 December 2000

To the Victoria Yoga Centre and the
Scholarship Committee,

Many, many thanks for your generous support towards
my trip to India this year. The support of our yoga
community means a great deal to me and I hope to
bring inspiration from India for "one and all" upon my
return.

Namaste,
Ann Kilbertus

Dear Victoria Yoga Centre Scholarship Committee and
Community,

I am writing you with heartfelt gratitude for the
generous support you have given me in regards to the
BKS Iyengar Scholarship. As I am finding out, making
a trip to Pune is a big financial commitment and your
support is most appreciated. I feel doubly blessed that
the support is not only financial, but has come in the
forms of encouragement, tips and shared experiences
and, of course, substitutes for classes while I am gone!

See you all on the yogic path!

Om Shanti,
Ty Chandler

I've enjoyed the subscription. One thing I'd enjoy is if
someone wrote an article on an *asana* monthly or even
a sutra. Just a thought. Thanks for all the effort put
into the newsletter.

Laurel in Alaska

2 December 2000

Dear Victoria Yoga Centre,

Please find enclosed my renewal for your newsletter.
Just wanted to say that I really like the publication. It's
very informative. I really liked the teacher training
article. I'm looking forward to next year's issues.

Thanks again,
Fay Gascho

Thank you all so much for the honour you have
bestowed upon me. I appreciate the gesture very much.
Although I haven't been directly involved lately, I
have wonderful memories of times spent with members
of the Victoria Yoga community. Please mail my copy
of the newsletter to me. Once again, thank you. I'd also
like to say how valuable is the work you all are doing.

Jennifer Rischmiller
(*Jennifer was awarded a membership for 2001.*)

Dear Leslie Hogya, Shirley French and Connie Barker,

Once again I am in Florida (till end of March), so it is
especially good to receive the yoga newsletter from
you. I am sending a cheque for my membership - I
have my mail forwarded here. I hope to attend the Salt
Spring Retreat this year. I am able to go to yoga class
almost daily here so it is a real bonus for me.

My best wishes for your continued success at the
Victoria Yoga Centre,
Katy McCuish

Monitoring

By Sheri Berkowitz

In May 2001 in Vancouver, Geeta Iyengar provided a set of unique experiences for many participants to grow, learn and stretch in new ways. In reflecting on the unique opportunity which was provided to me by virtue of my seniority (age + experience) in the Canadian Iyengar community, many thoughts and moments come rushing to mind. None are quite so touching as the responsibility to be a support in Geeta's classes as one of the monitors.

It is just grand to look out over a sea of 350 people. Our instruction as monitors was to correct only for what Geeta was instructing. Never mind that I saw all kinds of things that I thought needed attention. Answering questions, helping those participating to move into the instructions and staying tuned to the flow of instructions was a new place for me. In fact, due to the realities of the speaker system in the room, it was often difficult to hear the instructions. It was a great challenge and I was not responsible for 350 but the 20-25 in my area.

Special treats came to me in several ways. I watched Geetji, and also Manuso Manos, Stephanie Quirk and



Gloria Goldberg as they moved through the room watching, adjusting and supporting with skilled, experienced ease. I attempted to see for what they were correcting and adjusting and try the same for those around me who could benefit from these inputs to their *asanas*. At one very special moment Geeta observed that I was struggling with what to do for a woman who was sitting in a very tilted position in *Pascimottanasana*. She used a single word "scoliosis" and said, "Give her a lift." I did so under the one buttock of the tilted side and noticed that it was insufficient so quickly (wasn't it all... "Quick! Quick!?!") put her onto a higher support. Seeing that it worked to bring length and balance to the woman's spine I nevertheless glanced at Geeta for her approval or the chance of the opposite reaction! She was moved on, attending something else. Of course!

The moments that will stay with me as a picture of the grace of this teacher, etched on the memory cells are the moments of the final *Savasana*. It was a supported *Savasana*. All the monitors were adjusting for the lifted openness of chest that Geeta had requested in her instructions. Slowly as Geeta's words fell quieter and our adjustments were done, Geeta made her way through the room, stepping around blocks, blankets

and limbs with a pace and attentiveness which I have seen only in nature. A deer that once walked past a rock I was sitting upon, downwind from me, carried that pace. She saw, waited, observed, listened, waited, shifted and moved in total absorption, total grace. Geeta observed, saw, lifted a chest here, opened held legs there, changed the positions of arms, hands and heads, released a hardened belly, responding in total absorption, total grace. I experienced a flow of consciousness wherein my seeing opened and perhaps some understandings grew as I watched her graceful, attentive and loving care of these students. ☉

Monitor (The Duty)

by Ingelise Nherlan, West Vancouver BC

"Monitor" from the Latin *moneo* - warn

The *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* defines monitor as "a person for checking or warning"; a person "with disciplinary or other special duties" who "maintains regular surveillance over" and "regulates the strength of a recorded or transmitted signal."

I then looked up "warn" – "to admonish and inform a person of danger in unknown circumstances and advise to take certain action."

Condensing it further using key words from the dictionary this sentence appeared: The duties of a monitor is to check, admonish, regulate and maintain the energy output (transmitted signal) of the student they are assisting!

In the *Handbook for Monitors* (non existing) it is written that this be done in accordance with rule #1: Do not interfere with the teachings. Be quiet and admonish corrections in such a manner that the student's attention remains focused, i.e. assistance must match the teacher's timing. Speak only when necessary and even then one directive word usually suffices.

During Geeta's conference there was one teacher and many monitors. The ideal class. All monitors did what they were supposed to do: clarify. Silent elves? I thought again with gratitude of the teacher training programs across Canada, a major part of which is learning the duties of a monitor.

The dictionary further defines monitor as "detector of radioactive contamination". Well!! My thoughts grew wings and flew back to an intensive in Pune when Guruji suddenly thundered, "You people are butchering the art of yoga." Butchering, polluting, distorting, destroying. Same mess.

And don't we all recall the moment in the huge gym (400 students plus) when Geetaji had repeated an

instruction several times, observed some delayed reaction, and stated, "I can't tolerate it."

No doubt the pain of observing us distorting the purity of the poses is a contamination on the nervous system of someone who knows what gift each pose will grant if aligned with its purpose. The poses are pure. It is we who are working through seven sheaths to reach it.

I do believe though that the informative book omitted one important concept: sensitivity. But then again, it's the Oxford dictionary, not the yoga dictionary. For sure, all technical know-how does not a good monitor make unless it is fused with sensitivity.

There was plenty of all the ingredients that make a good teacher/monitor and that came as no surprise since it was Geeta at the helm.

It would take a lot of words from the learned book to adequately sum up the experience of the conference.

In show biz they say: "Ya had to be there."

In yoga we say: "Please come back, Geetaji."

With love and respect,
Namasté to all. ☺

YOGA PROPS

**Light Blue & Dark Blue
Sticky Mats**

from Germany

Cotton Blankets & Belts

from India

Available from

Shirley Daventry French
478-3775

Valued Moments on Stage

by Vicky Catchpole

Appreciating just how much I needed to be a student, I signed up for the conference with Geeta. Then I received news that certified teachers would be teaching in front of her. I was resistant to say the least. I wanted to be told, not tell. Is that like wanting to receive, not give? We were told to see it as a gift. Yeah, right, was my sarcastic response.

Well . . . it definitely was a very generous and wonderful gift. Geeta's care and attention was obvious when we would exchange glances. I felt respected. And was honoured to learn directly from a teacher whom I so respected. Her depth of knowledge and experience is tremendous and she is sequential in her teaching so that all aspects of our being are touched. And yet, I felt so real and down-to-earth - nothing extra - just in the moment.

Another gift was being on stage while Geeta taught. I am deeply grateful for having had the chance to work so closely under her watchful and discerning eye. What can I say about being instructed and "shaped" by her? She certainly tuned up my "instrument"! My job was to be ready to do what Geeta asked - to show what she described - to make her job easier. When I looked out into the sea of faces in front of me a few bright and shiny ones caught my eye. Yes, my students were sending wonderful energy to make my work easier.

We sat in *Upavista Konasana*. Time well spent

to heighten awareness in the back of the legs. Geeta sat in front of me. Seeing her legs so long and opened along the backs made me question, "What more can I do here?" The inquiring mind creates a space, a possibility in the body. Then *Tadasana*. Yes, I've lengthened and spread my soles, opened the front hinge of the ankle, firmed the four corners of the knees, spread the backs of the calves and thighs, moved the inner groins back, but I'd never moved the WHOLE shin bone back. Frontal brain lets go for that! That whack in *Tadasana* to "re-shuffle" me back to my habitual pose provided a good excuse to rest. How nice it is to relax into a comfortable, known place. But then there's the pull to express again - to find out what is within.

Standing poses. The *Upavista Konasana* awareness in the back leg allowed a grounding as well as flow and lift to support the lengthening of the spine. But, how about those arms, how the support for them came from the tremendous lift and broadening of the side chest girth. And *Prasarita Padottanasana*: *Upavista Konasana* on a different plane. The front hinge of the ankle



really opening now - whole shin bone back - to enable the organ of action, the heel, to establish the root of the pose. *Dandasana*. We increased the focus on the lift of the chest. I now have a new sense of *Uddiyana Bandha*!

There's a type of muscle toning I learned when training horses. A cupped hand, or specially made straw pad, is used to "swat" the large muscles of the haunches, back, shoulders, and neck of the horse. This tones and strengthens as well as relaxes the muscles due to the rhythmic contractions. Geeta's swats toned up my back muscles. What surprised me was that it also seemed to cause a "let go". I could release into *Paschimottanasana* more easily than I expected to. And the "aliveness" remained in the skin of my upper back throughout the pose!

We know to stretch before strengthening. The *Gomukhasana* arm work before *Sirsasana* allowed that awareness of length to remain in the upper arms and armpit chest throughout headstand. Geeta's attention to the eyes and their associated tensions was an excellent focus - no pun intended - to take into the pose. Level eyes resting equally between top and bottom lid relaxed jaw tension as well as helped in keeping the shoulders well lifted so the pose was stable. Again the quietness of the frontal brain was established. (This was challenged by the movement of the stage and its floor boards which was noticeable in an inverted position!)

Backbends on the chair, chair twist, and supported *Halasana* all provided rest and inner focus. By the end of the practice I felt light, yet grounded and well supported by the Universe. All is well. Many thanks to Geeta for her continuous attention that teaches us to hone our own awareness. ☺

More Difficult than Heli-skiing!

by Dr. Roger Lake, Vancouver BC

Last week, I went through an unusual challenge while attending a five day yoga conference taught by Dr. Geeta S. Iyengar. I like to define myself as an "aging jock"! A lifetime of joyful abuse of my body in contact sports, mogul and heli-skiing, tennis and squash has however taken its toll as I turn 55. Although powerful, my muscles are tight, and I have a very limited range of motion of my shoulders, spine and hips. Last week, this stiffness caused me to be called on stage due to the limitation of elevation of my arms over my head in *Virabhadrasana I*.

When Geeta's eagle eyes spotted me in the audience and called me on stage, my feeling at first was "No, not me!" While walking to the front stage though, I knew that I could use some help and also knew that I could trust her completely. I quickly got into my posture, opening my upper chest and stretching my arms toward the ceiling. I thought I was already giving a hundred percent when she started slapping my sternum upward and asked for more! While I believed there was no more I could do, I observed my chest opening, allowing my arms to reach even higher. With each successive slap, the same process would take place. My chest soon felt as if the upper four ribs were being ripped away from my sternum! Still though, I kept opening further as I was surrendering to the posture Geeta was leading me into. She was helping me to go beyond what I believed were my own limits. Her earlier words echoed in me: "You have to build your house before you can enter it." This was definitely a major construction project!

All day, I could feel aliveness in my chest muscles, ribs and joints. Since then, my body has taken on a new physical awareness in my upper chest, shoulders and triceps. The feeling has carried on not only in my yoga practice, but also in my daily life. All week, I've been

sitting, standing or walking with a new awareness. It is as if my chest and my shoulders have been awakened.

I believe it is now up to me to pursue my practice with the same discipline. As Geeta mentioned over the course of the week: "When I challenge you, it is not for my pleasure; it is to empower you to challenge yourself."

Thank you Geeta for challenging me to challenge myself! ☺

The Yogic Mind

by Corrine Lowen

Canadians were blessed by a visit from Geeta Iyengar in May of this year. At the five day CIYTA conference in Vancouver 350 students and teachers received the benefit of Geeta's teaching. We received instruction in *asana*, *pranayama*, and philosophy. We watched and listened as our Canadian Certified teachers received her thoughts on their teaching. We were overwhelmed and amazed at the three ring circus Geeta created in order to give us as much information as possible in two short hours of medical class. (I can't wait for the video.)

In these five days we had many opportunities to learn in many ways. Each of us came away with something precious, some things different, and some things shared. Each of us according to our level of understanding, our abilities, and our quality of mind at a particular moment received a new understanding of *asana*, of *pranayama*, of philosophy, of our selves.

When a student commented that the pose he was doing was more difficult than the heli-skiing he did last week, Geeta told him, "Yoga is an internal challenge. This is difficult work. When we challenge others it is an external challenge. It is easy to do! It is the internal challenges which bring change and are so difficult to master."

We were challenged to use not just our bodies, but our minds, and our body/mind to come to a deeper understanding of the work. In her first speech at the opening ceremonies she told us that, "No practice can start at the level of the soul. Practice must come every day from the body and the mind. These are not separable." Discipline is the platform for this path.

We were reminded that the work is not a collection of points. Hundreds of points mean nothing if there is no communication between the mind and the body. You may bring your attention to a point on the body, but the body/mind must also communicate with the big mind. For this to happen the brain must be soft and



The Victoria Yoga Centre

Is pleased to announce
the following scholarships:

**Going Deeper: An Iyengar Workshop with
Shirley Daventry French**
September 15 & 16

1 scholarship @ \$60.00
Please apply by August 15, 2001

Julie Gudmestad
October 12 & 14

1 scholarship @ \$100
Please apply by Sept. 12

Apply in writing to The Scholarship Committee.
Give to your teacher or mail to:
Scholarship Committee
Victoria Yoga Centre Society
Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria, BC V8V 4Y9

All applicants must supply a current phone number
and address. For additional information contact
Wendy Boyer 598-9321 or Amanda Mills 727-0222.



receptive.

For example, *Tadasana* is not just a physical practice. The mind penetrates to the depths of the pose effortfully bringing the mind to the pose. As a meal takes a long time to prepare, the yogic mind takes time to develop. We have to cook the mind with *asana* and *pranayama*. "This will make a delicious mind," said Geeta.

Geeta spoke of *satya* (truth) as the foundation of the pose. The truth supports itself, but one untruth requires another to support it. Another is required to support that, then another, then another. Fool yourself in the foundation of the pose and it will require many more untruths (wrong actions) to create the pose.

She admonished us to be true to ourselves in the pose. Truth in the base of the pose supports all actions that follow. As a computer will not respond if it is not properly programmed, we must use our practice to program the mind. A pose done properly creates a feeling of elation inside. This feeling of elation carries into daily life. This is the yogic mind. ☯

Inspirations for Life

by Melissa Worth

*II.28 yoganganusthanat asuddhiksaye j-anadiptih
avivekakhyateh*

"By dedicated practice of the various aspects of yoga impurities are destroyed: the crown of wisdom radiates in glory" (*Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*).

It is rare to be in the presence of pure faith and truthfulness. We live in a society heavily distracted with outward appearances and attachments. When I first saw Geetaji standing at the airport her mere presence and truthfulness in the moment at that moment moved me to tears. After her first appearance at the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Conference in Vancouver I wrote in my notebook:

- inspiration from Tuesday talk
- poise, grammar, presence, humility
- inspiration by example
- challenge yourself, one must be truthful in one's practice

Geeta embodies the treatises of Patanjali – she is a living example of the sutra I have quoted above. No one can dispute the existence of Geeta Iyengar's unwavering faith and dedication to her beloved Gururji and his teachings. I felt this wisdom radiating from a place of humble devotion and spiritual dedication. Through regular, devoted and truthful practice Geetaji walks this world free from afflictions and impurities of the mind and body and is able to generously, selflessly and humbly impart the knowledge of yoga to her students all over the world.

Mr. Iyengar comments in his translation of the above sutra - "This wisdom and achievement keep the *sadhaka* innocent and free from pride." This absence of ego and presence of whole-hearted dedication radiated from Geeta and easily filled any room into which she entered. I cannot simply admire her but I can practice with integrity and devotion. It is difficult to completely articulate in words how Geetaji's teaching has inspired

me; this is my best attempt. I was speechless for many days, walking in a bit of a daze but slowly and subtly I am applying her wisdom to my life. For starters, I walk lighter for having spent five glorious days with Geetaji. ☯

Geetaji

by Leslie Faber

Gee-ta-dasana. translation: Geetaji, mountain of knowledge, compassion and generosity; mountain of pure yogic gold.

What an absolutely amazing experience it was to be amongst the participants at the recent yoga conference in Vancouver and to be blessed by the presence of Geetaji. She gave so much. Fortunately, it was well-recorded on video and audio and many people took notes. She gave so much it will take all of us many years to assimilate it all.

She left us with a gift, a gift which is comparable to a fountain, a fountain that each of us can take with us and share with others. As we continue to use and share this fountain, it will continue to flow.

For sure, at times, Geeta was harsh, but she never demanded anything from us that she has not already demanded of herself. Her harsh discipline of today shall be our sweet nectar of tomorrow. Her example shall serve as our beacon. To be in her presence is to be inspired. I personally came away from the conference realizing that I have not been living my life to its fullest potential, so I have resolved to become a better person, to try harder and give more.

We all have that mountain of gold inside of us. Sometimes it is so well hidden we don't see it and can't access it, but it is our duty to find it and share it.

Namaste. My glorious mountain of golden compassion, knowledge and generosity salutes your glorious mountain of compassion, knowledge and generosity. Isn't that what it's all about? ☯

Meeting Geetaji

by Chris Lea

To meet Geeta Iyengar is to be filled with the grace of yoga. I am inspired as a practitioner and student of yoga and humbled as a teacher. Geetaji possesses all of the qualities of the finest *ofsadhakas* and is a true example of the human potential. Surely there can be no doubts as to the effectiveness of the Iyengar Yoga system after having been in Geetaji's presence. With the example that Geetaji has shown, how can we not dedicate our lives to the practice of yoga? Is it not our duty?

I am grateful for having been in the presence of so fine a yogini and thank all of the followers of the path of yoga who made this experience possible. ☯



Impressions from the Conference with Geeta Iyenger

by Nancy Searing

I anxiously awaited the workshop with Geeta for weeks before it happened. Once there, I knew I was in the presence of a very special person. I am amazed at how rich the week with Geeta was. I know it will take a long time, if ever, to integrate all that she taught. Her presence in the room was riveting. Her clarity of thought and ability to explain the deep and subtle refinements of the *asanas* is inspiring.

Much of what Geeta taught I have heard before from my teachers. Although that recognition deepens my appreciation for the strict attention to tradition and high level of excellence that my teachers employ, I recognize that in Geeta's presence the same words energized by her spirit brought my understanding to a deeper level. Even though much of that understanding was held only for fleeting moments, I hold within my mind the memory of the experience of moving my intelligence deeply into myself. That memory inspires me.

Geeta talked about how repetition of movement was exercise, but the repetition of *asana* with intelligence brings a spiritual awakening. Somehow, with her guidance, I found incredible peace by being in the moment and I felt connected to an energy much greater than myself.

I had never been to a large yoga workshop before. The energy of the hundreds of participants was exciting. I was fascinated with how Geeta was able to move raw beginners into much more refined poses in a short period of time. Her deep confidence and knowledge moved people who didn't believe they could do something into doing that very thing. Geeta's generous spirit and firm compassion was so obviously a catalyst for many to awaken to a deeper understanding of their

inner selves. My gratitude to Geeta for taking me closer to myself was reflected by many of the participants in the outpouring of emotion when saying goodbye to this amazing woman and teacher. ☺

Reflections on the Chance of a Yoga Lifetime

by Drew Perry, Winnipeg

What if you were an amateur songwriter and had the opportunity to take a five-day songwriting workshop with Paul Simon? Or you were a pretty good weekend golfer and had a chance to play and learn with a top-tier pro golfer like Mike Weir for five days? You would likely leap at the chance of a lifetime, but you would be a little anxious about what you were getting yourself into.

In a similar way, the May conference with Geetaji in Vancouver was truly the chance of a lifetime for a student of Iyengar Yoga. However, it was an experience that wasn't without its anxious moments. I, for one, was definitely not eager to have my *asana* work come under her personal scrutiny after seeing her interaction with the new teachers on the stage. I desperately didn't want to somehow find myself up on the stage. I just wanted to listen, watch, learn and work in the anonymity of the crowded gym. And I got my wish.

Over the course of the conference Geetaji not only demonstrated that she is a living master of yoga, but also a very skilled teacher. During the conference I repeatedly came to be in a state of awe: awe at her mastery; awe at the depth and nuances of her knowledge; awe at her methods; awe at the strength of her presence; and awe at her ability to work with such a large group and to see our collective limitations as if we were one body.

Her influence will last much longer than the

conference and extend much further than the 300 plus who attended the conference. I am certainly a better yoga student and aspiring teacher than I was before the conference. Her impact will last with me every day in my own practice and in every class as I teach others. The insights from the conference will be shared, discussed and debated again and again by those of us who attended from our studio, Northern Lotus Yoga in Winnipeg, as we relive the conference in our classes and teacher training events.

I was one of the people who responded to Shirley Daventry French's e-mail request last summer when she asked students and teachers around the country to indicate why they wanted Geetaji to come to Canada. I wrote back to say, as did many others, that for most of us there likely won't be an opportunity to travel to the Institute in Pune, and that it was therefore important for her to come to the many who would not be able to travel to see her.

I don't know what comments from Canadian teachers and students may have persuaded her to come in the end. All those who attended were very fortunate that she did decide to come, whatever her reasons. I hope that she also had a positive experience and would like to return again. Maybe the chance of a yoga lifetime will come again to a city near you and me. ☯

The Amazing Thing

by Athena George

When friends ask me about the five-day yoga conference with Geeta Iyengar, I find myself describing the things that were unfamiliar and even a little frightening. I tell them how Geetaji yelled at us if we didn't follow her instructions, how she slapped us on the thighs and backs to awaken dull areas, how she kept the demonstrators in poses for longer than I would consider physically possible. I tell of how she denounced one woman who said she couldn't spread her toes because of nerve damage. Geetaji declared that she had seen the toes move. I tell of how Geetji chastised another woman for putting a support under her knee in her forward bend. Geetaji accused the woman of protecting herself.

When my friends hear these stories, they are quick to respond: "Sounds awful." I'm equally quick to reply, "Don't get the wrong idea. There was something amazing about it too." What was the amazing thing that happened for me? It had to do with my chest.



Even a week after the conference someone complimented me, saying, “You’re walking differently. You look more open across your collar bones.”

If my chest and shoulders could talk, they would tell a story of a young girl who once had a wide open chest—how easily she breathed. One day, the young girl asked her mother to buy her a bra. The bra cut into her chest, but she was willing to suffer this tiny constriction to protect herself from being different than the other girls. As her breasts grew a little larger, she began to hunch over. This drawing-in of her chest hurt her back, but it too was worth the pain, because it reduced the unwanted attention from the boys. As she grew older, she fell in love and had her heart broken. She tightened her ribs around her aching heart; she wasn’t ever going to let that happen again. To keep herself in rent and food money, she took jobs that required she sit in a chair, hunched over a computer. She began to have difficulty breathing. To avoid the pain, she used asthma puffers, although they made her feel a little weird. To ward off the stresses of everyday, her shoulders tightened. She began to have chronic pain in her neck and shoulder on the right side.

Enter: yoga classes.

I’ve been doing yoga for almost five years, and during that time, my shoulders and chest have begun to loosen. Yet it is obvious to me, after the amount of opening I achieved under Geetaji’s instruction, that I had been still holding back, fearful of the pain of pushing myself past where I was comfortable, even if



the “comfort” was a little tight and uncomfortable.

What I understood Geetaji to say at the conference was that the very things that we use to protect ourselves from anticipated future pain prevent us from moving forward. She said that these protective actions cause new problems of their own. When she removed the support from under the knee of the woman in the forward bend, Geetaji instructed her to keep trying various ways of correcting the posture – without support – until she found one that worked. She said that this would not be the easy way, but it would lead to growth. (Note that Geetaji also propped many students up when it was necessary. She was only impatient with those holding back or propping themselves unnecessarily.)

In a quick survey of my behaviours I would most like to change, I find that almost all began as some form of protection. I over-eat to avoid unpleasant feelings. Who can feel anything with one’s attention on an over-full belly? I procrastinate or leave projects unfinished to protect myself from possible criticism of the completed project. The list stretches on.

At the opening and closing ceremonies, Geetaji led us in a chant to Lord Ganesha. The invocation asks Ganesha to “forever...remove all impediments in the path of my auspicious deeds”. What if the impediments I need to be removed are the very ones I use to make myself feel safe? I suspect that in order to be willing to have these protections removed – to let go of them – I must trust that I will be safe without them. This requires faith. It also requires being willing to face some pain.

Geetaji was asking us to have faith in the yoga teachings, to be willing to do exactly as she ordered. I was taught to question all authority, to be especially suspicious of those who ask for strict obedience, and to be extremely cautious of those who say: “This is going to hurt, but it will be good for you.” My experience has also been that I am much more willing to let go of self-limiting behavior in a gentle atmosphere.

What changes did I truly make in the first four days of the conference? The truth: none. I was stretching out of fear. I didn’t want to be singled out. It was only on the last day, when I felt familiar with the large class, the cultural differences in Geetaji’s teaching style, and I had witnessed all the faith and respect that my Canadian teachers had in Geetaji that I felt willing to push past my habitual ways of holding and tightening. Geetaji taught the last class of the conference in a strong, humorous, kind way. She consolidated all that she had taught us previously. I listened. I followed her words. I tucked my back ribs in, lifted my side ribs up and out, thrust my sternum up and forward and spread my collar bones wide. And somehow—maybe it was my wee twinkling of faith, or maybe it was my understanding that the pain I felt from my muscles stretching would pass, or maybe the elephant-faced Lord Ganesha had been listening—a few of my impediments were removed. My chest expanded. I felt more alive. The colours seemed sharper, and, like the young girl of my story, I breathed easily. ☺

The Geeta Experience

by Rachel French de Mejia

Having a mother who is a senior Iyengar Yoga teacher has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are likely fairly obvious to most of you. The disadvantages are in the mixed blessing arena.

A statement attributed to Oscar Wilde which goes something like this - the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about - came to mind during the many *asana* practices with Geeta. This represented an analogy for the only thing worse than being spotted by Geeta was not being spotted by Geeta. Having a mother who is an senior Iyengar Yoga teacher meant I was introduced to Geeta and that meant she knew I existed. After watching the teacher’s receive her attention on the second day of the conference, this was somewhat daunting. On one level I had hoped to slip sight unseen through the conference. On another level I knew that was unproductive. Seeing the teacher’s struggle to be clear and to learn, as Geeta scrutinised, was a real inspiration. What courage. Their willingness to learn was incredible. It made me think, what the hell am I so afraid of? Geeta asked this question frequently - what is your fear? That it will hurt? That change will occur and I will be unable to sink back in to old habits with my usual complacency? Those who were seen learned an awful lot. Between Geeta’s willingness to teach and the others who were so willing to learn, I was inspired to work harder than I have ever done before. I listened and was focused in a way I’m usually not.

Why did I work so hard? Why did I learn so much? Because Geeta was nice to me? No. I learned because she expected so much and was very clear about it. That is the ultimate form of compassion. Some of the grumblings from the peanut gallery indicated that what the other teachers experienced at the hands of Geeta was “a bit much”, “unnecessary”, “excessive”. Was it? I manage to ignore a lot of things that come my way too

easily. I know my three children often pay attention only when I get somewhat fierce, having ignored all previously pleasant and polite entreaties. I found I responded to what Geeta was saying, in part, because my fear of exposure was greater than my fear of myself. If I worked hard enough, I would not have to go up on that platform. I also knew if I was really ignorant about something I would hear about it. There is a weird sort of relief in that. Geeta doesn't have to worry about whether I like her class or not, if she'll scare me off by being too critical. What having such direct contact with a master has done for me is reinforce (as Geeta constantly did) that I am doing this for me. I will get out of my yoga what I put in. We in the west are so afraid of criticism because of a misguided sense that to criticise damages self esteem. My experience has taught me quite the opposite. While it is often uncomfortable to receive criticism, my self esteem has gained the most the greater the obstacle I've overcome. I have learned the most from things that challenge me, from my mistakes and when my ignorance is exposed. Praise is nice, but is short lived and needing it forever leaves me vulnerable and on shaky ground. Praise just strokes my ego, without giving me anything solid to carry with me through life. Praise is a bit like Marie Antoinette's alleged statement, "Let them eat cake." Sure it tastes sweet at



the time but it provides no nutrition, no substance, no life. It doesn't last and solves nothing.

Geeta's teaching has provided me with an opportunity to have a fuller life, to move beyond my fears and current limitations. What she has given will nourish me for some time to come, provided I continue to do the work. What a gift. Namaste. ☯

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
is pleased to present
JULIE GUDMESTAD

Iyengar Yoga Workshop – All Levels
(minimum - one year of Iyengar Yoga practice)

October 12 - 14, 2001

Friday 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Saturday 10:00 - 1:00 pm, 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Sunday 10:00 - 1:00 pm

Locations: Victoria YM/YWCA & Fairfield Community Place

NOTE: Most of the workshop is at the Y.

Saturday morning, 10:00–1:00 pm is at Fairfield Community Place, 1335 Thurlow St., Garry Oak Room.

Props: On Saturday morning, please bring the props that you use for shoulderstand (i.e. 3 blankets, sticky mat, strap). Please inform Linda if you are unable to bring your own.



Many yoga students have attended Julie's "Anatomy Awareness In Asana" workshops. Julie is a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher and licensed Physical Therapist. Besides her professional practice she runs a yoga studio in Portland, Oregon. She combines her anatomical and kinesiological knowledge of the body into the structure, practice and sequencing of the yoga poses. For this workshop we decided to ask Julie to teach a yoga workshop, rather than focussing on teaching anatomy. Julie teaches with clarity, strength and a delightful sense of humour. This is Julie's fourth visit to Victoria. Please join us for an inspiring and challenging weekend.

Fee:

Yoga Centre Members: \$150

Non-members: \$180

*Non-member fee includes
payment for Yoga Centre membership

Registration

Opens August 1st. Cancellations will be refunded only if your place can be filled. Cheque payable to Victoria Yoga Centre.

Mail: Linda Benn, 698 Rockridge Place, Victoria, B.C. V9B 6K1

Email: lbenn@islandnet.com.

Phone: 250-478-0757 or Victoria Yoga Centre: 250-386-9642.

(Editor's note: On Friday evening at the conference, a gala banquet was held in Geetaji's honour. At the banquet, a representative from each Iyengar Yoga region of Canada gave a short speech. What follows is two of those speeches.)

Greetings from the Prairies

by Sandra Stuart

To the untrained eye, Saskatchewan and Manitoba - the prairie provinces - are dull and flat and lacking in interest. But you, Geetaji, with your trained eye, would see the beauty that we see. You would appreciate the miles and miles of open sky beneath which the grain grows, the family farms struggle, and the small towns, settled by the immigrants from Ukraine, Russia, and Iceland, share the land with the settlements of the prairie's original peoples, the Cree and Saulteaux. Our provinces are named by the Indian people: *Saska* Chewan, swift river, and *Manitou*, the Creator.

For me, there is nothing quite so beautiful as a field of sunflowers, grown for their oil, turning their heads towards the blazing summer sun. Or a field of flax, so blue that from a distance you would think you'd come upon a large pond amongst the wheat and oats and barley. Or the amazing stillness of an early winter morning, walking to the yoga studio to offer a 21 day *sadhana*, the sound of boots on crisp snow lit by the stars still visible at six in the morning. It's a beautiful place and those of us who practice yoga there are happy to be awake to this beauty in our lives.

Throughout this conference, I have enjoyed the stunning logo created by Marla Britton. And I was thinking that if this conference had been held in the centre of the country, in Winnipeg, the logo would be quite different. I see a set of railroad tracks with a grain elevator in the background, the student in *Eka Pada Rajakapotasana* wearing a parka. It would have been lovely, don't you think?

When Yvonne Kipp first called to inform me that I was to make a short speech at the conference, I asked what



I was to speak about, and she said, "Tell us what it's like to be an Iyengar Yoga teacher on the prairies." And I thought, how different could it be to teach yoga on the prairies from teaching yoga in the Rockies or in Quebec or Newfoundland? To be given the honour of passing on the ancient teachings of yoga, I'm sure must be the same for all of us across this great nation. It is a

humbling privilege to be a link in the chain which connects the past with the present, the east with the west, the north with the south, and all of us with you, Geetaji, and your guru. We are grateful to be the conduits for the work of Shri Krishnamacharya, Shri BKS Iyengar, and his gifted children, Geeta and Prashant. We are also grateful to the Canadian senior teachers who so readily and generously come out to the prairies and share with us the recent teachings from India. And the Winnipeg folks and our yoga sisters in the northern Ontario city of Kenora who come to Winnipeg to take part in our workshops there are also grateful to the teacher who first introduced us to the work of BKS Iyengar, Sheri Berkowitz. Thank you, Sheri.

Geetaji, on behalf of the Iyengar students and teachers gathered here at this conference and those back in our home provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba who were unable to attend, I want to thank you for coming to our country to shine your bright light upon us. We wish you a joyful and safe journey, and we wish you good health. May you live to see one hundred winters.

Namaste. ☯

Greetings from Newfoundland

by Beverly Winsor

Geetaji, I am happy to bring you greetings from Newfoundland, the most eastern province in Canada. We are an island in the Atlantic Ocean and St. John's, the city where most of the Iyengar Yoga takes place is the most eastern part of Canada. Sometimes we say we are the eastern edge of the Western world.

Usually we are known for our rugged coastlines, vast wilderness areas, icebergs, whales and little trees that cling to the cliffs. They are shaped by the wind and are like bonsai trees. But this year we've become famous for our snow. We have had nearly 700 cm of snow and I don't know if you can imagine it, but that's a lot of snow! It seemed like every night that there was yoga class, we would have another snow storm. As I would drive to the yoga studio, I would listen to announcements on the radio. Many businesses would be closed and various organizations would cancel events and classes. I would wonder if people would come to class. But without fail, students always came. I think that is a testament both to the power of Iyengar

Yoga and to the importance that the practice has in people's lives.

We have a small and dedicated yoga community in St. John's. We have about 300 students and eight teachers. Four of our teachers are certified and two will be seeking certification in the next year or so. Several of our students and teachers have studied in Pune. We often travel to study with more senior teachers and we host workshops with more senior teachers once or twice a year. This is how we



keep our practice and study current. Like students everywhere, many St. John's students know and love you through your book. Newfoundlanders are known to be warm-hearted, friendly and maybe just a little bit casual. They were so excited that I was coming to your convention in Vancouver, and so many of them said, "Say 'hello' to Geeta for me!" And so it is my honour and pleasure to bring you greetings from the Iyengar Yoga community of Newfoundland.

Namaste. ☯

(Editor's note: This speech was given by Marie-Andree Morin on behalf of all participants after the last session at the conference.)

Closing Speech

by Marie-Andree Morin

Dear Geetaji,

It has been a great privilege for every one of us to be here for these few days with you. Everyone here feels an immense gratitude towards you. Everyone's heart is filled with admiration and love for you. Thank you for your patience with us! Being witnesses to the depth of your knowledge we have been made aware of the depth of our ignorance.

You opened our eyes and told us that:

We want to enter the house before we build it.
We want to fly the plane without starting the engine.
We want to fly the plane without having a flight path.
We want the fruit but we don't want to do the work.
We don't want to suffer.

You told us that no practice can start at the level of the soul. You showed us the right path. You gave us the tools. You reminded us that on our path there is a pilot



which is *yama* and *niyama*. We have to culture our mind with the practice. We have to practice with mindfulness. It is our duty to become more intelligent. We must learn to use not only the mind, but the mind, the intelligence and the humble ego together. It is our duty to walk on that path in the way you have guided us.

Thank you so much. ☯

Teachers Group Report AGM January 2001

By Linda Benn

The Iyengar Yoga teachers' community continues to grow and flourish. Last year we numbered just over 30 and this year we have 37 members, including several Prince George and up Island. We are delighted to welcome Chris Dimofski, Corrine Lowen and two of Marlene's students, Glenda Hingley and Nancy Searing to the teacher training program.

The purpose of the group, which operates within the umbrella of the Victoria Yoga Centre, is to share information, to encourage each other to improve teaching skills, and provide a venue for discussion and connection.

The Teacher Training Intensive held every July, is an opportunity to take a week and focus on asana, pranayama, philosophy and teaching skills. Not only is it invaluable for our local teachers but it also serves a need for teachers that live in outlying areas.

We have about 8 meetings a year with each having a different practice and focus. Given that everyone is so busy and that Saturday is a good day to offer classes, we have good attendance and participation in these meetings.

During the past year the focus was preparation for the Junior Intermediate assessment in October. Marlene Miller, Ann Kilbertus, Lauren Cox, Linda Benn, Linda Shevloff (Hong Kong) and Vicky Catchpole (Courtenay) all received certification. The assessment process is wonderfully organized by our teachers, particularly Ty Chandler and Robin Cantor. We appreciate the support that came from our students and colleagues and the guidance that came from the senior teachers and assessors. The only way we can express our gratitude to Shirley French is to continue to improve our personal skills and support the community of Iyengar Yoga.

Now we move on to prepare several others of our group who will be at their first assessment next October in Vancouver. James Currie-Johnson, Chris Lea, Jo Anna

Hope, and Kelly Murphy, Ty Chandler, Wendy Boyer and Caroline Sophonow may be candidates.

Members of the teachers group also organize workshops, produce the newsletter, answer the phone line, sell props, books, etc. We appreciate the work that the Yoga Centre Executive (under Leslie's guidance) does to coordinate all our activities and keep us on track.

Finally, I would like to announce that Ty Chandler has completed her three years of teacher training. No one can doubt the commitment that Ty has to the study and practice of yoga. She has quiet strength, intelligence and joy of life that is motivating and infectious. By the end of the third year Ty even was able to appreciate the process of writing papers. She also has taken on many and various responsibilities to support Iyengar Yoga. Ty is registered to attend classes at the Institute in Pune in June and July this spring. She is at a point in her practice and understanding where she will soak up the knowledge available from Mr. Iyengar, Geeta and Prasant.

Program Report

The Program Committee met four times during the last year, at which times we planned special events sometimes up to two years ahead. Our aim is to invite those people for workshops who are in direct contact with Mr. Iyengar and/or who are closely following his teachings. We have to keep affordability as well as availability in mind and we try to organize workshops for the different levels of students.

Besides workshops we set dates for Friday night gatherings, teacher meetings, the Saltspring Retreat and the Teacher Intensive Training.

Some of the highlights last year were:

- a workshop with Marlene Mawhinney who came

with her knowledge of the Canadian Intensive in India

- a workshop with Julie Gudmestad for the teachers. Her focus this time was hips and legs;
- the five day workshop with Ramanand Patel for first level students as well as for the intermediate levels;
- and in November we had Shirley's second "Going Deeper" workshop which was again a success for students and observers alike.

Finance Report

Income Statement

For year ending October 31, 2000

Revenue

Donations	711.00	
Workshops	33,112.52	
Teacher Training	2,835.00	
Membership Dues	6,987.65	
Inventory Sales	8,682.46	
Newsletter	876.00	45,505.98
Interest and other	971.33	
Total Revenue	54,175.96	

Expenses

Workshops	18,666.38	
Teacher Training	2,838.85	
Inventory Purchases	7,293.12	
Newsletter	8,344.05	
CITYA travel	1,300.00	
Scholarships	1,325.00	
General Expenses	2,838.57	
Total Expenses	42,605.97	
Surplus	11,569.99	

Publicity Report

by Britta Poisson

Yoga T-shirts

Thus far 31 t-shirts have been sold from the first run of 100 shirts. The women's medium grey is the most popular and is now sold out. People will now be able to order directly from me or through their teacher

Friday Night Gatherings and Other Events

I have set up templates for public service announcements in local publications, which I have used to publicize VYC events for the past year

Media List

I have compiled a media list of local publications, TV and radio for the purpose of informing the public of events and also for the possibility of getting stories and features about the activities of the VYC (e.g.: youth yoga, Dr. Geeta Iyengar).

Brochure and Brochure Distribution

I have a first draft of a VYC brochure based on previous brochures. This will be completed and distributed in 2001.

President's Report

This past year was a proving ground for the Victoria Yoga Centre. I was elected president for the year, knowing that I would be away about six months. There were many new people on the board, and they came together and carried on without me! I want to acknowledge all those who became members this year, and helped reformat the whole yoga centre! First there is Rosemary Barritt, who stepped into the role of Vice President, which meant she assumed the role of President in my absence. Martha Chick, became the Secretary. The first thing Martha did was organize us

with new binders. She has done a lot of clerical work for various members of the community including work for the national Iyengar association. Connie Barker took on the newly organized job of being Membership Secretary. This job was previously done by two people, neither of whom were on the board in recent years. Connie couldn't begin to do her job for a while because the data was on a Mac computer, and it wouldn't transfer into a PC format. Weis Pukesh became Program Coordinator. Weis, who is a teacher in training, had never even organized a workshop or been on the Program Committee. Britta Poisson has brought us more into the public eye as our first Publicity Coordinator. She also ordered new T-shirts for the Yoga Centre. Continuing on the board was Ted Mather, Treasurer. Ted was also away quite a bit this year and he was ably assisted by Chris Lea. Linda Benn coordinates the Y Program and helps organize the Teachers Group. She is the liaison to the board from the teachers and the scholarship committee. Jim Rischmiller holds one of the records for longest continuous membership on the board. He served as President and Treasurer in the past, and this year helped us launch our new web site.

I also want to acknowledge Gwynneth Powell, who is not on the board officially, but attended nearly every meeting as liaison person for the Newsletter Committee and Rachelle Ray, who has recently taken on the job of updating the web page.

I want to thank all of you who have brought new life and energy to the board and kept everything up and running. I also want to thank the now almost countless volunteers who help keep the newsletter, programs, Teachers Group, Friday Night Gatherings, etc., functioning.

Membership Report

by Constance Barker

Memberships as of December 31, 2000 totaled 282:

Full Members	235	Includes 11 Local Teachers and 7 Out-of-town
Exchange	22	
Honorary	22	
Complimentary	3	

Recommendations:

1. Redo membership form in newsletter to include the "City"
2. Add check boxes for "mail out newsletter", "do not mail out newsletter", "mail out receipt", "receipt not required".
3. For mail out purposes and easier sorting separate mail according to whether Canadian, US or Overseas
4. List of persons in the Yoga Centre who require printouts of membership. Annually or semiannually?

Scholarship Report

Scholarship Committee:

Maggi Feehan, Wendy Boyer, Ty Chandler

Liason: Linda Benn

Nov. 1 - Oct. 31, 2000

Felicity Green

Nov.	\$50.00	Caren Liedtke
	\$50.00	Kelly Murphy

Marlene Mawhinney

Feb.	\$100.00	Wies Pukesh
------	----------	-------------

Julie Gudmestad

Apr.	\$100.00	Chris Lea
------	----------	-----------

Salt Spring

June	\$150.00	Nathan Bernshaw
	\$150.00	Doug Hart
	\$275.00	President's Fee

Intensive

July	\$150.00	Karen Berezon
	\$200.00	Traci Skuce
	\$300.00	Marlene Miller

Ramanand Patel

Aug.	\$200.00	Aleta Crawley
------	----------	---------------

Total 1999/2000 \$1725.00

November 1, 1999 - October 31, 2001

Going Deeper	Nov.	\$ 60.00	No one applied
--------------	------	----------	----------------

B.K.S. Iyengar Scholarship Fund

1999:

Ty Chandler	\$250.00
Jane Stedman	\$250.00

2000:

Anne Kilbertus	\$500.00
Ty Chandler	\$500.00

Newsletter Report

1. The Newsletter Committee is made up of Shirley Daventry French and five rotating editors: Lauren Cox, Neil McKinley, Caren Liedtke, Greg Sly and Gwynneth Powell.
2. We are currently open to having new committee members join our committee.
3. The May/June 2001 issue will focus on Geeta Iyengar and will be ready in time for her visit to Canada.
4. To Be Announced: The finances and logistics of this issue have yet to be worked out but there is a possibility that it will be jointly produced with the Iyengar community in Edmonton. It will be taken to the CIYTA Conference, therefore needing extra copies made for that purpose.
5. We are looking into getting an account as a non-profit at Prism photo. Details will be brought to the Board if it deems beneficial.
6. There is a new protocol for publishing Teacher Training Papers. If an apprentice's assignment is submitted for publication, a member of the Teacher Training Committee must first recommend it.

Radha Yoga Centre



Swami Radha dedicated her life to updating the eastern teachings for the western mind. Her two groundbreaking books are *Kundalini Yoga for the West* and *Hatha Yoga: the Hidden Language*. She also founded Yasodhara Ashram, her major teaching centre, and several urban centres including Victoria's Radha Yoga Centre.



Swami
Sivananda Radha

Yoga at Victoria's Radha Yoga Centre

The yoga room at Victoria's Radha Yoga Centre is a carpeted, almost empty room. The one piece of furniture in it is a shrine. It's there to remind us of the purpose of yoga – to free ourselves from self-created limitations, to discover the spiritual potential that is within every human being. This involves stretching the mind as well as the body, and questioning the concepts we have about ourselves. It involves turning our cherished beliefs upside down. It involves asking ourselves why we think and feel as we do. It involves facing ourselves at the gut level.

Spiritual development is a continuing process of evolution. It doesn't happen overnight. One of the first questions asked of seekers who come to the Centre is "What is the purpose of your life?" This question gives you the all-important context for your practice of yoga. If you know what you want and you have few illusions about it, you can move to fulfill that purpose.

But illusions abound. They come in the form of cultural and parental influences, buzz words, fantasies about what it means to be "spiritual", inundations from the mass media and the advertising industry, popular images of "success", and on and on. These notions take

form in our minds and become fired into desires by the imagination and the emotions. But all too often, these desires do not yield what we had hoped they would.

When you feel dissatisfied with the usual run of what life offers, the question "What is the purpose my life?" takes on real urgency. What kind of person do you want to be? Better? More compassionate? But what do you mean by "better", by "compassionate"?

In the classes at the Radha Yoga Centre, we reflect on these and many other issues that must be understood if we are to live our lives with awareness.

These reflections take a number of forms. In Hidden Language Hatha Yoga, we use the poses to open our body intelligence. We use Mantra Yoga to quiet the mind and awaken intuition. We use the Kundalini system to unravel the mysteries of mind and consciousness. And we study our dreams to access the unconscious mind and its puzzling messages.

None of this work is done in a general or theoretical way. It is done on a very practical level to help us bring our spiritual values into daily life – into our relations with other people, into our work, into a walk in the park, into the supermarket – into every place we go and everything we do, say and think.

Radha Yoga Centre is closed until September.
We wish you a pleasant and Light-filled summer.

YOGA CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2001

12-14 Workshop with Julie Gudmestad
19 Friday Night Gathering
19-21 Intermediate Assessment in
Vancouver
27 Teachers' Meeting

JULY 2001

16-21 Teacher Training Intensive

SEPTEMBER 2001

15-16 Going Deeper: An all-levels workshop
with Shirley Daventry French
29 Teachers' Meeting

NOVEMBER 2001

16-18 Workshop with Chris Saudek
24 Teachers' Meeting

DECEMBER 2001

9 Mr. Iyengar's Birthday

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Constance Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY

is pleased to announce

WE HAVE A YOGA CENTRE PLACE

#202, 919 Fort St., Victoria, B.C.

OPENING SEPTEMBER, 2001

WITH A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF IYENGAR YOGA CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

EXPERIENCED, CERTIFIED IYENGAR YOGA TEACHERS

DETAILS IN SPECIAL SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER ISSUE OF NEWSLETTER

Check web site in August www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca



**Dear Yoga Centre Members ,
& all Iyengar Yoga students, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and International.**

With the support of our members and a group of dedicated and enthusiastic committee members, we have found and leased our own premises. This has been a dream of the Yoga Centre since its inception, 25 years ago. Finally we will be able to offer students and teachers a space that is dedicated to the practice and teaching of Iyengar Yoga. We will create an atmosphere of respect and cleanliness, honouring the ancient wisdom and spirituality of Yoga as taught by Guruji, Geeta and Prashant Iyengar.

The location is downtown Victoria. We are on the second floor of a heritage brick building with windows overlooking Fort Street. There are entrances off Fort Street and Meares Street to the courtyard with stairs to the studio. There is room for two teaching spaces.

Now the work begins!

In August we will have to do all the renovations. The floors will have to be replaced and at least one wall built. This is going to require many volunteers! Can you...

- ♦ Help with the renovation – design and physical work,
- ♦ Assist those completing the business operations plan
- ♦ Create and arrange publicity
- ♦ Fundraise
- ♦ Donate desks, PC computer, file cabinets, office supplies, stapler, photocopier, cupboards, shelves, vacuum cleaner, small fridge, microwave, tea kettle etc....
- ♦ Once up and running we will need volunteers to assist with day to day operations

LESLIE SAYS....

"Help us buy the props we need for the new VYC space! As a non-profit society, we will gratefully issue a tax receipt."

belt	@\$10.	block	@\$20
blanket	@\$25	mat	@\$40.
bolster	@\$55.	ropes	\$500.
Pune pony: \$1000			
slant boards, eye wraps, etc..			

LET LOOSE EVERYWHERE !!! ANY AMOUNT !!!

DONATION FORM

Please include this form with any donations.

Donor Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Phone no. _____

Email _____

Please send me a Tax receipt. Yes _____ **No** _____

**Victoria Yoga Centre: Phone: 250-386-YOGA (9642)
Mailing Address: Unit 592, 185 – 911 Yates Street, Victoria, B. C. V8V 4Y9**

Please fill out and return to
your teacher by July 15, 2001



The Victoria Yoga Centre

"The yoga practitioner lives to love
and serve the world. This is the
essence of life. Peace within,
peace without, and peace in the
individual, in the family unit, in
society and in the world at large."
4th Chapter Yoga Sutras

Many members of the VYC are working towards finding a space we can call our own. If you would like to volunteer to be part of this quest, please fill out the following questionnaire and return it to your teacher. Thank you in advance.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

Yoga Centre Member Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you have experience in the following areas that you are willing to share: -

Bookkeeper	☐	Accountant	☐
Lawyer	☐	Secretary	☐
Carpenter	☐	Fundraiser	☐
Real Estate	☐	Municipal Bylaws	☐
Workers Compensation	☐	Other	☐

Do you have any skills or interests that you feel may be of help in this project?

Once the space is established, how much time would you be willing to commit as a volunteer?

☐ ____ hrs Per Week ☐ ____ hrs Per Month

☐ On call only

What would you like to see at the new Centre? (i.e. more Friday Night Gatherings; child-minding, library, space to buy props and books etc.)

Do you have any large or small items that you can donate to the Centre? (i.e. furniture, computer, printer, appliances) a tax receipt will be issued where applicable.

Any other comments?

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Sept/Oct 2001

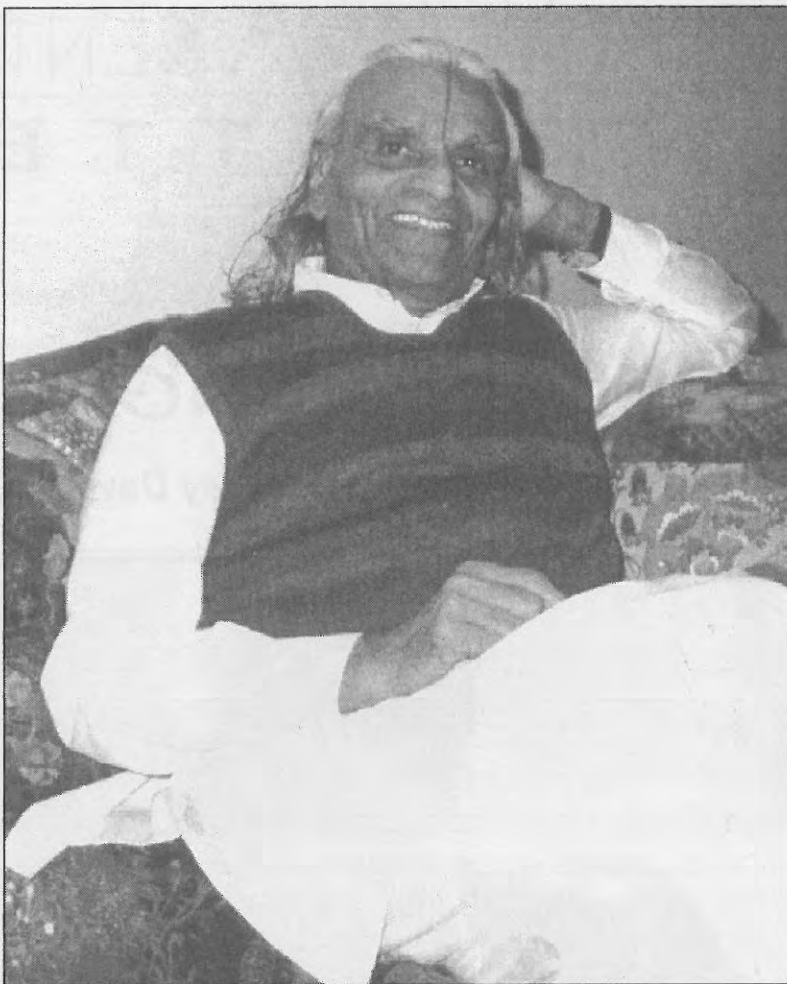
Please Subscribe



CELEBRATING

The 70th Birthday of our Teacher Shirley Daventry French





“With Mr. Iyengar and his work, I made a different choice, preferring not to rely on interpreters but to maintain as direct a line as possible to the Master himself. While there are many fine teachers around, from whom I have learned a great deal, I have sought the opportunity to learn directly from Guruji whenever possible – in Pune and on his visits to North America.”

– Shirley Daventry French

Ramamani Iyengar
Memorial
Yoga Institute



1107-B/1 SHIVAJINAGAR,
Pune : 411 016, (INDIA)
GRAMS : "YOGAKIPIKA".
PHONE : 5656134

Ref No 8/2001

2-1-2001

Dear Leslie,

Just now I received your letter regarding, Shirley's 70th Birthday to be celebrated soon. I am sure all Members of Iyengar's Yoga Family will join wishing her all the best in the yogic field of Life.

As you have asked me to write a few words about Shirley-

In my Life I have seen a very few noble and gentle Souls and she is one of them. She being a clean person I am sure her ways of living is an example for many to follow and live with joy and contentment as she lives serving not only the Humanity through Yogic disciplines but maintaining Family tradition with devotion love and affection. She is a rare person and words fail to express her hidden qualities.

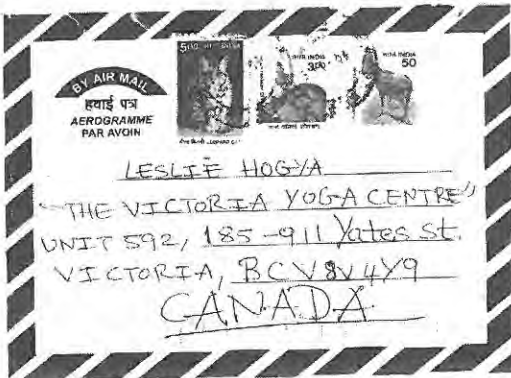
May God bless her and for a long life to service the Yoga Fraternity to deal deep into the depth of Yoga through her pen and teaching.

Do convey my good wishes and Happy Birthday both to her and her Husband Derek.

With all my good wishes to one and all.

Yours affectionately,

(B.K.S. IYENGAR)



भेजनेवाले का नाम और पता

Sender's name and address

Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute

1107-B/1, SHIVAJINAGAR,

PUNE : 411 016, (INDIA)

इस पत्र के अन्दर कुछ न रखिये

No enclosures allowed

Editor: Gwynneth Powell

Newsletter Committee: Lauren Cox, Caren Liedtke,
Greg Sly, Neil McKinlay, Shirley Daventry French

Layout & Production: Marion Stoodley-

Page Perfect Design & Type

Photography: Linda Benn, Wendy Boyer, Ty Chandler,
Derek French, Adrian French, Carole Miller, Gwynneth
Powell, Marianne Varkony

Special Photo Credit: Nancy Bleck and Susan Stewart,
page 58 top

Technical Support: Jim Rischmiller, Bruce Cox,
Douglas Fraser

Advertising: Carole Miller

Distribution: Keiko Alkire, Rosemary Barritt

Membership/Mailing List: Constance Barker

Printing: Hillside Printing & Copy Centre

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St. Victoria BC V8V 4Y9

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA or visit our website at www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca

Deadline for next issue: Sept. 24, 2001

CONTENTS:



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SHIRLEYJI

Neil W. McKinlay 6

TALKING WITH SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH

Caren Liedtke 7

REFLECTIONS ON SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH

Derek Leonard French 14

MY MOTHER SHIRLEY, THE UNTOLD STORY

Rachel French de Mejia 17

TOPSY-TURVY WITH ELBOWS AKIMBO

Stephanie Daventry French 18

MOTHER SAID

Adrian French 21

A WILLINGNESS TO LIVE FULLY

Michele Worth 22

BY HER EXAMPLE

Melissa Worth 23

AN OLD FRIEND

Audrey Finch 24

BE A STUDENT FIRST

Linda Benn 26

FIRST AND LAST WORDS

Lauren Cox 27

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any of our material, except that copyrighted by the author or artists. When reprinting, please credit this Newsletter and send us two copies of the publication containing our material. Copyright material is only available with written permission.

OUR SINCERITY PROTECTED US <i>Donna Fornelli</i>	27	THAT'S CALLED DARSHAN" <i>Neil W. McKinlay</i>	49
FRIEND. MENTOR. TEACHER. COLLEAGUE. <i>Leslie Hoya</i>	29	"WELL, THEN, YOU'D BETTER GET ON WITH IT!" <i>Ingelise Nherlan</i>	51
FEARLESS EXAMPLE <i>Ann Kilbertus</i>	31	ALL IN A DECADE <i>Keiko Alkire</i>	52
JAYA, JAYA SHIRLEY! <i>Linda Shevloff</i>	32	IN HONOUR OF SHIRLEY DAVENTRY FRENCH <i>Maggi Feehan</i>	52
SHIRLEY IS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE <i>Carole Miller</i>	33	TWENTY TWO YEARS OF INSPIRATION <i>Marlene L. Miller</i>	53
THE DIVINE COMMITTEE AT WORK <i>Jim Rischmüller</i>	34	ALL THESE YEARS <i>Kathryn Wiggins</i>	53
ANY AMOUNT MORE <i>Athena George</i>	35	CONSTANCY AND CONSISTENCY <i>Glenda Hingley</i>	54
SNIPPETS OF SHIRLEY <i>Traci Skuce</i>	36	CREATIVE CARTOGRAPHY <i>Greg Sly</i>	55
SYNCHRONICITY <i>Caroline Sophonow</i>	37	THE BLESSING OF YOGA <i>Doug Cart</i>	55
WORTH WORKIN G TOWARDS <i>Britta Poisson</i>	37	SIR SHIRLEY <i>Joanna Hope</i>	55
SHIRLEY, THE CROUCHING TIGER <i>Weis Pukesh</i>	38	SHINE ON <i>Teddii Schmit</i>	56
A SENSE OF BEING HOME <i>Leslie Faber</i>	40	IT WAS UTTANASANA <i>Robin Cantor</i>	56
SEED OF REALITY <i>Nancy Searing</i>	40	GIFT <i>Li Milne</i>	56
FROM THIS AUSPICIOUS DESK <i>Ty Chandler</i>	41	BIRTHDAY WISHES <i>Julianna Kovacs</i>	57
SEEING IS WITHIN <i>Celeste Mallet</i>	41	AN EFFORT TO DEEPEN <i>Vicki Catchpole</i>	57
ESSENCE OF THE PRACTICE <i>Sheri Berkowitz</i>	42	A CALL TO THE ORDER <i>Chris Pratt</i>	57
A LIFE OF INTENTION <i>Gwynneth Powell</i>	44	BIRTHDAY GREETINGS <i>Corrine Lowen</i>	58
A LESSON LEARNED <i>Judith Mirus</i>	46	THE SCALE OF JUSTICE <i>Annette Shultz</i>	59
INTEGRATING PRACTICE AND PEDAGOGY <i>Ron Burnett</i>	47	A GIFT IN THE STRUGGLE <i>Jeanette Merryfield</i>	59
IN OUR HEARTS <i>Christopher Lea</i>	47	IT'S THAT SIMPLE <i>Ted Mather</i>	60
SHIRLEY IS MY FRIEND! <i>Marlene Mauchinney</i>	48	A GOOD FRIEND <i>Hilda Pezzaro</i>	60

Happy Birthday, Shirleyji

It was almost three years ago that this edition of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter was first considered. Our community was in the midst of preparing Mr. Iyengar's 80th Birthday Issue when someone asked, "Why don't we do the same for Shirley?" The idea took on life in the instant it was spoken. "Why don't we?" immediately became, "Let's do it!" though this is not to insinuate bringing the project to maturity required anything less than considerable nurturance.

There were logistics to consider, of course. Who would do what? When should we have this ready? How would it all be coordinated? One of the first choices facing the newsletter committee was how broad to cast our request for contributions. For Mr. Iyengar's issue - and for the one commemorating Geeta's Vancouver visit - contributions were sought from across the country and, in our initial enthusiasm, we thought such breadth more than appropriate. However, sitting together one warm afternoon on the floor of the Y's Yoga Lounge, in what has for years served as our community's home, it occurred to us that a significantly different focus was actually in order.

Shirley Daventry French is a teacher of rare ability. As one of Canada's - indeed, as one of North America's - pre-eminent practitioners of Iyengar Yoga, she could earn a handsome living touring from city to city, sharing her wisdom in weekend and week-long events. It is our good fortune, however, that she has chosen another path for her teaching - that, though her calendar is rarely lacking for out of town engagements, she has chosen to remain resolutely committed to the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Formed by Shirley and a small circle of others, this organization has been endlessly supported by her energy, continually maintained by her conviction and

constantly challenged by a seemingly limitless well of devotion that has allowed us to become, encouraged us to become, that has very often *demand*ed we become one of the more robust centers of Iyengar-based activity on the continent. Thirty years on, we may appear self-sustaining as both a collective and as individuals, but were it not for her undying efforts, it is fair to say this community would not exist in its present strength. And were it not for this community, few if any of us would be treading the path of yoga as deeply and as thoroughly as we are.

Given these facts, it seemed appropriate - if not imperative - that this special issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter be, at least in large part, produced by current and former members of our centre. Though we have solicited contributions from friends and colleagues, and though we are grateful to include efforts from Shirley's family and from her guru, Yogacharya Sri B.K.S. Iyengar, the vast majority of articles contained herein have, by design, been penned by local hands.

More than anything else, this newsletter is Victoria's offering to our teacher - our offering to Shirley Daventry French on the occasion of her 70th birthday. Though it certainly pales when compared against the enormity of what she has given us over the years, it is nonetheless offered in an attempt to express our appreciation for her guidance across these last three decades. That it is offered with respect is, of course, a given. And that it is offered with love and devotion is something we hope to make abundantly clear in the pages that follow.

Namaste, Shirleyji.

Thank you and happy birthday.

Neil W. McKinlay
Victoria, BC
Summer 2001 

Talking with Shirley Daventry French

by Caren Liedtke

The following interview took place on Friday, July 13, 2001 at Shirley's Metchosin home to mark the occasion of her 70th birthday.

Shirley, how do you feel about turning 70?

I feel okay about it; it's just hard to believe. It seems as if it ought to be more significant than it is somehow.

Just another day. Life keeps going.

Probably that will be how it feels on the day. Because it is 70 and because it is the end of a decade, it feels as if it should be recognized in some way.

Any reflections on the last decade?

Many, many reflections on the last decade. I was talking to Marlene Mawhinney yesterday about matters to do with certification and assessment and she said that she thought that once we got it really organised and going, it would become easier, but it doesn't seem to be. That's in many ways a reflection of life. It doesn't seem to get easier.

In what ways isn't it getting easier?

Well, the challenges keep coming. Life is really interesting still. In fact, in many ways, more interesting.

In what ways?

The work. I feel more comfortable with myself, more



sure of myself in many ways, and yet having to meet all these challenges that keep coming up at the same time. More interesting. I think that is one of the consolations about getting older, that if you've lived a full life there aren't regrets that things are over. I look back at different stages and all the many, many things I've done and I'm glad I did them, but the things I'm not doing any more, I don't miss them.

Do you think about your death at all?

Yes. I think about it in terms of yoga and have I faced the issues and things I was born in this life to do? I also think of it in terms that are totally un-yogic, like, Oh my God, what is it going to be like? Will it be painful? Like most people, I hope it'll happen one night while I'm in bed.

Do you think that contemplating death is an important part of a spiritual practice?

Yes, I do. And I think it's very easy to avoid it and become too busy and then one day it's here. I think you can't live life unless you do contemplate death. In our society it is so very hard to talk to anybody about growing older and about dying. A few years ago, Jessica Sluymer, who used to be the director of Radha House, and I were talking at lunch one day about how the minute you say something to somebody about growing older they turn and say, "Oh, you're not old." If you say to them, "Well, I'm such and such an age and this is obviously not middle aged," they say, "Well you don't look old." It's all to make you feel better or to make them feel better. Probably mostly to make them feel better. So we were talking about this one day and I said to her something about growing older and she looked at me straight in the eyes and said, "We are old," and then we both burst out laughing.

We decided to start a course for women our age who wanted to talk about this - about growing old and what it meant in yogic terms. So we decided on a time and place and made some brochures. We called the course 'Growing Old'. We subtitled it 'A Time of Growth' because we knew that the 'Growing Old' wasn't going to be terribly attractive. I at that time was teaching a seniors class and when I gave the brochures out, student after student came up to me and said, "When you have

a course called 'Growing Young' we'll come." In the end three people did come. One of them was actually dying. She had a terminal illness. It wasn't a hypothetical idea to her. Eight, ten weeks, I can't remember how long we met; it was a really wonderful time. Who knows, maybe we'll offer that again some time.

Any thoughts on what came out of that?

Well, just the freedom of being able to talk about it without censorship. To sit and think about it. To be with somebody who was dying who was not pretending and not having to pretend. It's not frightening in most situations. I don't think it was frightening for her. She didn't seem frightened. Actually, because of the nature of her illness, she had emphesyma and was suffering a lot, I think she was very glad to

die. That raises questions like, can one be in that same position without having suffering? If you are suffering I can see that you might want to die, you might even consider doing it to yourself if you were suffering enough. But if you were not suffering, could you still accept death in the same way? It raised those sorts of questions.

In our culture there's such a worship of youth and denial of aging and death.

I wrote to an Indian friend of mine about this, a friend in Bombay, and said something in my letter about how much more death is accepted there. Of course, you see death there. You see dead people on the streets. Not a lot, but you do. You certainly see dying people. She said that one of the reasons they can accept this is because they accept life much more, too. They don't take life for granted, the spiritual side of life. It's a part of everyday life. You go into an Indian home and you

see their deities and the photos of their ancestors. They honour their parents who are not here anymore, so the reminders are always here of the generations and the transience of each one.

When Geeta was here she said that it is the nature of the body to degenerate. Do you feel any degeneration of body?

Yes, definitely. Again, it's the same paradox of living of a full life. In many ways my body feels better than it ever did. I have more awareness. It functions better in many ways, but not in every way. There is a reality

about growing older. Aches and pains and things that you can't take for granted.

How are your energy levels compared to what they used to be?

Well, again, they're different. I'm a, as you probably noticed, fairly high energy person. But I get tired. I like to take a siesta, every day if I can. I was introduced to this custom when we lived in North Africa. We took a siesta every day because everybody did. Since then I've

always liked to take one. When I get tired, I don't recoup my energy as quickly as I used to. That's perhaps the thing I notice most. I see that when Rachel, my daughter, is here. With all the things that she's doing - working and young children and so on - she'll get tired and in no time she's ready for another expedition, and it's all organised. Well, I can't do that. I don't want to do that. Sometimes I wonder if not doing all these things is because I'm older or because I'm wiser or perhaps a combination of the two. Hopefully, a combination of the two.

Do you believe in reincarnation?

I couldn't say with the certainty that I once heard Carl Jung talk about life after death. Once I saw a film, actually I've seen it many times, of Carl Jung interviewed by a man called Laurens van der Post. He was in his eighties at the time and was asked the question, "Do you believe in life after death?" Jung



paused, he had a wonderful look on his face, and then he shook his head and he said, "No, I don't believe it," and then he looked up and said, "I know." I thought at that moment, I was much younger when I first saw this, that I would like to be able to say that. I couldn't say with that degree of certainty.

But your inklings or your leanings are in that direction?

Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Reincarnation has always made so much sense to me since the first book I've read about it, a book called *Many Mansions*. I had never thought about reincarnation before then really. There's a statement in it by Voltaire and he said, "After all, it is no more surprising to be born twice than it is to be born once." And I thought, "Yes, that's how I feel about it."

Do you think our view of what happens in this life and after this life is an important part of the path?

I think it's absolutely important whether there is reincarnation or not, whether it's the Christian sense of one life to live and then redemption or it's the yogic sense of this life as one of many where you work through different obstacles. I think it has the same impact.

How does reincarnation instruct your life or your practice?

When I do things or don't do things, I think about the affect it could have on another life. Something that is a repeated habit of mine, do I really want to come back to have to learn about this again or do I want to take care of this in this life? Can I do this? Can I work through this karma?

What have been some of the major obstacles on your path? Relating to your answer about reincarnation, what are some of the things you feel you have dealt with?

In general terms, things like impatience. Being quick to make judgements and speak out without being properly informed. One major obstacle is learning when not to intervene. I'm an activist. I can quickly go in and say and do things, but it's much harder to sit back and not say or do things. That discrimination.

What obstacles are you working with these days?

The biggest obstacles perhaps are very difficult to put into words because they are much less clear. They are things to do with the meaning and purpose of life.

Things that I've been reflecting on for probably all of my life, but in an aware fashion for 35 years or so.

There are practical things like use of time. How much traveling to do, how much teaching to do, those kinds of things which are always coming up which are relatively easy things. And then there's the question of the meaning of my life and if there isn't any meaning to it, what am I going to do with the rest of it anyway. Because it's nice to think, yes, there is some meaning to it.

What's your sense of that meaning?

There are obvious things like I was born. I married and had children. Those children are here and they have children. So there's a biological thing of which I'm a part. When I was studying at Yasodhara Ashram one of the - you asked about reincarnation earlier, and the theories around that I can accept - but one of the things that made me most uncomfortable there was reading a book, *The Secret Oral Teachings*, by Alexandra David-Neel and Lama Yongden. It's a little thin book. If we wanted to complete this course [the three month Teacher Training Course], we had to write book reports. I made a commitment to get this work finished, to do one a month. One month when towards the end of the month I had done nothing, I got out this thin little book to write a book report on it thinking it would be easier and it was the thickest one of them all in the end. This was my introduction to an idea that was called in that book 'the multitude of others'. I don't know if that's a familiar Buddhist term because I haven't studied a lot of Buddhism. It was the idea that instead of this individual soul continuing, that won't be called 'Shirley' - I mean I could accept that, that 'Shirley' would finish, but there would be something that was me that would go on in another life - instead of this happening, what is me would dissolve and become part of this multitude in some form or other with no recognizable memory or thing that was me. That made me a little, in fact, it made me very uncomfortable. I had to keep going to the bathroom during that afternoon. That idea still makes me

uncomfortable. It's not an easy [idea]. The void. Nothingness. Yet, it's funny, one day, just about a week or so ago, that thought popped into my mind and I thought to myself, what's so awful about that? You're not going to have any pain or suffering or anything like that. You just won't be. What is so awful about that? But then immediately attachments to everything came back again.

But there seemed to be a moment of clarity.

A moment.



How do you relate to Swami Radha and her teachings these days?

She was a very important teacher for me and still is. I learned some practices from her which are part of my personal *sadhana* which I do every day. The self-questioning that I learned from her is part of every day, much too much of the day in many ways to be comfortable. Whether you call it Swami Radha or that Swami Radha awakened the teacher in me, I don't think it matters. It's the process.

Most people in the community are aware of the main characters in the Shirley Davenport French play. I'm wondering if any bit players come to mind who have had an important impact on you?

B.K.S. Iyengar, Swami Radha, Geeta, of course, and her brother Prashant also. More and more Geeta reminds me of Swami Radha in many, many ways. Her particular tradition is a different yogic tradition, but she's a woman, she has the same tremendous strength, the same single pointedness, the same, well like her father, too, doesn't waste a minute of any day. You might be sitting here drinking a glass of water just chatting, but then in a moment there will be a point of yogic teaching that she'll be looking at or talking about.

As yoga is becoming more popular and growing in North America, there will be more people involved in yoga who will not have direct contact with Geeta or Mr. Iyengar. Any thoughts on that?

It's inevitable. It's inevitable because it's harder and harder to go to Pune. Now they have all these criteria for going to Pune. In the beginning it was easy (laughs) - easier. It was easy to put your name on a course. It's just never easy when you're there! There are well trained teachers now. This is the thing. This is why a lot of time is occupied with answering questions like I had this morning about teacher training, because we have more responsibility now because perhaps classes with me or one of the other long time students of Mr. Iyengar is going to be the closest somebody will come to their teaching, so that brings a responsibility to teach clearly. That's why this work on certification has become so important, to see that there is this clarity so that people get a glimpse from us of what this teaching was like. It will only be a glimpse because it won't be the same. I don't know where it will go. Other masters will come. Geeta is a master in her own right, no doubt about that. The teachings have their way of finding their outlets.

Any other thoughts on the growing popularity of yoga in North America?

It's like anything in life, it has its good and bad sides. There are much worse things people can do than yoga, even not very good yoga. But it's sad to me that it stops at that. Of course, it doesn't if you go to a good teacher. If the teacher's good then what happens with the students will point them in the right direction

towards an understanding of yoga. It's like school teaching. I was reading an article about teachers this morning and their problems - my son is a school teacher. Good teachers prevail, I think, even in the rottenest system. And the same with students who come sincerely searching. They may not know they're searching. They may think they've come to a class because their hamstrings are tight or because their back aches or because they want to relax. That's why we went. Derek started for his bad back. I started, not so much that I wanted to relax, I just wanted to change my life. You go to a few yoga classes and then you find if you're with a good teacher, you find you can't go back because they've awakened this questioning in you. Or they've put you in touch with the questioning that's going on in you that took you there in the first place.

What do you think having our own space is going to do for the Victoria Yoga Centre?

I think it will give freedom to set up classes in response to more immediate need rather than next year's program for the Y, six months in advance. If things are not working, they'll be able to be changed more easily. I think we can try a lot of different things. We can run ideas. We can brainstorm and then we can try something for six weeks or eight weeks and if it doesn't work, [we can try something else]. Perhaps we can reach more people. I think also if we have a place where people can spend some time, maybe sit and have a cup of tea or coffee or look through the newsletters, that it will stimulate them to look into yogic teachings more deeply.

What do you see your role being in the community in the years to come?

One important role - to a large extent it's done, but it continues in some ways - is to put in place an organization that doesn't need me at all. If I were to die tonight, the Victoria Yoga Centre would go on. There's no doubt in my mind

about that. It doesn't depend on me at all. But things do come up from time to time. It happened a couple of weeks ago, an incident where it seems to be important and hopefully helpful for me to speak out about it because I've had the direct contact, more direct contact with people like Swami Radha and BKS Iyengar, and they have said these things to me and I have learned from this experience so it's an opportunity to challenge the other more senior teachers in a way that . . . (laughs) I was going to say, "That only I can do." (laughing) That's an expression of Mr. Iyengar's.

How about your "Reflections"? What role do you see "Reflections" playing in the community?

I don't know. Same thing. I'll go on writing them as long as I think there's some purpose for me. The main purpose is for me to clarify things in my writing and then if it seems to be of interest to the community and they want to print it . . . I mean I hope people won't go on printing it if it becomes gibberish (laughing).

Shirley writes from the old age home. Do you still think the path of the householder is as high a path as any other path?

Yes, I do. Definitely, I do. And this is one of the wonderful things about Geeta for me because although she's celibate in her own life, she's very much in the family and household. She's the head of her household.

She cooks for the household when she's there. She takes care of these things.

Mr. Iyengar is also an example of the householder.

Absolutely, and that's what drew me to him, apart from the brilliance of his teaching, the fact that he was so much part of family. Most of the Indians that I've met whose spiritual path is at the forefront of their lives, their family is also there. It's not seen as separate. It's seen as just a natural part of this, and this is how I see it. I think



whatever choice you make can be and I think it's natural for you. I don't see how if I hadn't had all these children and grandchildren and so on I would have learned a lot of the lessons I've learned that I think I really needed to learn.

For example?

To be a little less selfish. Generosity. Love.

How is your family helping or hindering your practice these days?

I think they help more than hinder. It's not a hindrance. Now, it's Derek and I living on our own most of the time. We have visits from children. We've just had a visit from grandchildren. It was great fun.

How do your grandchildren relate to yoga?

They accept it as a very normal thing. Their parents do it. They love my yoga room. My granddaughter brought a friend over here once on one of her visits and her friend went back to Vancouver and said that Adriana's grandparents have a marvellous basement! (laughing) It's interesting the sort of things they take for granted. One night we were all in the living room and I went out for something and when I came back in the living room something had been going on. The kids were on the floor and my granddaughter said to me, "Grandma, do a somersault." So, I did. So she takes for granted that grandmas can do things like that. Derek said at the time, I wonder how many grandparents could do that, could think of doing that through yoga.

What a great role model for her of aging. That's something I've really gotten through yoga is seeing so many amazing people that are older than me and seeing that getting older doesn't have to mean getting sick and shutting down.

That's right. She said a lovely thing to me when we were in Wales last year. She and my daughter came because we had a family wedding and we went on a

little trip afterwards. We were in Wales going around Harlech Castle. We were skipping along - we would hold hands and skip along and do things like that - and she is chatting away, and she suddenly said, "Grandma, I hope you are still alive when my babies are born." I felt so honoured. I thought to myself, it's probably unlikely because I was 29 when I had my first baby. My daughter was 30 when she had hers. If she follows that tradition it may not happen, but I was so pleased that she said that and that she was able to say that. It's interesting, they speak very freely.

In your last email you wrote, "May our speech be purified." I'm wondering how you're working with that. How does one go about purifying speech?

By trial and error and the attempt to practice constant vigilance. Speech is very important. Swami Radha always spoke about body, mind and speech, not body, mind and spirit because she said that speech was man's greatest achievement, what sets us apart from animals. Actually the first time I met Swami Radha she asked me a question and I replied very quickly. She looked me straight in the eyes and said, "You're very quick with words," and I knew it wasn't a compliment. Since that day I've been learning to try to think before I speak and yet still hold on to spontaneity. Like in this interview, I've been doing both - letting it come and then also thinking about it. Perhaps it's more to have the discrimination. Not to be cautious with speech, necessarily, but to be mindful. I grew up in a family and in a culture where to be quick with words was prized and I still value that very much. I've thought a lot about Mordecai Richler since his death and his way with words. I really like that way to speak out, to be witty, to say things that are just on that cutting edge.

But I think that the spiritual path puts that in a bigger context instead of just being witty for the sake of being witty.



That's right. I value wit as well with that. I certainly think you need a sense of humour to keep going.

I think you said to be suspicious of any teacher who doesn't have a sense of humour.

I quoted [Swami] Vivekenanda who said that. "Never trust a spiritual teacher that doesn't have a sense of humour."

Do you think yoga practionners need to believe in Hinduism?

No, absolutely not because yoga is a system of spiritual practice and not a religion. It adheres to the principles of most of the main religions, like Christianity, Judaism apparently, and, Islam. I know people from all those faiths who practice yoga.

So it's a complete system that you don't need to necessarily ground in a religion?

Right. But I think you have to have some philosophy of living. I'm not sure about atheists. I've never really thought about that. You could certainly practice yoga if you were an atheist, to what end and what purpose, I don't know.

So where should we look for that philosophy of living?

In yogic texts. Derek's been quoting his book of the moment, a book called *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle. I haven't read it, but he keeps quoting it to me. It's pure yoga. So there are modern contemporary writers who write about these teachings in terms that people of all kinds of faiths and beliefs can [understand] because they're truths.

So when you say 'the teachings', do you mean the teachings from any great spiritual tradition?

Perhaps from every great spiritual tradition. Whenever I take out of yogic teachings - Vedanta or the Sutras or whatever, the writings of yoga - some idea, I see that it's in other things. It may be in Christianity. It may be in Buddhism or it may be in something else. I think that at the beginning levels all of these [traditions] seem to be going in different directions, but I think the direction that they go towards is the same.

But you and other teachers have also warned against the

danger of . . .

Diversifying.

Yes, picking and choosing. I remember during Mira Mehta's talk someone asked, "Is that like the Four Noble Truths?" and she said, "Don't do that."

Because she's not a student of the Buddhist truths. I think we can confuse ourselves by picking and choosing. Because of our natures we pick only that which is comfortable and that's why you have to stay and take that next step that's going to be one you really don't want to take and stay there and be uncomfortable and be unsure and not be an expert.

I was reading some of the press releases from over the years about you and the Centre, and people kept saying, "Yoga makes me feel calm." I think if it's a genuine spiritual path, it should do the exact opposite.

Absolutely. I don't know anybody who's gone very far down this path who hasn't been very uncomfortable, very disturbed, bad-tempered, all of these things. The feeling wonderful, it works for a little while, but if you have to change teachers or change methods or change something else to perpetuate that, eventually, I think you can't . . .

The discomfort will catch up with you sooner or later . . .

. . . or it will come from outside. I think that sooner or later we all have to face life and death and what's it all about. 🙏



Reflections on Shirley Daventry French

by Derek Leonard French

"I love life, I've always loved life." Shirley spoke to me at a quiet celebratory dinner and I believe this remark captures the essence of this remarkable woman.

The enthusiasm, the God within, was obvious from an early age. Her mother observed, "Shirley has a lot of spirit," and this tolerant admiration, "The gleam in the mother's eye" must have provided a warm secure base for Shirley to begin her exploration of life. This strong sense of self would stand her in good stead when, at the age of eight, she was separated from her parents as all London children were evacuated at the beginning of World War Two.

There was less tolerance and less admiration from an authoritarian high school headmaster who commented at a parent-teacher interview, "that Shirley is a born leader but unfortunately seems to lead in the wrong direction."

Her zest for life attracted a crowd of eager adolescent young men. These biological interviews seemed to be of short duration and were terminated with a dispatch that formed a daunting background to our first meeting in the autumn of 1946. We were both fifteen. To my surprise, for at that time I thought of girls as alien creatures, I enjoyed her conversation, lively intelligence and good humour. We became friends.

The course of true love did not run smoothly. Shirley's energy coming through an emotional chakra is a force of nature (or as our children would say, "Mother is having a spazz"). But Shirley has described me as the rudest boy she ever dated, so perhaps we were evenly matched. In the summer of 1953, after a cycling holiday, we separated for the umpteenth time only this time it was final. Two months later we were engaged and we married on May 15, 1954.

An Odyssey began: London - then to the warmth, blue skies and white buildings of Tripoli in North Africa - back to England and a year in cold, dark, damp

Manchester. A difficult year, that in retrospect, marked the first tentative steps on the yogic path, the move from the unreal to the real. The marriage was changed forever.

The Manchester year was a catalyst in the decision to emigrate to Canada. Another year spent in London then the boat and train journey to Canada arriving in Victoria harbour on the old Canadian Pacific ferry in June of 1959. It was a glorious sunny day, an auspicious beginning.



We wanted to start a family and with three children in five years Shirley was quickly immersed (submerged?) in the joy and fatigues that only a mother can understand. A desire to preserve her health and sanity took Shirley to the downtown Y, at first to reconnect with her earlier love of swimming and later to join Archie McKinnon's ladies in an exercise class.

By 1968 Shirley presented the outer appearance of the glamorous and successful wife and mother who had adapted to her adopted country. Our family was photographed and interviewed by Canada Immigration to participate in an advertising campaign to attract doctors to Canada. A project that did not proceed when we critiqued the outrageous prose style of the interviewer. But Krishna's flute was playing softly and

some Divine dissatisfaction with the status quo was beginning its work. Some thrashing around ensued trying to change the universe but eventually it became clear that it was inner change that was required. The game was afoot.

Encounter groups were an initial catalyst in self awareness but in 1970 the ballet class at the Y was cancelled and together with fellow ballet orphan Carole Miller, Shirley ventured into a yoga class. A light went on. The first teacher was Jessica Tucker, one of only two people teaching yoga in Victoria at that time. Jessica was instrumental in bringing Swami Sivananda Radha to Victoria to give workshops on personal growth and the philosophy underlying *asana* practice. Also at this time, after what would now be considered a very brief apprenticeship, Jessica asked Shirley if she would consider teaching.

Acutely aware of her lack of knowledge Shirley pursued her studies with various teachers and eventually decided to deepen her study with Swami Radha at the three month residential Yoga Teachers Course at Yasodhara Ashram in the Kootenays.

Asana practice and practice teaching was a part of the course - usually a rather relaxed style. One morning, after perhaps a too generous helping of Sarah's marvellous sticky buns, the class was confronted with a different teacher, an ogre who insisted that kneecaps be pulled up and warrior poses be held for an eternity of sixty seconds. A first experience of yoga Iyengar style. Later, the ogre would metamorphose into a charming teacher called Hilda Pezzaro but the first contact was imprinted indelibly.

On a later visit to the ashram Shirley was to meet Norma Hodge, an Iyengar teacher from the Vancouver community. For two years Norma would spend a weekend every month drilling the Victoria community in the basics of the Iyengar tradition. It was Norma who encouraged Shirley to travel to India in 1979 to study at the source with Mr. Iyengar, the first of many such visits.

Shirley's new found passion and focus on yoga was not without its effect on the rest of the family. We live in

the Western community of Greater Victoria and whilst it has a goodly share of its own eccentrics, the values are fairly conservative. At school the children would be teased by their friends because their parents seemed to be different. The three months absence at the ashram presented the children with an opportunity for their own emotional maturation that was only appreciated some years later.

On one occasion Adrian our son was taking one of his friends up to his room; on an upstairs landing he encountered Shirley practising a headstand. "This is my mother," he explained as he ushered his friend into his room as quickly as possible. This may have led to his rather wistful complaint to Shirley "I wish I had an ordinary every day mother." Shirley being Shirley took this as a compliment.

And the work goes on. It has been our privilege, honour and pleasure to offer our rambling family home to host many illustrious teachers; Swami Radha, Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar and teachers from around the world. On her first visit, Swami Radha observed "You have a big house, use it well." And so we have opened the house to early Yoga Centre meetings, workshops, picnics, dinners for intensive course students and one of my



favourites, the crazy dances held after the Centre AGMs.

As I write this article the house is filled by Dr. Geeta Iyengar and her entourage. Ostensibly a rest stop between conventions in Vancouver and Pasadena, but as often happens with yoga events, the food is marvelous, laughter echoes through the house and the air resonates with the teachings.

Geeta commented favourably on the large number of teachers and students who welcomed her at the airport and also came to the house to chop vegetables and carry water under the

watchful eye of Khairon, guru of the cooking and tyrant of the kitchen (beginner, intermediate and advanced certificates in chopping will be issued later).

The enthusiasm of the karma yogis serving Geeta in the house is a reflection of the vibrant energy of the Yoga Centre flowing today from both the members who were present at the birth of the society

twenty-five years ago and the new generations of teachers and students. At the centre of the Centre is Shirley Daventry French, a founder of the society, who has offered her guidance and teaching over the years, a service that has deepened with her own evolving wisdom and maturity.

The grumpy old headmaster was half-right.

Shirley has been my teacher too. The intensity of the crucible of a long term marriage has called me to learn acceptance, tolerance, forgiveness, gratitude and love: after all if these qualities are not developed in the human dimension, where is the possibility of union with the Divine. As Geeta might say, "Is it not your

duty?" As another yogi observed, the path of the householder is difficult. How difficult is brought to mind by an interview with Mrs. Runic, the wife of a previous Archbishop of Canterbury; asked if she had ever considered divorce she paused for a moment then replied "Homicide sometimes but divorce never." The smile that this story evokes reflects more than her good humour.

When Lauren Cox asked me if I would write an article about Shirley for the newsletter my first response was an emphatic if unspoken NO. I value my privacy as

does Shirley and self-revelation is a much over done art form. However the request set in motion a prolonged reflection on our life together and I realised with love and gratitude what an enormous privilege it is to witness the growth of a headstrong young girl into the fullness of a mature woman and teacher. Whilst Shirley has many long term friends in the yoga community it occurred to me that many

students have seen her mainly in the role of teacher. I find her life story inspiring and perhaps it will help others who walk the razor's edge that is yoga. Besides, as Theo Pezzaro would say to his obedient wife Hilda, "You owe me."

Shirley and I exchange birthday cards each year; her card to me is always filled with meaningful prose about our life together; I lean towards a minimalist approach with original lines like Happy Birthday Shirley. Herewith, after much 'hunt and peck' typing effort is the Mother of all birthday card enclosures.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SHIRLEY

With Light and Love, Derek 🎂



My Mother Shirley, The Untold Story

by Rachel French de Mejia



Rachel and her mom at a workshop in 1989.

This is my opportunity to set the record straight...the goods on Shirley Daventry French...the history as yet untold. Since she wouldn't pay me the large sum of money I requested, here goes...

There are those of us who choose the path of yoga and then there are those of us who have it forced upon us, kicking and screaming. I was one of the latter. When I was first exposed to yoga I was about eleven years old. I didn't give it much thought for a while and my mom's interest in it was a welcome relief from all those encounter groups in Duncan! Little did I know what was in store. The impact was minimal at first, gradually progressing to, at age thirteen, taking over some of the cooking as my mom started teaching evening yoga classes at the Y.

Then enter Swami Radha. Things changed fast. It was out of control. At age fifteen my mother deserted her family for three months (along with my father who is no innocent by-stander in this drama, but he paid me off!) to attend the Yasodhara Ashram Yoga Teacher's

Training Course. Try explaining that one to the peer group! While spending three months in the care of a nineteen-year-old family friend was rather a lot of fun, with limits out the window and pizza all the time, hearing my folks called Hare Krishnas by my friends and their parents was not. Mom assured me that this sojourn to the Ashram would make her a better mother (Swami Radha said so). Being a bit of a cynic at that age (some things change slowly), I was not convinced. On my parents' return, and at the first and every opportunity thereafter, I let my mom know just how I felt, setting up numerous scenarios to test and prove my theory that this stuff did not work. I proved I was right and announced my findings: "The Ashram has not made you a better mother. In fact you're worse!" My mother's path of the householder began in earnest. One of my favorite efforts at subversion was to ensure that the appropriate level of fifteen-year-old-drama occurred whenever Swami Radha

visited, to show my parents who was *really* in control. I sure showed them! (Fortunately I grew up in time that there were no arranged dramas for Geeta's recent 2001 visit - I swear I behaved myself).

The impact on my life grew. This path of my parents' ensured I spent my sixteenth birthday, Christmas Eve, at the Ashram standing in a chanting circle before dinner with a group of strangers. I could have died. As a counter measure to three hours of chanting on New Year's Eve by all the adults, my siblings and I, plus the other youthful prisoners, rebelled. We managed to scrounge up a few beers and funny cigarettes (substances strictly banned by our arch nemesis Swami Radha) and then blasted an electric guitar out of the trailer door at midnight in defiant expectation. No one paid us any mind. They were probably all too euphoric from the nectar that arises with impending enlightenment.

Not all was awful at the Ashram that Christmas. I played rugby in the snow with several Swamis and

there were quite a few nice people about. My parents opted not to move us all there, thank God, unlike a few unfortunate wretches whose parents did. Things settled down a bit and life went on. I noticed, much to my surprise, that this yoga *was* making my parents better people and my mother a better mother. Yikes, could Swami Radha be right?

Age twenty-one and an errant knee enters the picture, followed by nagging, "Yoga will help," by my mother. I ignore this. As related above, obedience to my mother was not my strongest characteristic. Another year passes. Now my knee is really acting up, threatening my soccer and skiing aspirations. Again the mantra, "Yoga will help." Facing the choice of the orthopedic surgeon or yoga, yoga seemed the lesser of two so I joined a class...and then another. Next I graduated to my mom's Level II class, joining my dad and Audrey (an old family friend). Boy did my mom have her hands full! To my amazement yoga was a lot of fun and it helped, not just my knee but so many aspects of my life. It also shook things up. Next, I got brave. I attended a Life Seal lead by...you guessed it...Swami Radha herself. To my surprise it was great (not easy mind you). Since then I have attended two Radha Houses for on-going classes over the years and numerous Iyengar teachers' classes in Vancouver. I just kept going! My latest adventure being five days at the CIYTA conference in Vancouver with Geeta last May. Who knows what is next!

My parents' foray into yoga has provided me with a great framework to support my life. I have a solid foundation from which to continue exploring. My parents' commitment to yoga has provided me with the knowledge that, in spite of the difficulties, yoga works if you stick with it. Life's problems evolve, resolve, change and I prefer the difficulties of a life with yoga to the alternatives. Yoga has made my life so much richer, with the on-going hope of greater clarity and acceptance. Sharing my mother with the yoga community has at times been hard and the yogic path is not a panacea, however, as my husband has on occasion been heard to utter about life with me, it's never been boring. Yoga is in my life because of my mother and father. My mother's example has given me

the opportunity to look out for myself and look after my needs, making me a better nurse and mother. I received the gift of life from my mother and then the gift of yoga. What more could I ask for? My mother is one of my greatest blessings. My challenge (or as Geeta says, my *duty*) is to make sure I waste neither.

Namaste, Rachel 🙏

Topsy-Turvy with Elbows Akimbo *-life in the wake of a yogi*

by Stephanie Daventry French

Aren't I supposed to be gallivanting all over the world with my mum wondering where I am? My life has been turned on its head by yoga. I am the child of a yogi; my mother travels the world teaching and studying yoga. According to many traditions, yogis aren't supposed to have children. They aren't supposed to have sex (which I know from experience leads to children). Iyengar Yoga is not one of those traditions. Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar has two dedicated, brilliant protégés: his daughter, Geeta, and son, Prashant. Shirley Daventry French has three progeny sneaking behind her back to the newsletter editors to reveal her secrets.

Those of you who have discovered yoga as an illumination in your lives may wish you were born into a family of yogis. Yes, my mother is an inspiration to me now, but that was not always the case. Shirley Daventry French is a powerful woman, a profound woman, a deeply loving and passionate woman. Easy is not the first word that comes to mind for those of us who know her well (nor, I admit, has it often been applied to me).

Children are tossed by the travails of their parents. My mother was in turmoil for many years. Shirley Daventry French did not have visions that led her to yoga, as her first guru Swami Radha did. She did not have a sickly physicality, as B.K.S. Iyengar did. In fact,

she was exceptionally fit (if not flexible) prior to yoga. But there was a sickness of sorts - the capacity of a seeking soul squelched in the life of a woman of the 60's living as a housewife under the name of Mrs. Derek French.

Luckily, Shirley Daventry would not be squelched. Her grammar school headmaster, ironically nicknamed "Buggy," had tried to squash her spirit and failed, thank God. She was bombed in World War II and bombarded, as all women of her generation, by the limiting ideals of "girl" applied to females of all ages (the word woman was reserved for biology). She was dragged screaming from the center of culture and fashion in London, to live in a backwards nowhere town in Canada. Wives followed their husbands in those days. It's different, though perhaps more complicated, now (I know this, too, from current experience). Shirley might have found yoga had she

stayed in London, but London held more distractions.

Since women of her generation were wives and mothers first, my mother tried to fit her self-improvement into these roles. She didn't know how to cook when she got married (neither did my father), so soon after moving to Victoria she started a gourmet club with some other couples. We all benefited from this foray. My mother focused a lot of energy on schooling us children. First there was St. Paul's, a Catholic school with an excellent reputation for education and a religious viewpoint that didn't align with our family. I quit kindergarten in protest of prayers I disagreed with. Next, with a group of like-minded parents, Shirley started a free school. It was exemplary education for a while. At six I was enthusiastically gobbling up the curriculum of Spanish, French, Art, Theatre, and on the side - mud, bugs, snakes and kissing bandits in the cloakroom.

Eventually, parental enthusiasm wavered, the school's shaky financial health declined and it folded. Next, my mother enrolled my sister and I in ballet. I thought the teacher mean and quit before I received my first tutu. My mother realized that it was she who wanted to dance and enrolled herself in ballet.

The next cause to galvanize my mother's abundant 'energy available for the improvement of self and world' was the women's movement. As a child of Shirley Daventry, I was not raised to believe women were less capable or intelligent. I remember the first time a man presented this common distortion of the sexes to me - I laughed very loudly. I think the bras were actually trashed, but there was plenty of fire unleashed by the justifiable anger of this wave of the feminist movement. I knew it wasn't a new movement because my mother and sister and I would sit and watch the struggles of the suffragettes on PBS and sing "Shoulder to Shoulder" with weekly pride. I never learned how to do my hair, remove body hair, wear deodorant or put on make-



Stephanie sitting with little brother Adrian with older sister Rachel beside car.

up - the latter put me at a slight disadvantage in my early career as an actress. My mother never explicitly said, "Don't wear a bra!" but I saw it as violation of the women's movement to do so. This was a problem for me as my breasts were somewhat larger than my mother's and I played a lot of sports. Now I am a proud bra-wearing, card-carrying feminist.

The last stop on Shirley Daventry French's path to yoga was encounter groups in Duncan with Ray Woolum. I don't know what went on inside the group meeting room but my parents speak of the experience as an essential beginning shift in self-awareness. What I was exposed to outside on the grounds was the hippie movement. At age 11, I was already aware that not only was my family different, but so was I. The hippie culture was a liberating burst out of the cultural constraints I felt in Victoria. I experienced wonderful music, an array of colors and clothing, public nudity, people living communally in teepees, open displays of affection, and pot (which I declined). I had two life-altering encounters of my own which carried my soul slightly less scathed through the torments of adolescence and our mind numbing culture. First, I made two friends, a musician and a painter, both in their early twenties, who became important mentors for me. Second, I was exposed to and began a lifetime devotion to free-form dance under the tutelage of Cat Stevens and Osibisa.

By the time I was twelve, my mother, Shirley Daventry French, had recognized that she needed a more sustaining path and she had moved on from the encounter groups. Many of you probably know the easy version of how my mother got into yoga. A champion swimmer as a young girl, she started teaching lessons at the Y, largely to get out of the house and have a break from us kids. She took a yoga class offered at the Y by Jessica Tucker. As she began her exploration of yoga, Shirley realized that here at last was the answer to her soul's cry for sustenance. Very quickly Jessica enlisted her to teach. To prepare for her first solo teaching experience, Shirley was not required to complete the rigorous training she now demands of new yoga teachers; it wasn't available. As a teacher with integrity

she knew she needed more training so she invited teachers from out of town and organized workshops. This is what initially brought many great teachers into our home including Swami Radha, and later, B.K.S. Iyengar.

Like my sister, Rachel, when I heard that a woman was coming who had changed her name to Swami Radha, of all things, and only wore orange, I thought she must be pretty weird. I was 12, so I knew my parents were weird but I preferred that to the lowest common denominator of normal. Unlike my sister's peer group, my friends did not tease me about my family. Instead, they wanted to be in my family or wished their families were more like mine. Because I was seen as lucky to have such a family, I wasn't allowed to have problems or difficulties. But life challenges us wherever we are bravely working and I had (and have) my share of problems. I was also offered incredible opportunities; Swami Radha was one. When I first met her, she looked past my gangly body and my adolescent confusion. Swami Radha looked into my soul and said with her eyes, *I see you and I know what you are capable of.* My call and challenge ever since has been to fulfill that destiny.

Shirley Daventry French entered the path of yoga with the same vigor and commitment she brings to everything she believes in. But she was not free to devote herself to it entirely; she had a husband and three children. There is an old Indian story I have heard many times:

The monk sat in a cave on a mountaintop meditating until he found enlightenment. He came down off the mountain to bring his newfound wisdom to the people. As he entered the marketplace people rushed by and bumped him. He shouted at them in anger.

My mother had to find her way in yoga while continuously being jostled by her family and the demands of living in the world. I can now appreciate how difficult this must have been. As I sit trying to write this reflection, I am interrupted every few seconds (no exaggeration) by my 3 year old son and 1 1/2 year old daughter: a snotty nose, a question, an ant crossing the

floor, a dispute, a dinosaur wanting to play, a full diaper, a question, a missing puzzle piece, a hug.

As a parent myself I understand the inability to be all things to all people (my husband and I regularly put a quarter in the jar for our children's future therapy). But knowing this now does not change the many times as a kid I wished my mother had more time to cater to me. I ate grilled cheese and beans through a few too many 'make your own dinner' nights when she was teaching. I got stuck hitching rides home from sports because there were no buses in Metchosin at that time and I didn't have a taxi mum.

All of that is transitory. Shirley was always a mother in the most important ways. She somehow managed to be home for afternoon tea - an important time for processing the day. She never let us go to bed feuding, demonstrating instead the power of apology and affection to heal. She has always been a fascinating woman and a strong role model. At times, feeling neglected because Shirley had a career other than being my mother, I would say in anger, "Why did you have me? You wish you didn't have children to get in the way of what you really want to be doing!" Shirley would cite yogic philosophy: "You chose me! Why did you choose to be born into a family of yogis?" God knows, I hope! I'm still trying to figure it out.

It's been a fascinating journey thus far. Thank you, my mother, my first guide, for all you give to me and to others. I love and admire you very much.

Happy 70th Birthday with love from us all - Pierre and Stephanie, and your grandchildren, Elise and Pierre Sebastian.

We Celebrate You! 

Mother Said

by Adrian French

My mother always said, as she missed the turn to the movie theatre or the fish and chip shop, that the car was driving itself to the YMCA. As a child I always thought that the 'Y' stood for Yoga. As a young boy my mother said that doing handstands was not weird, but energizing and healthy. Regardless of what my mother said, I began to suspect that other mothers were not doing handstands in the hall, especially naked.

My mother said that she was becoming a yoga teacher and that she was very excited about how this was going to change the way she viewed life. Oddly at that moment, I too realized that my mother becoming a yoga teacher would also change the way I viewed life. Almost immediately my vision of life changed. In my playroom I no longer could re-enact Stanley Cup hockey; the large mirror at one end of the room and ropes hanging from the newly painted yellow and orange walls took away from the imaginary atmosphere of the Montreal Forum at play-off time.

My mother said that yoga is good for teen-aged boys and encouraged me to practice yoga much in the way my father encouraged me to dig weeds out of the driveway (to this day my mother cannot recall this episode in our lives). I was to chart my daily practice as I was also charting my daily television consumption. Being a creative thirteen year old, I quickly figured out that by turning a small black and white television upside down I could log time in both my charts all the while receiving the benefits of hanging upside down.

My mother said that she was studying under a great man. She made (and continues to make) regular trips to meet with and study under him. Once, the teacher came to spend time with my mother in Metchosin. One morning I peered up from a bowl of raisin bran and was met by two large brown eyes separated by a broad crimson strip running from nose to forehead. At that moment I recognized that this was a great man; however, I doubt that my mother and I were using that word in the same context. As I grew older and became aware that an entire universe existed beyond my world I

“Deprived of spiritual
nourishment for yourself,
what will you impart to
your family?”

began to comprehend that by spending time with this great man my mother was, herself, becoming a great woman.

My mother says that yoga will make all my aches and pains go away. The sports I've played have claimed a toll on my body. Each ache I complain of is met with a cocky, "You do, of course, realize what would help that." She insists that yoga can fix all that ails me. Once my mother said to me that she had hurt her shoulder doing a pose named after some exotic animal. I was happy to suggest that a rousing game of soccer would help to relieve the aches and pains of yoga.

Yoga has had a hand in creating my vision of the world. I like who I am and am grateful for the lessons, planned or not, that my mother continues to teach me. I have come to realize that although my mother may be weird, she is the only mother I possibly could have chosen. My mother said in an article for the Victoria Yoga Centre's newsletter that although her son did not officially study yoga many of his approaches to life have a yogic flavour. Who could ever question what my mother says.

Happy Birthday.

Love, Adrian 🍰

A Willingness to Live Fully

by Michele Worth

After more than a decade of strange coincidences that brought my familia and Shirley's familia together in classrooms, living rooms, waiting rooms, and yoga rooms - I met Shirley for myself in June of 1985. In Shirley's telling of our story, she says that she admired me from afar, from her domestic station at the kitchen window, until her awkward and girl-shy son, Adrian introduced us over a cup of tea. I was seventeen.

That first summer spent at the French homestead in Metchosin is etched indelibly in my mind as a series of images: a tight-lipped Adrian warning me about his

mother's sometimes nude sunbathing, and then stumbling upon a sanguine Shirley myself either eating ice cream cones on the deck while she took a break from her work on the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter or at delicious potluck parties attended by people wearing loose cotton clothes and leather sandals. It was a beautiful world that I had entered into, one that was given form and texture through Shirley and the path she followed.

I have now known this woman for sixteen years, nine of which have been lived out under the auspices of a mother and daughter-in-law relationship. The significance of this turning point in my life is reflected not only in my use of *French '85* as my top secret password for banking purposes (guess I'll be changing that now), but in how I walk and speak and am in the



world. Shirley introduced me to the *Moosewood* cookbooks, Murchies tea, the luxurious comfort of Birkenstock sandals, the sumptuous flavours of the Italian Bakery, the benefits of natural fibres, and the ideologies of feminism. And, yes, it goes without saying that Shirley has tied me up in her underground yoga lair, sent me copies of the Newsletter, and introduced me to the work of Mr. Iyengar. But this represents only some of the form and texture I mentioned earlier.

My concept of Shirley has never been one-dimensional - as a pillar of the Victoria Yoga Centre or as a yogic aspirant or as a strong voice for yoga in the west, though she is all this. She is a compilation of selves revealed through the stories told at the dinner table, images from family albums, and the musings of my

husband. As such she is a defiant British girl living through World War II bombings; she is an elegant and cosmopolitan urbanite in an evening gown; she is an audacious bikini clad westerner on a beach in 1950s Tripoli; she is a doctor's wife and manicured mother of three in the 60s; she is a dishevelled and long-haired devotee in the 70s; she is the refreshingly unorthodox and welcoming mother of the man I make my life with.

Shirley Rachel Daventry French is one of the great teachers of my life. (At this point you'll have to overlook the flourish of dramatic sentimentality as a failing of my prose and the sticky nature of recollection). The teaching that stands out, again and again, as singular is her statement, "Shoulders back and chest open." This is not only a physical posture but also one of psychological and emotional significance. This I have finally understood after years of repetition, observation and my work at Radha Centres in Vancouver and Victoria. Shirley presented me with an invitation and then made the introductions at the party, so to speak. "Shoulders back, chest open," are indicative of an attitude, intent, action of the head and heart. It is compassion and acceptance, and a willingness to live fully in the present with all that that means. It is strength and flexibility; it is trust despite fear; faith despite doubt. This is the texture whereof I spoke at the beginning of this reflection. This was the intangible thing, presence, energy that shared space with Shirley. This was the remarkable thing that I couldn't articulate about my boyfriend's mum. Shirley showed me the spirit of Namaste, then taught me the word "Namaste", and then provided me with the tools I needed to *feel* Namaste. What a gift. The texture of my own world has been profoundly and irrevocably changed by this. Namaste Shirley. 🙏

“What we have at any given time is partial understanding which will develop only if we continue to persevere and question.

By Her Example

by Melissa Worth

I began attending classes with Shirley Daventry French in my teens though my primary relationship with her was that of my sister's mother-in-law. At that time, Shirley acted more as a role model for me in the sense of woman and mother figure at a stage in my life when I needed it the most. I looked up to Shirley; she was a

vivid example of a strong, beautiful, fulfilled woman full of vitality and life.



By her example I was shown an alternative to how life could be approached. Life did not have to be full of guilt, shame and hardship; life would be what you make it. At that young age I

did not realise that this way of thinking was greatly due to the influence of yoga, specifically Mr. Iyengar and Swami Radha. The experience of being Shirley's student and having been connected to this family of yoga practitioners has greatly affected my life.

In addition to introducing me to yoga, I am also thankful to Shirley for having given birth to her son, my brother-in-law, Adrian. I met Adrian when I was ten and since then he has fulfilled the role of older brother in all of its 'torturous' manifestations! Shirley has raised a kind and thoughtful man who, although seemingly aloof, has also been a great teacher in my life and is a caring husband to my sister. You have deeply touched my life in many ways, Shirley. 🙏

An Old Friend

by Audrey Finch



When I met Shirley thirty-five years ago I found her to be chic, sassy and pert with a large curiosity for life. She had gorgeous auburn hair and approached everything with flair, exuding confidence and a willingness to try new things. Shirley was always

interesting to be with and usually something exciting or fun would occur; our families shared many happy occasions together. She was quite hip and together and we explored some of the consciousness raising trends of the late sixties and seventies. Gradual changes over many years of hard work and dedication to B.K.S. Iyengar transformed the chic and sassy into the yoga master she is today, still with a keen sense of humor. Keep it up, old friend. 🎂



Iyengar Classes Locations

Iyengar Yoga classes are taught at the following locations. For more information, call the numbers listed below.

Victoria YM/YWCA	386-7511
Fairfield Community Centre,	
Fairfield New Horizons	384-6542
Panorama Leisure Centre	656-7271
Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre	478-8384
University of Victoria -	
Athletics & Recreation	721-7282
Naden Gym of CFB Esquimalt	
Cedar Hill Recreation Centre	595-7121
Oakland Community Centre	370-9101



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

is pleased to present

JULIE GUDMESTAD

Iyengar Yoga Workshop – All Levels
(Minimum - One year of Iyengar Yoga practice)

October 12 - 14, 2001

Friday 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Saturday 10:00 - 1:00 pm, 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Sunday 10:00 - 1:00pm

Location: Victoria Yoga Centre

Props: On Saturday morning, please bring the props that you use for shoulderstand (i.e. 3 blankets, sticky mat, strap). Please inform Linda Benn if you are unable to bring your own.



Many yoga students have attended Julie's Anatomy Awareness In Asana workshops. Julie is a certified Iyengar Yoga teacher and licensed Physical Therapist. Besides her professional practice she runs a yoga studio in Portland, Oregon. She combines her anatomical and kinesiological knowledge of the body into the structure, practice and sequencing of the yoga poses. For this workshop we decided to ask Julie to teach a yoga workshop, rather than focussing on teaching anatomy. Julie teaches with clarity, strength and a delightful sense of humour. This is Julie's fourth visit to Victoria. Please join us for an inspiring and challenging weekend.

Fee:

Yoga Centre Members: \$150 + gst

Non-members: \$180 + gst

*Non-member fee includes payment for Yoga Centre membership

Registration

Opens August 1st. Cancellations will be refunded only if your place can be filled. Cheque payable to Victoria Yoga Centre.

Mail: Linda Benn, 698 Rockridge Place, Victoria, B.C. V9B 6K1

Email: lbenn@islandnet.com.

Phone: 250-478-0757 or Victoria Yoga Centre: 250-386-9642.

Be A Student First

by Linda Benn

"There are many gurus in the world. Everyone becomes a guru. Wherever you go, there are nothing but gurus - so many that people have become fed up with all their conflicting teachings. Whenever a guru appears, he starts up a new sect. He has never been anybody's disciple, but he claims to be everybody's guru."

Swami Muktananda, in *Play of Consciousness*

In yoga, as in many fields, people will set themselves up as experts, leaders and teachers without ever having been a good student.

Shirley is my teacher but even more so, she lives her life as a student of yoga, a *sadhaka*, a disciple following the teachings of Mr. Iyengar. I know that she loves teaching, pressing each of us to face and explore our limitations, to honour the life force within. But I think that her students and friends understand that for her, teaching is a tool to express her devotion to the study of Self and to the great teachings of Mr. Iyengar.

I have never felt that Shirley needs followers or seeks power. She does not need us, her students. One day she



may decide to stop formal teaching and I think that she will do that clearly and with no sense of loss. She will be able to say that she taught well but it is time for other challenges and adventures. It is this lack of dependency that makes her such a good teacher. The Victoria and Canadian yoga community all rely on her clarity and detachment when it comes to resolving difficult situations.

I have gone to her as my teacher and friend with personal problems and suffering and found her to be someone who can listen patiently and sympathetically. But she always brings a clear perspective, offers possible solutions and the confidence that this too can be resolved. Shirley has the steadiness of character that is the result of *abhyasa* (determined practice) combined with the non-attachment of *vairagya*.

Perhaps it is the ability to be dedicated and humble enough to be a good student combined with non-attachment that makes excellent teachers such as Shirley Daventry French and Sri. B.K.S. Iyengar. 🙏



First and Last Words

by Lauren Cox



Shirley Daventry French is living the *Bhagavad Gita*, which translates to the “Song of God.” I read in a book review that the first and last words of a great scripture will always give us the key to its central message. In the *Gita*, the first word is *dharma*, or duty, and the last word *mama* which means my. Therefore the *Gita* is about “my duty.”

In the *World Book Encyclopedia*, *dharma* is defined as “moral and religious laws.” *Dharma* establishes the rules of duty, responsibilities and ethical conduct for all people. And the dictionary defines *dharma* as conformity to one’s duty and nature.

Just as the *dharma* of the sun is to shine, the moon to reflect, the wind to blow, the *dharma* of humankind is to uphold the duty that suits our inherent nature - that which is ours to do in this life. The *Gita* invites us to discover our *swadharma* (purpose) and to have the courage to follow it. This explains Shirley’s obvious pursuit in this lifetime.

My teacher, friend and forever challenger is not content to follow only her dream. Oh no! She has taken it upon herself to encourage and challenge all her students. How many times has she taken me out of my comfort zone? (And I mean *way out*!) How many times has she asked us, “Whose duty is it?” How many times have I felt the prodding of the master’s stick? I

for one know that if I had stayed in my comfort zone I would not be where I am today.

Living the “Song of God” invites us to realize that life has a beautiful tune worth celebrating.

Birthday blessings Shirley Daventry French and may you continue to inspire us as you celebrate your *dharma*! 🎂

Our Sincerity Protected Us

by Donna Fornelli

Shirley and I first met in a yoga class at the Victoria Y nearly 30 years ago. We often laugh about our first “teacher training course.” It was twelve hours spread over six weeks and then we were turned loose on the unsuspecting public. Our sincerity protected us, as Swami Radha so often said.

Shirley soon became the Program Director at the Y and remained in that post for many years. She oversaw the transition from hybrid yoga to mainly Mr. Iyengar’s style. Shirley developed a rapport with the Y administration and little by little the furniture was moved out of the lounge where the yoga room is today. Then, wall ropes went up, equipment was bought, and the Y Custody Account was established which would help with new equipment and scholarships. It is rare for any Y in the country to have this kind of relationship with a yoga program and Shirley was behind it all. Now the Victoria Yoga Centre has one of the finest teacher training programs in North America along with the most experienced and well-trained teaching staff, thanks to Shirley.

Shirley and Derek graciously opened their home to meetings of those of like mind. The beginnings of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society happened in their living room. The papers for incorporation were signed on their dining room table. Many workshops were held in their children’s playroom, now the Yoga Room. They were directly responsible for bringing Swami Radha to



Canadian participants during Geetaji's visit to Colorado in '96

Teachers' Association (CIYTA), a board member of CIYTA and, until this year, was a member of CIYTA's Professional Development Committee. She, along with others, worked tirelessly on this committee to implement national certification through assessments following the wishes of Mr. Iyengar.

Shirley never shirks from her duty; neither does she stand in the way of new teachers taking over her jobs so they can do their duty. She teaches by example, is encouraging to teachers, supportive of all and does not mince words when her dander is up. She sees both sides of any situation and plays the devil's advocate when

necessary. Shirley admits when she is wrong.

Over the years, we have watched our families grow, get married, have children, have crises – not necessarily in that order. I remember one of the times my life was being turned upside down and Shirley appeared at my door with an armful of flowers and an understanding smile. She has given me friendship, encouragement and a lot of laughs.

Shirley, it is a privilege to be counted among your many friends. 🙏

“Those of us who have the blessing of practising yoga have on hand the most powerful tools imaginable for healing ourselves including the knowledge that this is how we learn and evolve.”

Victoria and laying the student foundation for Radha House.

In the summers Shirley would travel somewhere to study yoga. Each September we would look forward to her Thursday morning class to find out what she had been up to. One year she brought back Iyengar Yoga and that was it, most of us were hooked and still are to this day. Her tenacity, dedication, good humor and steadfastness have made Iyengar Yoga in Victoria what it is today.

She is a dedicated student of Sri B.K.S. Iyengar and has been instrumental in the development of Iyengar Yoga in Canada. In the 1980's she began a national teachers directory so that we would know where yoga classes were being held across the country. Today it has grown into the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Directory with more than 100 teachers and now lists teachers in training as well. Shirley applied for the use of Mr. Iyengar's Service Mark that the national association has the privilege to use. Shirley is a founding member of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga

Friend. Mentor. Teacher. Colleague.

by Leslie Hogle

Shirley is all these and more to me. Which one to write about? I have supported others to write for this issue by saying, "Just one short anecdote, that's all you need to write." What shall I pick?

Shirley and I have traveled down the yogic path together for many years. For a while she leapt forward, and I fell back. Years ago in the 70's, Shirley and I attended Jessica Tucker's yoga class at the Y in Victoria. Even though we had not yet been introduced to B.K.S. Iyengar's methods, Jessica did use his classic text, *Light on Yoga*, for inspiration. We both took workshops with Swami Radha. But circumstances and our natures led Shirley on a more intense search that took she and her husband, Derek, to the Ashram for their three months teachers' course where she encountered Iyengar Yoga classes with Norma Hodge. Soon after, she and Derek traveled to Pune to study at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute.

When I came back to yoga, after my last child was born and a series of health problems that had me in the background for a number of years, Shirley had become my teacher and has been ever since. I was recovering from a whiplash injury, among other things. She and Derek were offering a course on yoga for backs. I was fearful of doing anything that would bring new pain to my neck. They assured me I would not re-injure myself from the yoga poses and this was a turning point for me. Under their skilled and watchful teaching, I began my yogic journey once more.

Inspired by the first big yoga convention held in San Francisco and Mr. Iyengar's visit to Victoria in 1984, I traveled to India for the first time and took part in the Canadian Yoga Intensive in Pune in 1985, which Shirley organized and led. My anxiety before this trip brought on a new round of pain in my neck, but again,

Shirley reassured me, and in fact encouraged me to phone Geeta to ask for clarification. Facing this fear, and working with the Iyengars first hand, was truly life altering. While we were in Pune, Shirley again helped



expand my horizons when she asked me to participate in the interview with Mr. Iyengar for our newsletter. Then came my commitment to our national community. Several years ago when we needed to fulfill an obligation to have a representative on the organizing committee of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association, Shirley looked at me and said, "Leslie, why don't you do that?" I had never

particularly liked meetings or administration work, but since the committee didn't involve dealing with numbers, I agreed to be on it. This work got me more involved in the running of the national association, and I am now on CIYTA's Board of Directors. Like a domino effect, this in turn led me to meet with Mr. Iyengar himself on our behalf, asking him to be our Honorary President, to which he agreed - as long as he didn't have to attend meetings, which I assured him he did not! Without this involvement, I also would not have had the opportunity to spend so much time at Geeta's side at the recent convention in Vancouver.

These are but a few examples of the many, many times Shirley has encouraged me to go further, deeper into my practice, into my strengths, into roles of leadership.

Through Shirley's encouragement and confidence in all of us in Victoria, our community is strong and vibrant. It runs very much with a deep commitment to Mr. Iyengar's work, to the ethical precepts of yoga, to supporting each other, to working collegially. She encourages and expects us to rise to our potential. The six of us who form the Teacher Training Committee work closely together to supervise new teachers. This committee functions well not only because we follow the guidelines set out at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune but that we maintain a strong foundation in that we respect one another's abilities and opinions.

From an outsider's point of view, perhaps our organization seems to run smoothly, but I know it hasn't always been easy. For some years Shirley carried the torch nearly alone. She organized everything, typed the newsletter, invited teachers, made the brochures, planned programs, and taught the classes. Sometimes we let her down, and a letter would arrive with her return address. "Uh oh, what did we do now?" The undertone of Shirley's missives was always her passion for the work, and that was clear - What were our priorities? Was it not our duty to do the work, to carry on the teachings, to attend workshops, to travel to study with Mr. Iyengar, whether it was abroad or in Canada? Where was our commitment? Our purpose? Shirley's words helped me to be more resolved, more

committed to yoga. She helped me see I needed to be more definite, clear. Her strength, dedication and her goal to follow the path of yoga have brought vitality to Victoria and our yoga community.

Thank you, Shirley, for your friendship, your faith in my abilities, your encouragement, your teaching - for living your ideals. 🕯

The Victoria Yoga Centre



Is pleased to announce
the following scholarships:

Julie Gudmestad
October 12 & 14

1 scholarship @ \$100
Please apply by Sept.12

Chris Saudek Workshop
November 15 – 16

1 scholarship @ \$100
Please apply by Oct. 15

Apply in writing to The Scholarship
Committee. Give to your teacher or mail to:

Scholarship Committee
Victoria Yoga Centre Society
Unit 592, 185-911 Yates St.
Victoria, BC V8V 4Y9

All applicants must supply a current phone
number and address. For additional information
contact Wendy Boyer 598-9321 or
Amanda Mills 727-0222.

Fearless Example

by Ann Kilbertus

Once upon a time I became a yoga student at the Y, taking different classes from different teachers. After several years of this I decided to try Monday nights with Shirley Daventry French. I remember entering the room with some trepidation, knowing that this was the advanced class, which most of the teachers attended. In many ways I haven't looked back. After a few more years and many workshops later, Shirley approached me one evening and asked if I'd ever thought about teaching. I pondered, and the more I pondered, the more the idea fit. Without my consciously having this direction in mind, Shirley was able to cut through and shine light ahead on the path of yoga for me.

In my view, she is a true Teacher, inspiring and inquiring, deeper and deeper, into the subject of yoga without necessarily handing everything out on a silver platter to the student. To teach in this way requires a subtle awareness about how to motivate different

people, when and how to challenge, when to encourage, and when to let go. It requires vigilance and dedication. Over the years, my relationship with Shirley has evolved into different things in different

situations, from teacher to friend, from colleague to mentor. I watch in awe as she continues to teach classes and workshops, to host yoga teachers from around the world, to type articles and write letters to the editor, and to be the fire that has fostered such a strong yoga community in Victoria for over a period of more than thirty years.

As a Senior Teacher, Shirley seems to be coming more and more into her own. All aspects of the teachings flow naturally from her due to years of dedicated study and practice. She teaches by fearless example. I feel blessed to have crossed paths for such a long time with such a remarkable woman.

A light-filled birthday to you Shirley!

P.S. You did say that I had until you turned 70 to improve my *Utthita Parsvakonasana*, so I took every opportunity I could to practice in every possible location in search of Divine inspiration. 🙏



Jaya, Jaya Shirley!

by Linda Shevloff

The bonds formed between gurus and disciples continue irrespective of time and distance, over the course of many lifetimes. This esoteric idea was remote from my understanding when I first heard it stated at a yoga workshop I attended many years ago, but the idea did introduce me to

a concept about human connections to which I have since given considerable thought. My current awareness does not extend to other lifetimes, though I have had some powerful connections with teachers in this one.

Last October, when flying back to Hong Kong from Victoria after having completed the Intermediate

Assessment there, my thoughts were centered on Shirley Daventry French. Shirley was my first Iyengar Yoga teacher in 1980, and since then she has been my primary teacher. I did my teacher training with her. I learned my own style of teaching through her. She introduced me to both Swami Radha and B.K.S. Iyengar. Shirley's focus, determination and commitment have directed my development and cleared my path in life. Even now, seven years away from Victoria, it is Shirley I turn to with my yoga questions and it is her example I follow. She gave me courage to undergo certification, even though I was so far removed from my teacher. She has been a guide and

a friend. On that flight home, pondering these things, I suddenly recognized the invaluable gift she has been in my life and the connection I have with her. My life has been shaped by Shirley's example, and no matter where I live on the planet, Shirley will remain in my mind and heart.

So now, on the occasion of Shirley's seventieth

birthday celebrations, what gift can I offer? What words can I use? After having received so much, what can I give back in return? There is no material thing that will do. I offer her my love and my gratitude. I hope to live my life with as much courage and conviction as she lives hers. I am honoured to have Shirley Daventry French in my life. Jaya, Jaya, Shirley. 🎂



Teachers' Meeting '93

It's a great gift to have a birth in this grand, abundant country... that we don't need to spend the whole day fetching water so we can do our spiritual work of looking within.

Shirley is One of Those People

by Carole Miller

"[Her] fundamental integrity is persuasive - the song of spirituality - and the enduring grace of goodness is what we sing about."

Sinetar, in *The Mentors Spirit*

When I first read the book, *The Mentor's Spirit* by Sinetar, I couldn't help thinking about Shirley, a dear friend and mentor to me. The words 'friend' and 'mentor' have many implications; we picture those people who come into our lives, perhaps unexpectedly, people who are foundational to our growth. Shirley is one of these people. I've known Shirley for over thirty years in her roles as mother, wife, teacher and mentor. Three decades of friendship have brought us together in a variety of contexts. A women's consciousness raising group, dream group; visits to Yasodhara Ashram; study in India; Straight Walks with Swami Radha; workshops and conferences. At the heart of it all, has been the practice of yoga.

We have shared our joys and challenges: We have watched our children grow up; we have been support for each other through family illness and personal difficulty; we have celebrated graduations, bar mitzvahs, weddings and births. Our children, now grown, are a wonderful and enduring reminder of our long history.

Shirley exemplifies the joy of learning, of discipline, of openness and of dedication. It was she who introduced Mr. Iyengar's philosophy and teaching to the Victoria yoga community, challenging us to uncover our potentialities. Shirley has provided me with the support and stimulation to expand my perception of teaching and learning. She is a gifted mentor,

encouraging us to develop our understanding of yoga through our practice and community. Her generous spirit speaks to the meanings of friendship, family, and fellowship. 🙏



The V.Y.C. Labour Day Picnic '88.

Congratulations

To the following teachers who were awarded
Introductory certification at the Halifax
assessment, June 15-17, 2001

Introductory Level II

Karen Major
Theresa McDiarmid
Eileen Millar
Heidi Steinberg Fenton
Temmi Ungerman Sears
Robert Walker

Introductory Level I

Valerie Crump
Robert Power

The Divine Committee at Work

by Jim Rischmiller

So, there was the newsletter editor, two weeks from deadline and her computer froze up, with none less than *everything* in this issue on her computer. I was sitting next to

Linda Benn at the breakfast Board Meeting in June and on hearing this sad and frantic tale from the editor, Linda said "Jim is a computer guy, talk to him, see if he can fix it." (Which was a fair assumption on Linda's part, as I am in the computer network business.) On the principle that I should listen when the Divine Committee speaks, I put off mundane things like earning money that weekend.

For the privilege of getting this newsletter out. The problem eventually turned out to be a nasty virus. It had buried itself deep into the roots of the computer and I had to do a Kali on it whilst not losing one word of the 'data'. As a bonus the editor snapped together a take-home pack of Indian food for me, and on return of the fixed computer, some rice pudding 'just like my mum used to make' was offered. Who could refuse? And not only that but I was then put on the spot with an inquisitive, "By the way Jim, do you realize your contribution for this celebratory issue is two months late?" I have become adept at the art of procrastinating and this 'nasty virus' had, in a round about way, presented me with an opportunity to mend my ways.

I first started learning from Shirley around 1983. We were all young and beautiful then. I had lots of hair and so did Shirley. We went to Poona in 1985 and liked it so much we went back in 1989 and 1991. Somewhere in there I observed an interesting thing. Shirley became a disciple of Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar. He is a strong teacher, but then so is Shirley. I remember Shirley and I had an argument one day (which I lost),

and as I walked the dogs that night I was revisiting the whole thing and feeling hard done by. Then I became aware that the dogs, who were attached to the end of my leash, thought it was I who was on the end of the *their* leash. Two different perspectives - just like my discussion

with Shirley. I realized that running old tapes, i.e. rehashing old arguments like this was not only detrimental to me but horror of horrors, it did not do my ongoing relationship with Shirley any good either.

Shirley does not hide things. Just like her teachers Swami Radha and Guruji, if it is needful, like it or lump it, out it comes. It is a gift to have clear people in your life. You can agree or disagree and in the process find out who you are. In 1991, I was in class with Guruji, we were in Halasana, and I was in agony. Guruji came over and put a block under my feet. Out of all those students, he saw my predicament and made the effort to help me find a place where I could learn. This same compassion I see at work in Shirley. Thank God for them both. 🕯️



The Salt Spring Retreat '89



Swami Padmananda, an early disciple of Swami Radha, has been a significant teacher for Shirley.

Any Amount More

by Athena George

It's two days after the Salt Spring Island yoga retreat and yoga teacher Shirley Daventry French's crisp voice still rings in my head. This 'inner Shirley' isn't telling me to kick back and relax. Oh no. She's stating very clearly that, "Yoga is responsibility." Again she strikes this theme: "Yoga is not a way to avoid our responsibilities, but a way to learn how to do them more graciously and fully." Words chime out in Shirley's English-accented voice, words like priority, practice, effort and self-discipline.

Perhaps these particular words strike inner bells because I am still smarting from something that happened the first night of the retreat. At the end of *Savasana*, I approached the contact for the Yoga Newsletter and offered to write something about this year's retreat. She squinted and frowned at me. She asked, "Did you hand anything in last year?" I answered no. She said, "Because we need commitment here."

Suddenly my stomach tightened with a swampy-queasy feeling. Had I promised to write something about the retreat the year before and neglected my promise?

Something was stirring, not a clear memory, but a sinking certainty; I certainly might have done this. Procrastination and inconsistency are two of my more irksome traits. This incident set two more words clanging in my head (in Shirley's voice, of course): promptness and consistency. A third also clamoured to be heard: reliability.

Let's take a word-tally. So far, we have: responsibility, effort, priority, practice, self-discipline, commitment, promptness, consistency and reliability.

Am I beginning to pick up a faint message here? Could the universe and my yoga teacher be trying to tell me something?

At one point in the retreat, I felt hopeful about my procrastination problem. Shirley said that we can use both our positive and negative traits to help us with yoga. She said, "If you are a stubborn person, then you can become stubborn about sticking to your practice." This sent me into a deep puzzlement, thinking of a way I could use procrastination to help me with yoga. I suspect this doesn't mean I should procrastinate on all my other duties to make time for yoga. Maybe I need to procrastinate about procrastinating, if you follow my drift.

All this reminds me of something my weekly yoga teacher Sheri Berkowitz often says. (I think she said she heard it from one of her teachers.) Just when I've stretched as far as I possibly can, Sheri tells us to stretch, "Any amount more."

At the retreat, Shirley also asked me for this 'any amount more'. She tapped me on the back during *Virabhadrasana I*, in reference to how far I could bring in my shoulder blades and my back ribs, and said, "You have the flexibility, you just need to make the effort."



Heading to the Salt Spring Retreat '96

I have the pen and paper and no shortage of words. All I have to do is make the effort to write this bit about the retreat for the newsletter and get it in on time. (*Note to Shirley: It wasn't until after I submitted this piece that I learned of the theme of the issue. What a wonderful surprise that I had spontaneously written you a tribute that fit so well. Happy Birthday!*)

A few more of Shirley's words vibrate between my ears. During the first night's *Savasana*, she said that yoga meant union. She asked us if we could feel the union between the energy on the inside of our skin and on the outside. For the rest of the weekend, this union of inner and outer energy shimmered in my awareness. I came to notice how, in a very physical and immediate way, Shirley embodies this union. Her years of yoga practice unite in her body as she demonstrates an *asana*. Her years of study of yoga philosophy unite in her words, both spoken and written. Her years as a yoga teacher unite in the swift, certain and careful way she makes a correction to my posture. To extend this, her years of teaching yoga teachers unites in her work to certify Iyengar teachers across Canada. When Shirley Daventry French asks us to plant the mounds of

our big toes firmly — and responsibly — I believe we do so willingly because we know she asks no more of her students than she asks of herself.

Okay, enough written. 'Any amount more' isn't often necessary when it comes to writing. Here is my effort. If I get this in, and on time, then yoga has helped me to learn to fulfill my responsibilities more graciously and fully. I know that even after I set down the pen, more of Shirley's words will toll in my head. Here comes another one now: *surrender.* 🙏

Snippets of Shirley

by Traci Skuce

Prologue

Shirley likes to serve up her teachings with a twist of lemon. Clarity and humor cut through the grease. The karmic grease, the grease that drips from our fragile, deep-fried egos into our practice. She works hard to help us cleanse our palates, readies us to taste the nectar of each pose. For this, I am forever grateful.

1. Maybe we're in *Prasarita Padottanasana* or *Parsvottanasana*. I'm in the front of the class, off to the side. Someone stiff, in the back, complains about lack of movement. Shirley tells her she's lucky, that her body won't let her move any further, that she won't be able to move incorrectly. "Flexible bodies can sneak around the correct action," she says, "and move easily into wrong

action.” As she says this, she looks at me, and smiles. I smile back, my cover blown.

2. My neck and shoulder are bothering me again. It’s the Summer Intensive and we’re hanging from ropes. I approach Shirley, after her demonstration. I show her where my trapezius knots and tortures me. I want her to give me an answer. *The answer.* She tells me I can hang, as she just showed or I can place the knot of the rope under my occipital – create traction. “Or maybe,” she says, assessing my shoulders, “you just need to let go.” I watch as she walks away, brisk and confident, to help another student. I know she’s right.

3. It’s late afternoon at the Y. I’m observing the restorative class in the yoga room. Shirley and Anne move swiftly in their knowledge. It impresses me the details they can see, the change in skin tone, the hardness in the eyes. I go to fetch props – more bolsters, some slant-boards. Across the hall, music thumps from the open door of an aerobics class. Shirley pops into the prop cupboard, snatches some blocks. Before we head back into the yoga room, she pauses and looks with disdain toward the blow-your-eardrums-out pulse. “It is my version of hell,” she declares, “to be an aerobics instructor!” She disappears back to the helm of the restorative class and I am left giggling.

4. It’s before the Thursday morning class, students gather outside the yoga room: some flip through the new *Monday Magazine*, others stretch and chat. Shirley is sitting amongst a crew of women, chit-chatting about this and that. They dive into household duties: organizing dishes in the dishwasher. “I think I’m the only one who knows how to do it right in my house!” Shirley declares. Another woman agrees. “It’s about spatial awareness, otherwise the dishes rattle, rattle, rattle.” Shirley laughs her big laugh. She understands that we can study the mind everywhere, even on the bottom rack of the dishwasher.

Epilogue

Studying with Shirley has been a great honour for me. When I lived in Victoria, I used to leave Thursday morning classes with trembling legs and an open chest, to pick up my son at the child-minding. “She’s just

amazing,” I’d say to my friend, Karen. “Today she said...” or, “Today she had us doing...”

Though my time with her was limited, the base Shirley has given me is immeasurable. 🕯

Synchronicity

by Caroline Sophonow

Shirley represents Timing in my life. Her the big hand, me the small. For every hour it takes me I’m inspired by her minutes and seconds. We go around together. 🕯



Worth Working Towards

by Britta Poisson

It happened during the Special Needs class. I stopped for a moment to survey the room, to see what I could do. To my eyes, all seemed to be running smoothly. But a movement among all the movements in the room caught my eye. It was Shirley. She was moving from person to person, making an adjustment here, giving a directive there. Her voice, her body and her mind responded to each situation as it presented itself. Yet her every action was unobstructed by a personality. There was no gap between what needed to be done and what was done.

I stood there as I sometimes can in nature, undistracted by thought or sensation. Then, a crystal clear thought appeared: “Now that is something worth working towards.”

Shirley, it is by your example that a profound shift occurred for me that day. Thank you. 🕯

Shirley, the Crouching Tiger

by Weis Pukesh

The first time I let myself slide down the ropes, feet firmly planted on the wall, slowly coming into a backbend, concentrating my hardest to work the legs to the utmost, head thrown back, Shirley came running out of nowhere, put her arms around my back and pulled sharply on my shoulderblades in order to open my chest. In doing so she dislodged a scream from deep inside me.



The Teachers' Intensive, 01

This scenario occurred several more times in the next few months. Feeling rather vulnerable hanging in the ropes like that, not knowing from where – or if – an attack was forthcoming, I became hyper-vigilant while hanging in the ropes, sensitive to anything that was coming to me. Thus the next time “Shirleythe Tiger” was coming, I screamed before she even touched me. Never missing a teachable moment, Shirley turned to the class and said that scream was strictly coming from the mind and was not a true statement. Well yes, memories were in my way and so I tried to be like a



carcass on a hook that does not react to anything, but my mind was having such a hard time with that decision.

Over time, sliding down the ropes into a backbend fell out of practice and memories began to fade. A year went by before we were again required to hang from the ropes in a backbend. So down I went, slowly, steadily, mind fully engaged on what my body was doing. And whoosh!!!! Two hands appeared on my shoulderblades, jerking me forward, opening my chest.

“Argh!!!!” I screamed.

Then I remembered, “Right....”

And as she disappeared from my field of vision, was that a tiny smile I noticed around the edges of the Tiger’s mouth?

Happy Birthday, Shirley!

One day you won’t need to open my chest anymore! 🎂

“If you didn’t learn what you needed to learn then life will present you with another opportunity to learn what you need.”

गुरुः पिता गुरुर्माता गुरुर्देवो न संशयः ।
कर्मणा मनसा वाचा तस्मात्सर्वैः प्रसेव्यते ॥ १३ ॥



There is not the least doubt that Guru is father, Guru is mother, and Guru is God even; and as such, he should be served by all with their thought, word and deed.

Siva Samhita III-13



A Sense of Being Home

by Leslie Faber

I don't know Shirley very well, so I can only talk about the influence she has had on me. In July of 1999 I was diagnosed with having rheumatoid arthritis. Within the next few months I would lose everything, including all hope ever leading a normal, productive life. I was completely devastated. Western medicine failed miserably. Eastern medicine offered a glimmer of hope and I was actively exploring the possibilities.

In January 2000, after another huge flare-up, I was desperate to find something to better my condition. I decided to try yoga. Two months later I found myself in the Special Needs class at the Y. Little did I know that I was about to embark upon an incredible journey. I found the first class difficult and painful but struggled through and was very glad when I heard the words 'final relaxation.'

As Shirley led us through *Savasana*, she asked us to bring our attention to our breath. She asked us to visualize our lungs filling our whole bodies and to visualize our whole body awash with *prana*, with each new breath. She asked us to have faith in this energy and to have faith in our own body as well. She went on to suggest that we re-claim the space that was created in our body in that day's practice. At that moment I felt an overwhelming sense of relief, a sense of being home, of belonging, a sense of hope. By sharing her knowledge of yoga Shirley had given me that hope, she had given me the tools to re-build my life.

I completed Special Needs and moved on to Level I. By the end of May 2000, I was controlling the pain with *asanas* and I was drug free. I moved to Level II. On March 1, 2001—after one year of yoga—I celebrated the day by joining Shirley's Level III class; what an incredible year it had been!

Although I still have some effects of the arthritis, they are minor indeed, and I can honestly say that I am living a richer, fuller life and I owe a big part of this richness and fullness to Shirley. Thank you Shirley

Daventry French, for sharing with me your love of yoga in my hour of need. I am truly grateful. 🙏

Seed of Reality

by Nancy Searing

A few years ago, early in my training in Iyengar Yoga, I informed Shirley, in one of my first classes with her, that I was there because it was my intention to be a "yoga teacher". She gently but firmly stated, "It takes a lot of work to be a yoga teacher." She did not squash my enthusiasm, nor humiliate me for my seeming arrogant, but left me with a comment that was, I recognize in retrospect, a seed of reality that brought balance to my naive desire and my lack of perspective of my true ability at that time. I am grateful she allowed me to flounder my way through the class, which I was in no way ready for, with kind encouragement. Without directly focusing on my lack of readiness I felt that my true abilities at that time were mirrored to me in a manner that allowed me to maintain my self-respect, clarified that I did have a lot of work to do, and provided the encouragement to continue on my path.

Since that time I have had a number of opportunities to work with Shirley including the Saltspring Retreats, her Going Deeper workshop, and the Monday night Level IV classes. Shirley offers her wisdom and skill in a clear, precise and compassionate manner that is sometimes challenging yet always motivational. Her high level of enthusiasm for and commitment to yoga is evident in her balanced, stable, and lengthy presence in the Victoria yoga community. Any opportunities I have to receive Shirley's teaching are extremely welcome for invariably they lead me to a deeper understanding and appreciation of yoga. Shirley, you are a true inspiration and role model for yoga. It is with gratitude I thank you. 🙏

From This Auspicious Desk

by Ty Chandler



The '98 Salt Spring Retreat

How auspicious it is to be writing this from Pune. You see, today I met Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar. Introducing me to the Iyengar Family has been such a gift. And I thank Shirley, for so many reasons.

For one year I spent two hours a week reading back issues of the *VYC Newsletter*. I had been studying with Shirley for a few years at that point and was already aware of the profound impact she had had on the Victoria yoga community as well as Iyengar communities nationally and internationally. But going back and reading fifteen years of "Reflections" and seeing the endless workshops, classes and gatherings that Shirley had instigated or took part in was (and remains) awe-inspiring. During one of my reads, I found these words of Shirley's that have stayed with me, affirming my connection to her teachings and kindred spirit: "I knew once on the yogic path, the work would be incredibly hard, but a life for me otherwise would be a waste of time."

Shirley, your example of walking on the yogic path has inspired changes and direction in my own life. For inspiring our greatest potential, and for helping all toward greater awareness and realization of the Atman, I am profoundly grateful. 🙏

“This may be the moment of
enlightenment and you
don't want to miss it!

Seeing is Within

by Celeste Mallet

"Guru...a Guru is one who has
wisdom and is capable of teaching."

Baba Hari Dass in *Silence Speaks*

A guru can only point toward a tree and say, "Look, there is a bird sitting on a branch."

The guru's duty is finished and the student's duty begins. The student tries to see the bird, moving the head up and down and sideways, and now and then asks, "Where is the bird?" The teacher again points and says, "Look straight along my finger." The student finally sees the bird.

The act of seeing is within, but one needs to use one's vision in the right manner.

The yogic lineage is represented by an extraordinarily rich depth of knowledge developed over time by many gurus and teachers. Words cannot aptly express my deep gratitude to my teacher, Shirley, who through her devoted and disciplined efforts in yoga connects me to this lineage, and helps me to see the "bird on the branch." 🙏

Essence of the Practice

by Sheri Berkowitz

Over the years I have come to appreciate that there is nothing so refreshing in our yoga community as the traditional order that is in place. It follows one of the most ancient and best yogic traditions - that the most senior people in age and experience are the senior teachers in the community. This is an inversion to the way things are currently set up in our community at large with its value placed on speed, technology, and a materialistic lifestyle, and where youth is valued over experience.

When I began Iyengar Yoga in the late seventies, two things struck me about Shirley Daventry French, (known then as 'Shirley French'). She was one of Canada's best teachers and she practiced. I state that she practiced because that was a novelty in the early eighties. Transcendental meditation and yoga were new to the scene, and the notion of practicing a spiritual pursuit was, if not *entirely* new, then very rare, mythical even! As a culture we had grown up with a notion of learning and completing assignments under guidance until we graduated which marked we were finished our education and then carried on the responsibility of the profession. In our very own schools even, we had teachers who were using the same notes they had used when they taught our own parents!

And then came Shirley, along with a few others, teaching and shining with an assurance that can only come from true interaction with the art. This notion of practicing meant perpetually refreshing and deepening the learning and refining our understanding. As we began to practice, we found that observing and altering the ways in which we supported both ourselves each other was not always welcome to our *tamasic* ways. But these challenges would be the catalyst to growth and the very essence of the practice we were undertaking.

It is interesting to note that this head start of enthusiasm and dedication was great enough to put Shirley, along with those few others, in the lead for all time. As the community has grown and others have gone to India to train and practice, Shirley's ability to

seek, absorb and pass on the teachings from Pune has held fast. The challenge of traveling to India and the difficulties this represented all fell short of her desire to learn and be at the source.

When I returned from a year spent in San Francisco and colleague Karen Fletcher returned from Victoria we brought Shirley to Winnipeg. That weekend workshop was so thrilling and inspiring for our community that her visits would become regular in the years that would follow.

After my eventual move to Salt Spring Island, I was a short ferry ride away from Victoria and enjoyed attending Shirley's Monday evening class on a regular basis. Reading her column, "Reflections" in this newsletter has been a way to stay tuned into her integrity, to her honest and forthright challenge, not only to herself but to us all, to live by the wisdom offered in *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

My own experience of Shirley is that she has an easy camaraderie and at the same time is a very private person. We have laughed and shared many stories over a meal. I have received letters from her that have touched me deeply in their heartfelt support in personal challenges and for my own work in Iyengar Yoga. I have often caught sight of her worried looks at group meetings and watched her busily writing her mantra during challenging times.

As I consider the lonely position of leadership, as Shirley sets national standards for a new profession in Canada, I love this moment. This moment when I can stop my everyday focus and in these few words of greeting, put my love, my honouring and my appreciation for Shirley into the light on the occasion of her 70th birthday.

Lead on beloved Shirley! 🕯️



The Victoria Yoga Centre is pleased to present

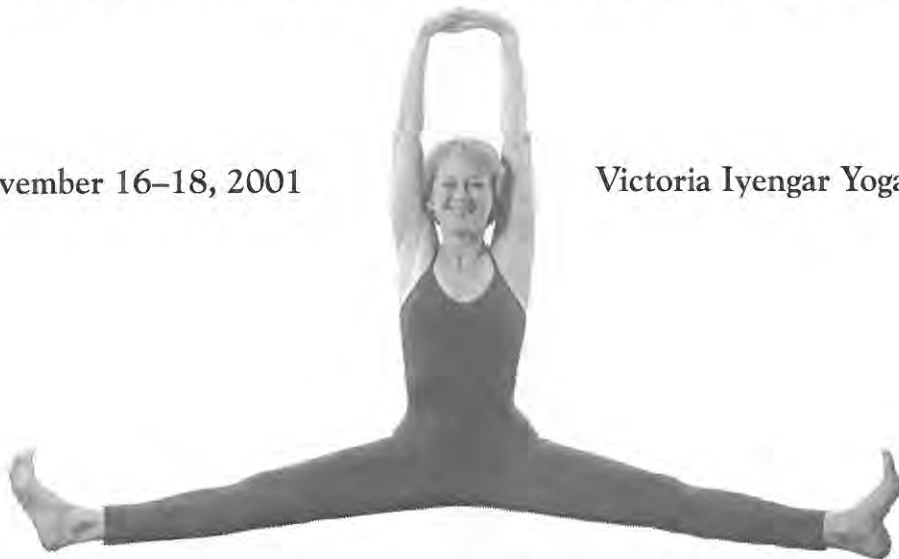
An Intermediate Workshop

with *Chris Saudek*

for teachers, student teachers, and serious students of Iyengar Yoga

November 16–18, 2001

Victoria Iyengar Yoga Centre



Chris Saudek has been a devoted student of the Iyengars for more than 20 years. She has studied extensively at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, including two times when she stayed for more than five months each. The training Chris received as a physical therapist gave her valuable background for her study of yoga. Chris is a precise and disciplined, caring and innovative teacher. She is the director of the Yoga Place in La Crosse, Wisconsin and certified as a senior intermediate teacher of the Iyengar method.

Fri. Nov 16 6:30-9pm

Sat. Nov 17 10am-1pm and 3-5pm

Sun. Nov 18 9am-12pm and 1:30-3pm

Fees: \$180 (+gst) Yoga Centre Members
\$210 (+gst) Non-Members
(includes membership)

Registration begins September 4th. Cancellations will be refunded only if your place can be filled. Cheque payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Mail to:
Ann Kilbertus
766 St. Patrick Street
Victoria BC V8S 4X5

For more information contact: Ann 1-(250)-598-0976 or wq556@victoria.tc.ca

A Life of Intention

by Gwynneth Powell

Just as Shirley wrote last spring in "Reflections", that there was nothing wishy washy about Kriya Yoga, as described in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* II-1, I would like to say that neither is there anything wishy-washy about Shirley Daventry French.

When a group of artists gather together to render the human figure, each one will perceive through their individual nature and thus convey their expression through realism, romanticism or the abstract. Shirley's approach to yoga is no doubt that of a realist. What I admire in Shirley's teaching is how she keenly gauges personalities. I have observed her in workshops and in the classroom to see how her astute receptors work to find the balance of discipline and compassion. In times when egos may be feeling cornered, her mental agility finds ways to get her lesson across. I think it is her ability to keep coming back to the truth of reality that enables her to carry out the teachings of yoga in a form that Mr. Iyengar consents to call his own.

I am also inspired by my teacher's honesty as she writes her life in "Reflections", giving accounts of her own journey on the yogic path. Shirley's fearlessness of exposing her own inner discontent in order to pursue her work in this life, never relenting as she strives to be the best she can be, is a constant inspiration to me. As she talks of her own struggles at learning to let go and surrender, her willingness to trust becomes more and more obvious. She seems to have infinite trust, not

only in her own karma and practice, but also in the abilities of our yoga centre membership. Shirley trusts in our community, having handed over jobs she did for years with the faith that we will maintain and further a positive and encouraging dynamic which represents our yoga community, a community she has devoted her life to. Whether Shirley's trust has come to me via the newsletter committee, teaching yoga classes or serving

dinner at her residence for an auspicious group with Geetaji sitting at the head of her table, her trust has always been an honor.

As editor of this issue, I had the blessed privilege of piecing together all these stories from the better part of a lifetime. The submissions that came pouring in, together with over 1000 photographs that I sifted through, was a progression as one left off and another continued. There was occasionally a true order, but largely there was a lot of overlapping which deepened the

picture. Eventually the bits and pieces, coupled with the stories that I have heard, many through her own musings, began to fit together. Although I have sensed it for some time, it is now exceedingly clear how it came to be that Shirley's is a life full of intention.

Shirley, I am well aware of how much you disfavor such praises... but it is with the utmost respect for your journey that I call you my teacher.

Happiest of birthdays to you... with love. 🎂



Shirley Rachel Daventry French
October 11, 1931



A Lesson Learned

by Judith Mirus

I first knew you, Shirley, before you ever knew me. I attended a workshop you co-taught with Liz McCloud, way back in the late eighties. My next exposure was in 1990 at the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association meeting. It was marked by a highly charged discussion that underscored the diversity and strength not only of opinion but also of personality within the Canadian Iyengar Yoga community. I remember you vociferously presenting your views between writing, from what I could see, the same line over and over again in your notebook, like a naughty pupil being kept after school to write 'I shall not...' I thought, "What could she possibly be doing that for?" Many years and workshops later, along with many mantra-filled notebooks, your particular practice for centering and restraining your mind, especially at times when the energy around you is unrestrained and dynamic, leaves me with a lesson learned.

Another memory is one of the devotion you showed Liz, by coming to Edmonton expressly to be with her before she died in June of 1992. Because you stayed at

my home, it also gave me comfort to be able to share my own thoughts about the teacher our community was losing.

Unable to be with you regularly, the occasion of your workshops here and our work together on the Professional Development Committee has given me opportunity to notice how much you have evolved, (especially in Guruji's use of the word), both in your teaching and the presence you bring to your *sadhana*. I look forward to more years of friendship and mentoring.

Congratulations Shirley and heartfelt wishes for the best years yet to come. 🎂

“Yoga strengthens us and prepares us to meet our challenges head on, to face and conquer our fears.”



They were quite a team: funny, playful and exacting as teachers! Shirley and Liz were great friends, they shared a real affection for one another.

- Wendy Boyer

Integrating Practice and Pedagogy

by Ron Burnett

If Iyengar Yoga is about attaining an inner recognition of the balance between body, mind and spirit, then Shirley Daventry French not only incarnates that harmony, she has also learned how to bring that sense of balance to others. There are many practitioners in many different areas and disciplines, but very few teachers with the depth and vision needed to integrate practice and pedagogy. The inner stillness that comes when *asana*, thought and presence meld into one cannot be achieved by artificial means. You cannot impose an *asana* upon yourself. During the many instances when I have taken classes and intensives from Shirley, I have watched her eyes watching me. Will he release? Will he relax enough to allow the *asana* to penetrate, to create awareness and to bring that awareness into the foreground - into the actual pulsing of body and mind?

To me, Shirley is as deeply into the language and the poetry of yoga, as she is into the spiritual model and life that the practice of yoga proposes. The way we speak and think about an *asana* affects our practice. Most importantly, the ways in which we listen to the instructions our teachers give us profoundly influences the self-awareness we need to move forward. Shirley is so conscious of the complex relationship between listening, learning and doing that she creates a context in her classes that empowers students and gives them the confidence to engage with yoga at the deepest level.

I first met Shirley when she came to Montreal in the early nineties to participate in an intensive that was given by Faeq Biria. We connected right away and subsequently during a sabbatical in Victoria, starting in 1993, I took a year of classes with her. I have been learning and practicing Iyengar Yoga since the mid-eighties. I still feel like a beginner in what will clearly be a life-long quest to understand the gifts that B.K.S. Iyengar has given to all of us.

One of Shirley's most important contributions to Iyengar Yoga has been her devotion to rigour. There seems to be no point in learning *asanas* if one does not have the tools to plunge more deeply into their meaning. Once, when Shirley was teaching a *pranayama* class at her house, she spoke of the rare moments when there is real clarity between inhalation and exhalation, when the mind is freed of the turbulence of thought, when, quite suddenly, our recognition of the gift of breath envelops us and calms the body and the soul.

I am honoured to be Shirley's friend and her student. 🕯



In Our Hearts

by Christopher Lea

My words cannot adequately express my appreciation for this teacher. The truthful experiences in life are unspeakable and best kept in our hearts. So when asked to write about Shirley Daventry French the only words that come to mind are: SINCERITY. SINCERITY. SINCERITY. 🕯

Shirley is My Friend!

by Marlene Mawhinney

It is no coincidence that I met Shirley and B.K.S. Iyengar for the first time *at the same time* – San Francisco Convention 1984. Since then our lives have intertwined around Guruji, Geeta, Pune, teaching, teacher training, professional development and assessment.

We have studied together, practised together, learned from each other, laughed together and, cried and despaired together. These are the building blocks of our friendship.



CIYTA Assessors' Meeting at Shirley's home in '99

As a friend, the first word that comes to my mind when describing Shirley is spirit, in the sense of a small person with huge spirit. And this great spirit is tempered with steadiness and humour.

Our friendship really began with us living in the same hotel and going to classes together in Pune thirteen years ago. We had some strange and bizarre experiences at this hotel. We couldn't quite understand what was going on. On my next trip to Pune, I discovered that this hotel had become a brothel. No wonder we had strange experiences! As everyone who travels to India

knows, the excitement, the frustration, the richness and the difficulties of these trips create a kinship that is very special. This was the beginning - then several shared trips - then Guruji initiated certification in Canada and so the story goes.

Over the past few years I have seen and talked to Shirley on such a regular basis that when I go to her home in Victoria or she comes to mine in Queensville, Ontario, everything seems just as it should be. We have struggled together to learn the syllabi required to do our work. We have had lengthy discussions about *asanas*, techniques, the truth of Guruji's work, the role and responsibility of training teachers and assessing, and on and on. Interwoven through these talks we have solved the problems of the yoga world and the world at large. We have come to know each other's families, and we laugh a lot. Through all this, Shirley's spirit is never daunted.

As much as I cherish my beloved Guruji and his work, I cherish my friendship with Shirley.

She is a very special friend. 🙏

“

*'When we are ignorant
we are forgiven, but
once that ignorance is
replaced with
knowledge, it then
becomes our duty to act
with this knowledge.
'This is yoga.'*



“That’s Called Darshan”

by Neil W. McKinlay

When told Linda Benn had a meal with Geeta Iyengar during the latter’s short stay in Victoria, my first thought was of Shirley Daventry French. More specifically, my first reaction was to think of the commitment that had drawn Geetaji to our island, of the devotion that had opened our community to her, of the energy that had transformed Metchosin into a suitable locale for her visit and of the generosity that had been extended time and again over the years in order to bring Linda to that table.

Something similar occurred when I heard of Lauren Cox’s teaching performance at the conference that followed Geeta’s visit. I thought about all the care and attention Shirley had offered in order to make such an opportunity possible and in order to ensure Lauren was prepared to take advantage of this rare chance. And saying goodbye to Ty Chandler a few days before she left for India, I was bathed not only in the glow of her

exertions, not only in all the hard work that she had exerted in order to bring such a journey into being, but also in that of her teacher - in that of Shirley Daventry French.

Now, generosity has not been a virtue I’ve often associated with Shirley. Impressed by her other qualities, I suspect I have been blinded to this particular attribute. I see an amazing teacher when I look at her – an amazing teacher and a dedicated student and a shimmering ball of enthusiasm and I think the fire of these has prevented me from witnessing some of her other characteristics. Recently, however, whenever I look around or whenever I contemplate the Victoria Yoga Centre, I am unable to see anything other than Shirley’s unbelievable willingness to share her wisdom, her insight and her drive with those around her.

As to why this is suddenly the case, I think it may have something to do with finally telling her I am a Buddhist. This may not seem so great a thing to confess, but in a community so immersed in the

treasures of yoga - with a teacher so fully dedicated to this path - I worried it may result in something near exile. Instead, when told Shirley simply smiled and descended into a discussion about London. And a few days later, during my last class before heading to Colorado for a month-long meditation retreat, she offered a correction. "This will help during those long periods of sitting," she said, pointing between my shoulder blades - and then moved on to the next student in line.

This comment was both helpful and unexpected, and these qualities seem common to many of the gifts Shirley has given over the years. Only days ago, for example, I returned home in a funk of yearning for that retreat in the Rocky Mountains and was given some timely direction by her July/August "Reflections". "Having decided that this is what I want to do with my life," she wrote, "why wouldn't I make it a priority to return to Pune and the source of this work? However, first comes a responsibility to digest the information already gathered and transmute it from information into knowledge. Then it will become an integral part of my life and myself. Only through practice will this be possible, and to return to Pune without having made this effort would be merely greedy."

The same can be said of an email exchange we shared after the publication of *Time* magazine's characterization of Iyengar Yoga as "easy." "Maybe you've been doing it wrong," I kidded, expecting the joke to end there. Expecting the joke to remain a joke. Shirley, however, had different ideas. "It's not that I've been doing anything wrong," she returned. "Iyengar Yoga is easy provided you make the

maximum effort and surrender in the right proportions. It's just that all you students make so much fuss."

Over and over this has happened in the short time I have known this woman. Again and again I have been slapped into wakefulness by the sharpness of her voice, surprised by the crispness of her direction. Even, it seems, a chance meeting is an appropriate occasion for Shirley to give.

I ran into her on Broad Street not long ago. I was heading home, she was walking toward an appointment. After listening to my observations of the impact of Geeta's visit to this area, after smiling through my descriptions of the electricity I felt coursing through our community, she stepped a little closer. "That's called darshan," she told me with quiet intensity. Darshan - a term denoting the insight transmitted from teacher to student that, in the yogic tradition, extends back thousands of years.



We in Victoria have been blessed to have so clear a conduit for this transmission as Shirley Daventry French. We have all benefited from her generosity with the teachings she has received in ways and to degrees I am sure we cannot imagine. I personally am sometimes awed at my good fortune to have worked with this amazing woman for so long. Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, yogi - in a way very little of this matters, for to be touched by the flame that burns within Shirley is to be touched by, is to be graced by something that is much more than a particular label or specific creed. It is to have a light cast on possibility - a

light cast on what I might become, given proper effort and diligence, and on the path I must travel to get there. And for this, I offer humble appreciations. 🙏



In 1999 Shirley and Derek resigned from the VYC Executive after serving on the Board of Directors since the Centre's birth. The current Board acknowledged their role as founders and a Magnolia tree was offered. There was a tea party at their home; Swami Padmananda led the ceremony of dedication.

“Well, Then You’d Better Get on With it!”

by Ingelise Nherlan

...said Shirley Daventy French, and her T's were pronounced succinctly as in “Tea for Two” (the proper British way you know, dear).

It began when Vancouver invited Shirley to teach a weekend workshop February 2-4 this year. It would be perfect, Friday evening, all day Saturday and then Sunday morning.

It happened that Saturday was my birthday, so at the end of that afternoon's practice I scurried home for a quick shower, then off to have dinner with my family. I admit to closing my eyes that night a little later than planned. But it is exceedingly difficult to tear oneself away from loved ones, particularly when that includes four tiny arms wrapped around your neck pleading irresistibly, “Don't go home gran-ma.”

Consequently I arrived to class Sunday morning

perhaps a tad on the *tamasic* side – TADasana would have been appropriate. Toward the end of the morning, Shirley called for *Salamba Sarvangasana*. As much as I love the pose, I admit to having visions of sugarplums dancing in my head in the form of a *Setu Bandha* bench at that time.

Now, one of the marks of a good teacher is, as we all know, the ability to be omnipresent. No exception here. That spells being where you *need* to be, not necessarily where you are wanted. Haven't we all, at some point, tried to become invisible in a Pune class? Come on be honest. It never works. Need and want are two interesting concepts of life in general and particularly so in yoga.

So there I am, setting up for *Sarvangasana*, and maybe, just maybe, taking a blanket or two more than I

needed, mumbling to my neighbor something about feeling sluggish and well, admitting in a smug way, "Savasana would be good!!!"

And all of a sudden, out of nowhere, "Well, then you'd better get on with it." There was teacher, right where she needed to be. It was priceless and oh so funny. The sheer coincidental precision of that moment lifted my energy and *Sarvangasana* took on a life of its own. I thought once again of Guruji's humbleness as he practices in front of his students showing, by example, that our weaknesses become our strengths if we live life in truth. *Satya!* Good job Shirley.

And so, Shirley! I shall return the favour. May you celebrate your birthday till the young hours of the next morning. Then I shall be *ringing you*, as they say in Britain, with a wake-up call for your *Pranayama* practice, reminding you that old age starts at ninety, not seventy. So, in case you had any sugarplums dancing in your head in the form of retirement, well, the bad news is, you've got it all wrong.

The good news is that you've got twenty years ahead of you in which to serve Lord Patanjali – which, by the way, you do so very well.

So, *you'd beTTer geT on with iT.*

Happy Birthday Shirley, be well and God bless. 🎂

In Honour of Shirley Daventry French

by Maggi Feehan

touch on skin -
sleep cornered eye
smells
the single seed
inhales
soil oxygen

touch on flesh -
lilac basket smile
watches
slanted roof of light
readies
for moisture

touch on bone -
rhythm sky mind
tastes
shoot of forgotten song
opens
and embraces



All in a Decade

by Keiko Alkire

Dear Shirley,

Yoga has long been an antidote for my life's pain (stress, for example). Your insistent quotation of Geeta, "Is it not your duty..." has taught me that its potency is greater than the antidote.

Thanks for being my teacher for over a decade. 🎂



Twenty-two Years of Inspiration

by Marlene L. Miller

I met Shirley in 1979 at Yasodhara Ashram when she came, with Derek, to present a Hatha Yoga workshop at the Yoga Teacher Training Course. Shirley also co-led one of the workshops of the mind. It was at the Ashram that I talked to Shirley about my moving to Victoria and being part of the yoga community. She immediately said there was a need for teachers and would I teach on

Thursday evenings! How did you know Shirley? With the decision to move to Victoria no longer in doubt, I arrived in September of that year.

Thus, on nearly every Monday evening for two hours over the past 22 years I have stood before Shirley to receive her teachings and understandings of yoga. Additionally, there have been numerous workshops we both participated in as students. And there have been countless meetings of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society on every administrative and management process any organization could encounter. All has resulted in wonderful memories of inspired growth for me personally as it has for our yoga community.

During this tenure of 22 years, Shirley, you have sparked every emotion from joy and laughter to despair and tears and back again. Yet through all, you have been steadfast in your support, mentoring, and encouragement of me to continue on the yogic path.

Indeed, I am fortunate in yoga and thus in my life, as I have not had to search for a yoga teacher of the highest ethical quality. First in the mid-70's I met and studied with Hilda Pezzaro who studied with both B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Sivananda Radha, which is how I

came to the Ashram that resulted in our fortunate meeting. Shirley, thank you for being there and present during the past years, and may our paths continue to parallel each other's, weaving in and out through the coming years. Love & Namasté 🕯️



1987 Executive

“A glimpse can be a grace that encourages you to continue.”

All These Years

by Kathryn Wiggins

Thank you Shirley for all these years of your continued commitment and dedication to Iyengar Yoga. I have very much appreciated the times I have studied with you, and being welcomed into your lovely home and studio. Happy Birthday and wishes for good health and contentment in the upcoming years. 🕯️

“

There is no greater gift you can receive than teaching which helps you move closer to the Light. Grasp it whenever you can, and be grateful.



An Honorary Dinner for Guruji in Victoria, 1984.
Swami Radha on the left.

Constancy and Consistency

by Glenda Hingley

I've recently taken the opportunity to read though many of the Victoria Yoga Centre's old newsletters. Something that enters my mind as I read "Reflections" and see photos from as early as 1984, is the constancy of Shirley's presence and the consistency of her message. If the newsletter editors printed her column on her experiences with Roling from 1995 it would seem as relevant today as it did then. In fact, in June 1988 she actually wrote a column discussing how similar themes recur throughout the years and the message remains the same. The themes are: respect the teachings, acknowledge your teacher, express gratitude, practice what you have been given, pass on what you

have understood, develop your own potential, use your individual talents for the good of the whole and involve yourself in the work. I am in awe of Shirley's ability to create columns year after year and her patience with us as we attempt to learn.

The photos though, are what really fascinate me. No matter what the year, through different fashions in clothing and hair, we see the same direct, self-assured, forthright Shirley smiling out at us. I even suspect that she is perhaps one of those people you can immediately find in old school photos or baby pictures. It gives a sense of her honesty and candor, which expresses itself so clearly through her writing and teaching.

I can only hope that, in our next turn through the karmic wheel, we will still be able to recognize Shirley, either by her face or her teaching so that we will have the opportunity to learn from her once more. 🙏

Creative Cartography

by Greg Sly

We all come to this work of yoga with our own unique experiences and perspective. I sometimes think of each of us as having a map of Life, with all the dimensions of our experience on it. A life spent in the study of yoga adds further depths of order, subtlety and knowledge to one's map, and Shirley's genius as a teacher arises for me each time she offers another way to enrich the content of my map through yoga. Sometimes gentle and always commanding, her map is a wonder of her journey into light. We who are destined to share in her journey are among the most fortunate of earthlings.

As a practitioner of five years and a budding teacher of Iyengar Yoga, I am humbled and astonished by her practice and the fullness of her teaching. Is it yoga that brings about such a complete human being? I hope to find out.

Shirley seems to know me in ways that I cannot yet know myself. When she has cajoled, coaxed or cornered me into yet another revelation and yet another new mental/ physical state arises, in her eyes there is always that warmth of welcoming and that challenging playfulness. I can't even imagine which boundary we'll cross next.

With Love and Gratitude. 🙏

“ *Selfless service is a
favour to ourselves, to
our higher Self.* ”

The Blessing of Yoga

by Doug Hart

Dear Shirley,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for all you have done to make the Victoria Yoga Centre Society a vibrant place. And on a more personal level, how you have inspired and encouraged me to practice and live with the blessing of yoga in my heart.

Namaste 🙏

Sir Shirley

by Joanna Hope

I spoke one day, to a beginning student of Iyengar Yoga, a friend who had listened to me talk yoga for two years. She had asked questions, was always eager to discuss philosophy, had put herself into *asanas* in my living room, had borrowed books and newsletters, and had finally begun classes.

“Shirley said...” I commented one day.

“Shirley? You mean you call her *just* Shirley?!” this student asked incredulously.

“Well... yes.” was my response. “What would you think I might call her?”

“I don't know...perhaps ‘Sir Shirley!’” was the awed response.

We both laughed, but such is the regard in which Shirley is held. Shirley Daventry French, senior Iyengar Yoga teacher, my inspiration, the inspiration of hundreds of yoga students, literally from sea to shining sea and beyond.

Happy birthday, Shirley - Sir Shirley, that is. 🙏

Shine On

by Teddii Schmit

My life and so many others have been richly blessed by Shirley's presence in the world. It is an honour to contribute a few words to celebrate her 70th year!

Having worked at the YM/YWCA for 24 years, I have witnessed Shirley's dedication to personal development and mentoring of others. Her passion, tenacity and integrity have always been an inspiration and an aspiration for me. She redefines the words elder and senior, endowing them with power and wisdom. Shirley is a living model of what is possible. Shine on Shirley. Thanks for being! 🕯️

It Was Uttanasana

by Robin Cantor

My initial encounter with Shirley was in the early eighties at my very first workshop in Winnipeg. For most students new to yoga, *Tadasana* and *Savasana* are the first Sanskrit words they learn. For me it was *Uttanasana*. My strongest memory of that workshop was being in variations of *Uttanasana* for two and a half days. My hamstrings screamed for weeks afterwards. I was curious and inspired by this much older and wiser woman to continue on the yogic path. Now here I am almost two decades later – the same age now that Shirley was then – still curious and inspired by this wiser and not much older woman, as she continues to show me that my limits are far beyond where I had expected they were.

An affectionate thank you Shirley, for guiding me through the fear! 🕯️

Gift

by Li Milne

What impresses me most and what I am grateful for is my teacher, Shirley Daventry French, and her devotion to the teachings of Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar. I have recently had the opportunity to take both Iyengar Yoga and other styles of yoga with different teachers across Canada and the U.S. From these experiences I now have a greater appreciation for what a gift it is to have a teacher who is a direct student of Mr. Iyengar and who is so keenly dedicated to keeping the teachings pure.

I am thankful for being able to study a form of yoga that maintains its Indian heritage even in North America. And I am grateful to Shirley for making this possible for us here in Victoria, British Columbia. 🕯️



An early workshop at Yoga Centre Winnipeg

Birthday Wishes

By Julianna Kovacs

It was March and my family and friends were asking me what I wanted for my birthday. I thought all day about what I would wish for. That night, I had a beautiful dream.

I went to Shirley's yoga class and no one was there but Shirley. In my dream, I thought, "*This is my birthday present! I am here to learn everything, all that Shirley knows. Nothing can stop me.*" I had this feeling of tremendous unconditional love and a beautiful feeling of the knowledge, all that is yoga. 🕯️

An Effort to Deepen

by Vicky Catchpole

Shirley French is indeed an inspiration. She has worked with great dedication to build up the Victoria Yoga Centre program. Rather than putting pleasure ahead of her work, she has found pleasure in her work. Through the newsletter she has nakedly shared many of her most inner thoughts in an effort to deepen her self-knowledge. In fact, on a lighter side, I think she likes to get naked. Early on in my yoga studies, and because I work on my own up-island, Shirley wanted to encourage me to better observe and improve my poses. She took me into her bedroom and did *Adho Mukha Svanasana* in front of her closet mirror. It had 2 sides that opened so you could see yourself from different views. She then suggested, with her characteristic laugh, that it was best done naked to better see how the body was moving.

Thank you, Shirley, for your enthusiasm and dedication to yoga, and for encouraging us to bare our souls as well as our bodies! 🕯️

Teachers' Meeting '88 held at the studio of
Norma Hodge (back row, third from right)

A Call to the Order

by Chris Pratt

Welcome to the ancient and honorable order of Septuagenarians, an exclusive society to which many aspire to belong someday.

You are and have long been a source of inspiration in the lives of all who are privileged to know you, and this milestone in your own life merely adds luster to an already shining light. Strange, isn't it, how we attach special significance to any anniversary that ends with a zero. A human artificiality that means nothing in the grand scheme of things, but then zero usually does mean nothing, doesn't it.

However, a suitable occasion has presented itself to say: Thank you, Shirley for the changes you have brought to my life during the past seven years. And not just in the *asanas* that you teach with such patience and encouragement, but also in the insights you have offered into the deeper meaning of yoga. These have opened my eyes and my mind to a far greater understanding of the mystery of life, and for that I shall ever be grateful to you. 🕯️



Birthday Greetings

by Corrine Lowen

To follow a path, one must have access to the teachings. Geeta says "A good book is better than a bad teacher. A good *teacher* is better than a good book."

A community of good teachers is a rare environment, and a rich opportunity in which to learn and grow. In Victoria we are fortunate to be part of such a rare environment. Our teachers are excellent and our community is strong. Founder of this community, Shirley Daventry French has touched the lives of all Victoria Iyengar Yoga students. The strength of the community and the commitment of our teachers are inspired and supported by her unwavering discipline, strength and compassion. We join together in bringing greetings to Shirley on the auspicious occasion of her 70th birthday.

Shirley is the seed from which the Victoria Yoga Centre germinated so many years ago. She is the strong root that anchors and nourishes the community as we grow both internally and externally, individually and as a group. Beginning students learn from teachers who Shirley taught to teach. Many dedicated beginning students have progressed to become Shirley's students in level IV classes. Of those, a good number have undertaken the rigors of the teacher training program.

The depth and precision of Shirley's effort to bring the pureness of the teachings to her students was made crystal clear to me in Vancouver in May of this year. It was my first opportunity to work with Geeta Iyengar. I did not experience a sense of uncertain newness for I had been prepared for this opportunity in many years of classes with Shirley. Geeta's instructions, her words and phrases rang with a familiar note. This was somehow not surprising to me. Like an old friend, the instructions struck a chord deep within, in a language I had heard from my first classes with teachers trained by Shirley, later in Shirley's own classes, and now from Geeta herself. The gift of Shirley's years of effort paved the way for deep penetration of Geeta's work within myself, and many other Victoria students at the Vancouver conference.

Back at home in class in Victoria, we are treated to a class with Shirley on rarer occasions now. On these fortunate days the penetration continues as she admonishes us to *go beyond* our usual place in the pose. Shirley inspires me to intensify my work in class, deepen my personal practice, and to delve into the classical texts of yoga.

My life is a creation of yoga. I thank Shirley for establishing and sustaining the community in which I learn and practice, for demanding the best of us in our work, and for her devotion to accurately conveying the work of the Iyengar's to her students.

With much gratitude I wish you a Very Happy Birthday Shirley! Namaste. 🙏

We're Moving! in the meantime...

In our last newsletter we announced the opening of our new space. The Victoria Yoga Centre will move to 202-919 Fort Street and commence our regular schedule of classes Oct. 1. See the full schedule of classes on page 62.

Interim classes will be held during September at The Shambhala Centre in the former church hall (corner of Pembroke and Belmont in Fernwood—easy access off of Begbie St or Fernwood Rd)

Interim Schedule begins Monday September 10th

*Bring your own props

*All one and half hour classes are \$10 (others as noted). Please come early and pay at the door.

Mon.	Level IV	5:30pm-7:30	Shirley Daventry French (\$13)
Mon.	All Levels	7:30pm- 9	Ann Kilbertus
Tues.	Level II/III	5pm-6:30	Leslie Hoya
Wed.	All Levels	5pm-6:30	Ty Chandler
Thurs.	All Levels	8:30am-10	Linda Benn
Thurs.	Level III	10am-12	Shirley Daventry French (\$13)
Thurs.	All Levels	12-1pm	Lauren Cox (\$8)

For more info call the yoga line 386-YOGA (9642).

The Scale of Justice

by Annette Shultz

I do not know Shirley well, but the strongest impression I have is that of a sprite: great humor, serious spirit, and constant support. I decided to integrate another passion of mine – astrology. Shirley has a Libra sun sign, so I created the following collage of phrases, which reflect people who possess this energy.

Leaders who are here to transform consciousness

- Restless, endless curiosity, and self-motivated;
- Enjoys mixing with diverse groups of people – charmer;
- Prefers to work with at least a partner if not in groups (beware of the motivator).

Ability (or is it an endless desire) to explore the multidimensionality of life

- Knows that no path is unambiguous;
- Rational and versatile;
- Beautifying and artistic force;
- Agonizes over proper action-how to equalize a balance.

Primary symbol the Scale of Justice

- Movement towards reconciling opposition;
- Every truth is compromised of two half-truths;
- No light exists without a shadow-no shadow exists without a light

Life lessons-or at least experiences

- Tolerance of paradoxes-assists in expanding possibilities;
- How does one make decisions within a world of endless possibilities;
- How does one move beyond in-decision to acting as if this IS the choice;
- Ultimate endpoint of the journey
- Acceptance of the complexity faced everyday
- Calming down-everything finds its balance in time
- Serenity

Enjoy the celebration in honor of the 70 years you have blessed this world with your presences and embodiment of Liberian energy. 🎂

A Gift in the Struggle

by Jeanette Merryfield

I had been on holiday and had incurred an injury while away, a cracked radius. Thus I arrived to your level III class with a cast on, in January 2001. Gathering outside of the doors were students arriving for your class, and they asked a lot of questions about what had happened to my arm.

Shirley, you received the information and did not focus a lot on my situation. Your suggestion that I do Adho Mukha Svanasana using ropes for support was very helpful.

In the class you were speaking to the group about how when we struggle there is a gift in that struggle. Those words that you shared were very timely because that was exactly what was going on for me. I was experiencing vulnerability since my injury. I could not maintain my massage practice and I felt off balance with my arm in a cast. I am so appreciative and full of gratitude for you Shirley. You gave me the gift of acceptance and through that I was able to deepen trust within myself and with you and move forward.

At the CIYTA Conference Geetaji instructed us to move into Sirsasana. I was in the asana and Geetaji directed, "Open the pelvis." I was sweating, not only in my efforts but in my self-created challenges and Shirley, you came over and adjusted me ever so lightly which allowed me to sustain the pose. I thanked you the next day for your gentleness in giving me that directive adjustment that helped me to find my strength to be in the pose. Afterall, no one else could be in Sirsasana for me. Thank-you for your kindness. 🎂

Join us for opening ceremonies
at the new place on
October 7th from 1-4pm



Working with Geetaji at the 3rd Canadian
Iyengar Yoga Conference Vancouver '01

It's That Simple

by Ted Mather

The energy flows from the higher to the lower and back up in a beautiful spiral. When we mortals pray, dance, sing, create, practice yoga and love, we flow this energy. Shirley strongly moves these teachings from Sri B.K.S. Iyengar through to the wonderful primary teachers Linda, Leslie, Ann, Marlene, Lauren and to us.

I have come to Monday night class burdened with some self-absorbed personal issues, seeking some kind of direction. Shirley just looks at me and exclaims, "Ted, pull up your knee caps!" "Roll your thighs in!" "Your life's work is to move your elbows together." And I realize it is just that simple.

Shirley, you are my teacher and I love you. 🕯️

A Good Friend

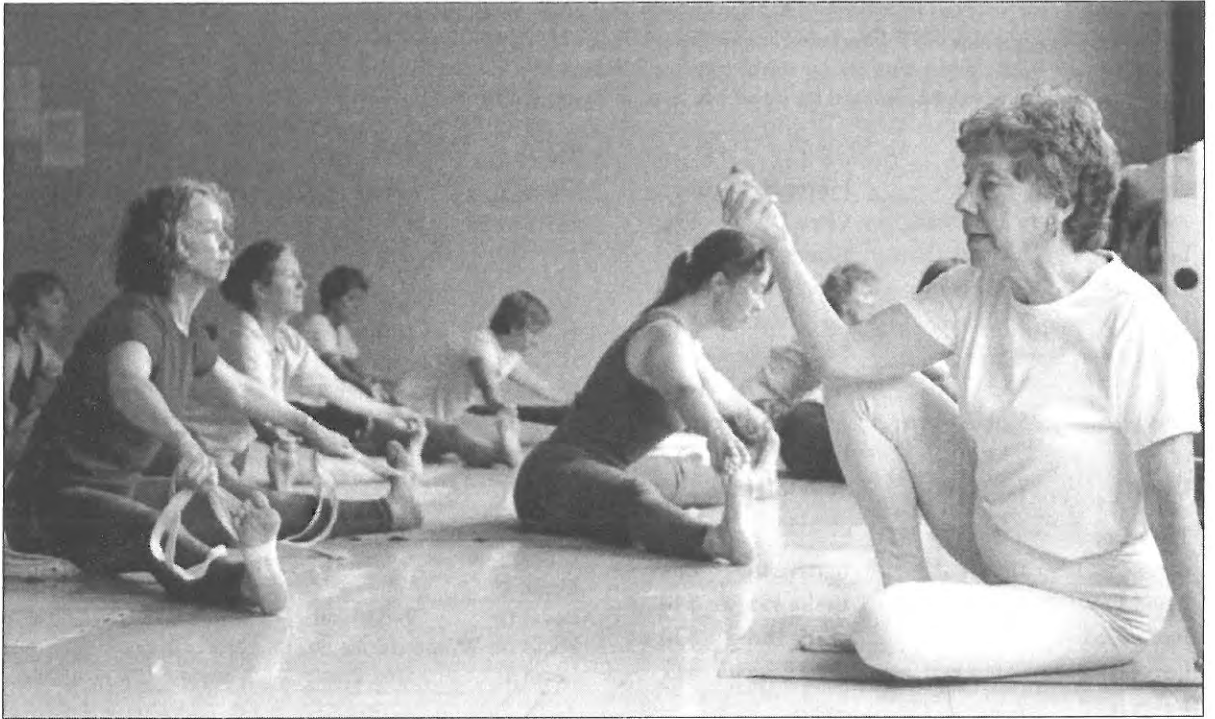
by Hilda Pezzaro

It was sometime in the 1970's when I first met Shirley. She had come to the Yashodhara Ashram for the Yoga Teacher Training Course. I was teaching a program of Hatha Yoga and I had been reading and working with Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar's book, *Light on Yoga*. I remember teaching knees up in *Trikonasana*, which at that time was considered a rather different approach. Shirley, with her delightful sense of humour, credits me with introducing her to Iyengar Yoga and being her first Iyengar teacher.

That was the beginning of a wonderful friendship and it has been an honour and a joy to see where she went after learning to pull her knees up. Shirley Daventry French is my very best student and I congratulate you, Shirley, on your commitment and dedication to this art. It has been a great pleasure for me to attend your workshops and see your continuing development as a teacher and how you have inspired so many others to learn to pull their kneecaps up.

My dear friend, I wish you a very happy 70th birthday. 🕯️





“...this is the heart of yoga – the work we do in our community week in week out.”

-Shirley Daventry French

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga



Term 1: Oct. 1 – Nov. 4, 5 weeks, except Oct. 8

Term 7: Nov. 5 – Dec. 22, 7 weeks, except Nov. 12

Fees do not include GST. Fees listed are for Term I. Fees are for one class per week for 4 or 5 weeks, depending on day of the week or holidays. Pertimes welcome for most classes but not encouraged for Level I & Special Needs (B) Studio B

Monday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
All levels drop-in	6:30-8am	Chris Lea	\$36
Level I	8:45-10:15am	Lauren Cox	\$32
Level II	10:30-noon	Lauren Cox	\$36
Level I	3:30-5pm	Linda Benn	\$32
Pranayama	4-5pm	Leslie Hogya, 4 week terms, start in Nov.	
Level IV	5:15-7:15pm	Shirley Daventry French	\$52
Level I	7:30-9pm	Ann Kilbertus	\$32

Tuesday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level I	10:30-noon	Leslie Hogya	\$40
Noon Drop-in	12-1pm	Chris Lea	\$30
Level II (B)	5-6:30pm	Wies Pukesh	\$45
Level II/III	5:30-7:15pm	Leslie Hogya	\$52.50
Level I	7:30-9pm	TBA	\$40

Wednesday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level I	9-10:30am	Ty Chandler	\$40
55 & Better	10:30 am-noon	Leslie Hogya	\$40
Noon Drop-in	12-1pm	Leslie Hogya	\$30
Family Yoga	3:30-4:30pm	Lauren Cox	\$50
Special Needs	4:30-6pm	Shirley Daventry	\$50
French & Ann Kilbertus			\$50
Level I(B)	6-7:30pm	Ty Chandler	\$40
Level II	6:15-7:45pm	Gwynneth Powell	\$45

Thursday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Pranayama	7-8am	Shirley Daventry French	\$40
Level I	8:15-9:45am	Linda Benn	\$40
Pre-Natal	9-10am	Robin Cantor	\$37.50
Level III	10-noon	Shirley Daventry French & Linda Benn	\$60
Noon Drop-in	12-1pm	Lauren Cox	\$30
Level I	4:15-5:45pm	Leslie Hogya	\$40
Restorative(B)	5:30-7pm	Wendy Boyer	\$40
Level III	6-8pm	Ann Kilbertus & Leslie Hogya	\$60

Friday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level II	9-10:30am	Linda Benn	\$45
Focus on Women	10:30-noon	Linda Benn	\$45
Level I	5-6:30pm	Gwynneth Powell	\$40

Saturday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
All levels drop-in	7:30-9am	Wies Pukesh	\$45
Level II	9-11am	Marlene Miller	\$48
Level I(B)	9-10:30am	TBA	\$40

Sunday

Special one to three hour workshops most weekends

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE #202, 919 Fort St. 386-YOGA (9642)



Radha Yoga Centre

Season Opening Song Party

Sunday, September 9, 7:00-9:00 pm

Start the new term with a song and a sweet. Come for dessert and stay to sing. We will sing spiritual songs of eastern and western traditions at this special satsang. Refreshments provided. All welcome. *No charge*

Divine Dance Workshop

Sunday, October 21, 10:30 am - 2:30 pm

Sacred dance is a way to bring mind and heart together to express devotion to the Most High. We will focus on simple movements of a dance that offers a prayer to the feminine aspect of the Divine. No dance experience or talent needed. Bring lunch; tea provided *Fee \$25.00*

Fall Schedule of Classes

The Power of Choice

Tuesdays 7:30 - 9:30pm

Using the symbolism and tools of the Kundalini system, discover the power of choice to help you put your ideals into practice in daily life. The focus this session will be on the senses.

Dream Yoga

Wednesdays 10:00- 12 noon, begins Wed. Sep 26
Free intro class 10:00 am Sep 19

Ever wondered what to do next? Or if you're on the right track? Many great teachers say our own unconscious knows the answers and our dreams are trying to communicate this information. Join us to learn how to decipher your personal dream symbols and read the messages of your dreams.

Satsang in Swami Radha's Memory

Sunday, November 25, 7:30-9:00 pm

Swami Radha passed into Light on November 30, 1995. Each year at this time, we gather to honour her memory and express our gratitude for her life and teachings. Also, the Radha Centre prayer room will be available throughout the day for private reflection. Call to book your time. *No Charge*

Spiritual Practices

Free introductory class 7:30 pm, Sep 10

Sunday, October 21, 10:30 am - 2:30 pm

An introduction to four spiritual practices: the Divine Light Invocation, Mantra, Karma Yoga and Prayer Dance. There are many ways to the Divine. These practices are tools to help you uncover your own unique path.

Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga

Mondays 5:30-7:00pm Wednesdays 7:30-9:30pm

Thursdays 9:30-11:30am *Free Intro class 7:30 pm, Sep 10*

Stretch your body, stretch your mind, unlock the deeper meanings of the classical hatha poses. Swami Radha's gentle method incorporates symbolism and reflection. Develop a harmonious integration of body and mind leading to an intuitive awareness of the spiritual level of Hatha Yoga.

Basic Hatha Yoga

Wednesdays 5:30-7:00pm

Thursdays 7:30-9:00pm

Free intro class 7:30 pm Sep 13

Let your body and your mind enjoy gentle stretching and relaxing, using the ancient poses of Hatha Yoga.

Cost: \$96

Saturday Morning Drop-in begins Sept. 22

10:00-11:30pm

Cost: \$8

Radha House Victoria • 1500 Shasta Place (off St. Charles, south of Fort) • 250-595-0177

YOGA CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 2001

15-16 Going Deeper: An all-levels workshop
with Shirley Daventry French
29 Teachers' Meeting

NOVEMBER 2001

16-18 Workshop with Chris Saudek
24 Teachers' Meeting

OCTOBER 2001

7 Opening ceremonies at our new yoga
centre from 1 to 4pm
12-14 Workshop with Julie Gudmestad
19 Friday Night Gathering
19-21 Intermediate Assessment
in Vancouver
27 Teachers' Meeting

DECEMBER 2001

9 Workshop in celebration of
Mr. Iyengar's Birthday

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Constance Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____ City/Province _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.

VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE

NEWSLETTER



Nov/Dec 2001

Please Subscribe

Celebrating....



... twenty years



The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE
#202, 919 Fort St.

Program of Classes in the Iyengar Approach to Yoga

Term 2: Nov. 5 – Dec. 22, 7 weeks, except Nov. 12

Fees do not include GST. Fees listed are for Term 2. Fees are for one class per week for 4 or 5 weeks, depending on day of the week or holidays. Pertimes welcome for most classes but not encouraged for Level I & Special Needs, (B) Studio B.

Monday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Drop-in	6:30-8am		\$54
Level II/III	10:30-Noon	Lauren Cox	\$54
Pranayama	4-5pm	Leslie Hoga	\$32
Special Needs Focus on Back care (B)	4-5:15pm	Linda Benn	\$51
Level IV	5:15-7:15pm	Shirley Daventry French	\$78
Level I	7:30-9pm	Ann Kilbertus	\$48

Tuesday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level I	10:30-Noon	Leslie Hoga	\$56
Drop-in	12-1pm	Chris Dimofski	\$42
Level II (B)	5-6:30pm	Wies Pukesh	\$63
Level II/III	5:30-7:15pm	Leslie Hoga	\$73.50
Level I	7:30-9pm	Ty Chandler & Ann Kilbertus	\$56

Wednesday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level I	9:15-10:45am	Ty Chandler	\$56
55 & Better(B)	10:30-Noon	Leslie Hoga	\$53.50
Drop-in	12-1pm	Leslie Hoga	\$42
Family Yoga (1 adult, 1 child 5-8 years)	3:30-4:30pm	Lauren Cox	\$70
Special Needs	4:30-6pm	Shirley Daventry French, Ann Kilbertus, Leslie Hoga	\$70
Level I	6:15-7:45pm	Ty Chandler	\$56
Level II (B)	6-7:30pm	Gwynneth Powell	\$63

Thursday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Pranayama	7-8am	Shirley Daventry French	\$56
Level I	8:30-10am	Linda Benn	\$56
Pre-Natal	9-10am	Robin Cantor	\$52.50
Level III	10-Noon	Shirley Daventry French & Linda Benn	\$84
Drop-in	12-1pm	Lauren Cox	\$42
Level I	4:30-6pm	Leslie Hoga	\$56
Restorative(B)	5:30-7pm	Wendy Boyer	\$56
Level III	6-8pm	Ann Kilbertus & Leslie Hoga	\$84

Friday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level II	9-10:30am	Linda Benn	\$63
Focus on Women	10:30-Noon	Linda Benn	\$63
Level I	5-6:30pm	Gwynneth Powell	\$56

Saturday

Class	Time	Instructor	Cost
Level II	9-11am	Marlene Miller	\$84
Level I(B)	9-10am	Corrine Lowen	\$56
Teachers Meet	11am-3pm	Once a month	

Sunday

Special one to three hour
workshops most weekends

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE #202, 919 Fort St. 386-YOGA (9642)

Editor: Neil McKinlay

Newsletter Committee: Lauren Cox, Caren Liedtke,
Greg Sly, Gwynneth Powell, Shirley Daventry French

Layout & Production: Marion Stoodley–

Page Perfect Design & Type

Cover Illustration: Lauren Cox

Photography: Gwynneth Powell, Lauren Cox

Typing: Nancy Poole

Advertising: Carole Miller

Distribution: Keiko Alkire, Rosemary Barritt

Membership/Mailing List: Constance Barker

Printing: Hillside Printing & Copy Centre

The VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY is a non-profit society incorporated under the Societies' Act of the Province of British Columbia, whose purpose is "to encourage the physical, mental, and spiritual growth of its members and other interested persons of the society at large by the study and discipline of Yoga." The Society owes its inspiration to Swami Sivananda Radha and Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar.

The Society Newsletter is published regularly, providing current information on events concerning yoga in the Victoria area and the Yasodhara Ashram. Published by the VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE SOCIETY.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, photographs, drawings, information or suggestions may contact the The Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter:

202 – 919 Fort Street
Victoria BC V8V 3K3

For more information on Victoria Yoga Centre activities and events, please call 386-YOGA or visit our website at www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca

Deadline for next issue: Nov. 19, 2001

Permission is hereby granted to reprint any of our material, except that copyrighted by the author or artists. When reprinting, please credit this Newsletter and send us two copies of the publication containing our material. Copyright material is only available with written permission.



CONTENTS:

REFLECTIONS

Shirley Daventry French p. 4

SRI PRASHANT IYENGAR'S VIEWS AND ADVICE

Sri Prashant Iyengar p. 7

"OH NO! NOT ANOTHER SPECIAL ISSUE!"

Neil W McKinlay p. 10

TRIBUTE TO JESSICA

Unknown Author p. 12

OUR YOGA CENTRE

Dennis Fafard p. 13

IMPORTANCE OF ASANA

B.K.S Iyengar p. 15

FINDING SPIRITUALITY IN ASANA

Leslie Hoga p. 18

THE GURU PUJA

Swami Radha p. 20

WHERE IS THE VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE?

Shirley Daventry French p. 23

OUR YOGA CENTRE

Linda Benn p. 24

IN OUR MAILBOX

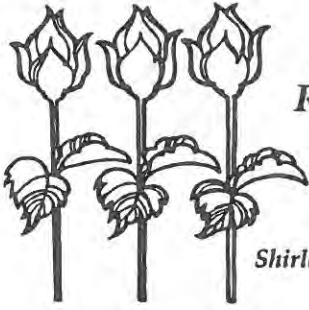
..... p. 26

MR. IYENGAR'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Glenda Hingley p. 28

MARGARET LUNAM: A BIRTHDAY APPRECIATION

Barbara Young p. 29



Reflections

by
Shirley Daventry French

What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.

The Dhammapada, Chapter I, Verse 1

Twenty years ago one of the directors of the Victoria Yoga Centre, Norman McKenzie had the idea that our newsletter could be expanded and improved. At that time it consisted of two or three typewritten sheets, copied, stapled together and written intermittently when the spirit moved someone. It so happened that two other board members had publishing experience: Trish and Bill Graham, a graphic designer and typesetter respectively. The four of us got together and produced the first newsletter in its current format in November 1981.

We were ambitious. We would publish twelve issues a year. And we did, for many years, using cut and paste technique and typewriters - many kinds with many different fonts. In those days, most people submitted handwritten articles which required typing and, of course, typists. Bill and Trish typeset and designed our brochures and notices, and produced splendid headlines. Norman, who had taken on the role of editor, was not satisfied with the mishmash of typeface being used (serif, sans-serif, 10 point, 12 point, dark, light, thin, thick) and



decreed that all articles should be typed on IBM Selectric typewriters using a particular font. The reality was that only one such typewriter was available in someone's office and the person using it was unable to type the whole newsletter. Norman was forced to surrender and accept the smorgasbord we were producing. Nevertheless, with the design talents of Trish Graham and the artistic ability of Nance Thacker, we produced quite a good looking newsletter. State of the art at that time.

The cut and paste method required a team of people who spent a large part of one weekend a month working under Trish's direction at her house or the home of Jennifer Rischmiller, a reliable member of the paste-up team. I took part in the paste-up once, and it quickly became clear to me that this was not my forte: bits of articles stuck to my fingers, paste got on to and blurred the type and I had a tendency to produce uneven margins. No-one begged me to return and from then on I stuck to writing and editing.

We produced twelve issues for many years and then one summer, exhausted, we decided that we would combine our June and July issues into one Summer issue. And one winter, exhausted, we decided we would combine our December and January issues into one Christmas/New Year issue. And so it continued with ten a year.

Editorship passed from Norman McKenzie to Bill Graham to Linda Shevloff to Jennifer Rischmiller. Design from Trish Graham to Linda Benn to Lauren Cox. By the mid-1990's the newsletter committee was reduced to three: Jennifer, Lauren and myself. We had pleasant newsletter meetings around Lauren's dinner table not to mention delicious soups and other delicacies cooked by Lauren. We became a tight-knit group working together well but volunteer support dwindled to the point where some months Jennifer was not only editor but also took care of the assembly and distribution. Jokingly, as Jennifer continued this role for a decade or more (not entirely from her own volition but because no-one appeared willing to take over), I gave her the title "Editor for Life".

Could we go on, we asked?

The quality of the newsletter had began to suffer in the effort to produce ten issues a year. Little new and fresh was appearing locally. Feedback was nil, and we even discussed publishing an issue full of gibberish and seeing if anyone noticed. We looked at our options. One obviously was to end the newsletter and free up our time - an option with considerable appeal at that moment. However we felt it still served a valuable service. We had permission to use articles by Guruji and Geeta which were obviously a valuable resource, and articles from others with whom we had set up an exchange, providing a national and international perspective into the work we were all pursuing. We decided to continue to publish but only every second month.

Why didn't we think of this before? With a more realistic schedule and the renewed commitment plus a more positive attitude on the part of all three of us, we attracted some literate local students with interest, energy and talent: Neil McKinlay and Caren Liedtke, followed later by Gwynneth Powell and Greg Sly. After her long sojourn, not only as editor but for much of this time also serving as Yoga Centre President, Jennifer called it a day and left us to our own resources. We decided on a rotating editorship and then I too withdrew from this rotation except for special editions such as those for Guruji's 80th birthday and Geeta's Canadian visit. I continue to attend committee meetings when I am in town. They are an opinionated lot but I really enjoy our debates.

Looking back it is interesting how the history of the newsletter mirrors the history of the yoga centre. At about the same time as the newsletter hit its low point, there was difficulty in getting people to come on to the board of directors or to do very much of anything. Longtime members such as myself were frustrated. Had the yoga centre run its course? At the heart of the teachings of yoga lies the message that everything in this world is impermanent. As it had with the newsletter, the question arose with the centre: should we go on?

Derek and I met with Jim and Jennifer Rischmiller for dinner one night in the local pub to discuss whether we were willing to put any more energy into sustaining the centre and its activities. I can't remember if Jim or Jennifer was President at that time. Both have served the centre long and well in this capacity. Derek and I are founding members. We all had a sentimental attachment to the centre which we understood we had to let go sooner or later. Was this the time? By the end of the evening we had agreed that we would all put in one more year and if no others came forward willing to take on responsibility that would be it. As with the newsletter, our renewed commitment plus (probably most important of all) our change of attitude, attracted new people willing to get involved.

Now, here we are in the Fall of 2001 a vibrant community moving into our own yoga space, a heritage building in downtown Victoria where we will offer a comprehensive program of Iyengar Yoga plus provide a home for our yoga library. An enormous number of volunteers have worked tirelessly to bring this about, but more about that in the next issue.

Both the newsletter and the centre are slightly old-fashioned in these days of Yoga Big Business. Both are community based and foster a spirit of karma yoga. We are out of step with the current commercial climate of yoga in the Western world. And thank God for that!

Yoga is going through another burst of popularity. Many people, some with minimal exposure to this ancient art and limited understanding of the vast body of teaching on which it is based, are leaping in to profit from this surge of interest. Entrepreneurs who may or may not be practising yoga themselves are setting up franchises, not only in the city where they live but sometimes in many other cities - establishing a chain of yoga centres. There are other entrepreneurs: yoga teachers with sufficient knowledge of yoga that they cannot claim ignorance of yoga philosophy with its underlying theme of selfless service. Having made a name for themselves, they set up expensive (and sometimes brief) teacher

training programs at the end of which the participants, having spent thousands of dollars, are permitted to set up centres under the umbrella of that teacher's name. For instance, one eight week "Accelerated Yoga Teacher Training" promises to cut through years of study and prepare students for a financially satisfying career for a mere \$5,000 US. I wonder, does it also cut through years of practice and the knowledge which comes from that?

Contrast this with a Master like B.K.S. Iyengar who gives so freely and generously of his wisdom and knowledge. One month's tuition at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune costs \$150 US dollars.

Then there are those who study with a Master such as Iyengar or Pattabhi Jois, become known because of their association with that Master, and then branch out on their own. Suddenly, instead of teaching Iyengar Yoga they are teaching Bliss Yoga or Peace Unto All Yoga or give it their own name: Daventry Yoga. Why not? This frees you up from all the restraints your Master has imposed on you as he or she encourages you to limit your short term gratification for the sake of your soul.

Despite his reputation and his many decades of dedicated practice and service, B.K.S. Iyengar was very resistant to his work being called "Iyengar Yoga" insisting, as he still does, that he teaches yoga, a subject which needs no embellishment. Not so long ago, reluctantly, so that his pupils who were following his tradition could identify themselves, he surrendered.

Commercialism in yoga has arrived in a big way in 21st Century North America. Everywhere yoga centres are springing up. To pay the rent they need students which results in their offering a cocktail which may include Iyengar Yoga, Power Yoga, Astanga Yoga, Kripalu Yoga, Sivananda Yoga and more. Once the students have come it becomes almost obligatory to start a teacher training program - another money maker. Most of these programs award certificates in either the centre's name or the name of the teacher giving the program. Once it

meant something to be a certified yoga teacher. These days it can mean nothing. Certified by whom? What was involved in earning this certificate? What were the qualifications and training of the person awarding it?

Amidst all this grandiosity, here we are in Victoria still plugging away at karma yoga. With the overhead at the new space we face a new reality - the bottom line. Having sustained our work for thirty years in the community, having sustained the newsletter for twenty years, we are rich in experience in all aspects of yoga. We have a core of well qualified Iyengar teachers, and a core of willing volunteers. Long may it last, and - as Guruji would say, *God willing* - may we avoid the pitfalls of creeping commercialization at the same time as earning enough to pay the rent.

As quoted at the beginning of this article: *What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.* Our thoughts dictate our actions. May we continue to culture them through the practice of yoga and create a vital and spirited centre which is a credit to our teacher and ourselves.

Om namah Sivaya!

Footnote

You will find another viewpoint on the commercialization of yoga in the following article by Guruji's son, Prashant which was published in Volume 7 Number 3 of Yoga Rahasya. This is the journal and valuable resource on Iyengar Yoga published jointly by Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune and Light on Yoga Research Trust in Mumbai. Copies will be available to read in our library. Further information is available c/o Sam Motiwala, 6-22 Palia Mansion, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400 014, India. ☺

Sri Prashant Iyengar's Views and Advice

by Prashant Iyengar

(reprinted from Volume 7, No. 3 of
Yoga Rahasya with their permission)

On retaining the purity of Gururji's teachings through the coming generations of teachers

It is important for our system to be understood as a science and for that, "scientification" of our system is essential. There has to be a theory behind the science. I thought that most of Gururji's teachings are very laconic, aphoristic as yoga itself is an aphoristic subject. They need to be opened out otherwise they will not be understood in the right perspective. That is why I thought of working on opening out the laconic statements of Gururji and have given a few talks on OUR system.

I will give you an example with reference to therapeutic yoga. Once I was teaching a class. Someone had a backache and one of the assistant teachers started helping that person. I asked, "Why are you doing it?" He said that when he had had a backache in the same spot Gururji had helped him. He felt better and so he was helping that person. I told him that suppose Gururji had treated him by giving him a kick, would he be doing the same thing for the other person? Would it be right on his part to kick that other person? He then understood.

This is not how Gururji's system is to be carried forward. It cannot be carried forward if a teacher feels that Gururji DID this and so I am doing it. Gururji does with his hands. But, when you are making the other person to do, you are not doing with his (Gururji's) hands. As a student, it is not important for you to know WHAT Gururji does but WHY Gururji does. Your application has to be as per your calibre. Most of the students tend to only learn WHAT Gururji does. They must understand the theory behind the teaching aspect, even in therapy. This is not the way to follow Gururji. They see what Gururji teaches and they try to teach that way and

this is going to be harmful in the long run. The basic principle is that they have to know the science behind it. What to do, why to do and when to do.

I think that this is very essential if the system has to go uncontaminated or least contaminated. Otherwise, there will be contamination and distortion if there is no scientific base for it. Theory therefore is important.

Students want to learn scientifically but at the same time they do not want to learn the theory behind it. That is not right. I feel that theorization is very important considering the way Iyengar Yoga is getting popular.

On professionalism/commercialization of Yoga.

The danger that I see now is the professionalism/commercialization that has crept into yoga. With this, professional teachers tend to take any particular aspect of Iyengar Yoga and project it to the public. This is a lopsided presentation. Iyengar Yoga should be going as an integrated subject. These days, you have Yoga for such and such a disease - spinal problems, gynaecological problems, and even cash crop courses like workshops on inversion, backward bending and even pranayama. This is how teachers are projecting "Iyengar Yoga" because they need to conduct workshops for their professional gains, financial gains, their name. They can get name and fame if they are to teach a pranayama course or a backward bend course. If Gururji takes one such course for Iyengar teachers, they will take ten such courses in ten places for students.

Commercialization is harmful for yoga because then you give what people want. This is not proper.

Teaching is done in two ways. One is to teach the students while another is to teach the subject. When you teach the student, you have to give what the student wants. But when you are teaching the subject, the student is not of any concern. You have to teach the subject. So, these two things should be balanced, they should be going hand in hand. An "Iyengar Yoga" teacher should be working on both the lines. One should not be teaching the students

all the time but should also teach the subject. If you are teaching the students, you cannot teach what the student does not want. In that case you will not teach so many things. You have to prepare the student to accept to learn the subject. Otherwise, the consumer principle applies here. Give what they want. You can teach the beginners what they want. Like in kindergarten, the students are taught, but at the post graduate or doctorate level the subject is taught..

"Iyengar Yoga" has everything from kindergarten to post-graduate to doctoral and post-doctoral level. Therefore, all this should be borne in mind while teaching. If you only teach what the student wants or only particular aspects of "Iyengar Yoga" then you are limiting your teaching and the presentation of the subject. This will lessen the radius of your teaching and will not present "Iyengar Yoga" in its full radius. To teach and present "Iyengar Yoga" in its complete perspective, you have to accept these two paradigms of teaching the student and teaching the subject.

Each teacher must bear in mind that he/she is liable and responsible to teach the subject also. And he must know the subject in that case. They must study the subject, they must know "Iyengar Yoga" as a science and only then they should teach. Otherwise, the teaching is compartmentalized and commercial.

Somebody wants bread in this location, give them bread. Somebody wants *bhakri* (a type of Indian bread) in that location, give them *bhakri*. That is how "Iyengar Yoga" may be going. It may become consumer oriented because it is a profession. Yoga can never ever become a profession; should not become a profession!

In all the other professions, there is infrastructure because without infrastructure, you will never ever be able to run the profession. You cannot say that you will be a lawyer without any infrastructure. As a lawyer, you can never ever say that you have no time to study the law or read. But, this is what is happening to our yoga teachers. They are professional teachers and when you ask them if they have time

for practice and study - they say that they don't have time for practice and study. This is not professionalism. A medical doctor cannot say that he has no time to read journals because then he is not able to keep abreast with present science, contemporary science. Whereas among the yoga professionals, you will come across teachers who have no time to practise and no time to study.

Secondly, commercialization also leads to competitiveness. This is not good in yoga. Therefore, my personal opinion is that "full-time" yoga teaching is not good and not proper. Your bread and butter should not depend upon teaching yoga. In my case too, my bread and butter is not yoga. If your livelihood is totally dependent upon teaching, then a person is likely to make a lot of compromises. Professionalism brings with it jealousy, envy, a competitive nature and all these things are not at all yogic. You will be having your "market", your clientele and for that your practices would be unethical. All this will be practised spontaneously, naturally and unknowingly. This is one danger that yoga is facing, particularly in the West. One should read the dangers of this and take proper course of action. ☺



Holiday Classes

at the Victoria Yoga Centre
202-919 Fort Street
250 386 YOGA

**December 27th to December 30th
January 2nd to January 5th**

Drop in classes and members only
practice times will be offered during the
holiday season. Check our website
(www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca) or
contact the office for details.

In the Light of Yoga

a special benefit workshop in celebration of the
83rd birthday of Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar

Sunday, December 16, 2001

1:00 - 4:00 pm

**at The Victoria Yoga Centre
202 - 919 Fort Street**

1:00 - 2:30pm

Asana Practice

Levels 1 & 2 - Parivrtta Sthitti:

Twisting Asanas with Linda Benn

*Levels 3 & 4 - Yogasana: The Power of
Devotion with Shirley Daventry French*

2:30 - 3:30pm

Restorative Practice All Levels -

Coming to a Close with Ann Kilbertus

3:30 - 4:00pm

Refreshments & Lauren's Prop Shop



Teachers

Shirley Daventry French, Linda Benn and Ann Kilbertus are accomplished teachers in the Iyengar tradition. Each has travelled to India to study at the source of this practice. And each is presently an instructor in the Victoria Yoga Centre's Teacher Training Program.

Cost

\$40 Yoga Centre Members

\$50 Non Members

To register contact Melissa Worth at 250-519-4779. Please make cheques payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre.

All proceeds from this workshop go to the BKS Iyengar Scholarship Fund which assists students in pursuing the study of yoga in the Iyengar tradition.

"Oh No! Not Another Special Issue!"

by Neil W McKinlay

The Newsletter Committee performed a short skit in early September. The occasion was a party celebrating the seventieth birthday of Shirley Daventry French. A few speeches were made. The September/October newsletter was presented. And then, to break up the mood, we put on a play.

The idea was to give those in attendance a whimsical look inside the workings of our committee. To poke some fun at ourselves. To poke some fun at Shirley. A turning point in this farce arrived when Lauren Cox walked into our imaginary gathering and quoted an email she had just received from Shirley. "The other day," she read with elocution most precise. "The other day the thought came to me that this coming November marks the 20th anniversary of our newsletter in its present form, which deserves some special recognition."

"Oh no!" Gwynneth Powell and Caren Liedtke exclaimed, slapping heads in unison. "Not another special issue!"

This has been a unique year for our newsletter. Four of the five newsletters we've put out in 2001 have been special issues. There's been the Assessment Issue. The pre-Geeta Issue. The post-Geeta Issue. The Shirley Issue. And now, this.

The email Lauren mentioned in our play was in no way a fabrication. Shirley did send out such a note during the summer. This month does mark the

twentieth anniversary of our newsletter in its present form. And the occasion does seem worth noting in some fashion - though not simply because two decades have passed since that first group of students began typing and stapling and cutting and pasting.

Our community is presently in a period of rather dramatic transition. After almost thirty years, we have moved most of our activity out of the downtown Y's Yoga Lounge and opened our own centre on Fort Street. The distance between these locales may be only a few blocks - though in some

ways the gap between one and the other could not be greater. In the Y, we were contented tenants and much of the work that can seem so peripheral to yoga - registration, advertising, sweeping, cleaning, changing light bulbs and such - was more or less taken care of for us. In our new space, however...well, it is a new experience. A new era in many ways.

And so, what better time to look back at where we've been? This was the idea, anyway. Originally, we had hoped to pack this issue with old articles chronicling the decades-long development of the Victoria Yoga Centre. Our

archivist, Greg Sly, spent a great deal of time pouring over back issues for just this purpose. As our publication date neared, however, something very interesting happened. Letters kept arriving on my desk. Ads kept piling up. The article by Prashant Iyengar seemed too timely to resist. As were the pieces about Margaret Lunam's birthday, Mr Iyengar's birthday workshop. Altering and realtering my outline, I kept complaining that our present was just not letting me alone enough to take a good look at our past. And this, I have realized is quite fitting.

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter. There are seven



February 1983

reprints from years past between these pages. As we begin to take our first tiny steps into our collective future, we trust they will provide some sense of what this newsletter and what this community has been through. Such a sense is always important, of course, though we encourage no one to spend too much time looking back right now. The present is always asserting its influence in our lives and this is where our greatest challenges lay.

So happy birthday all!

And welcome to the new space!

As always, there is much work to be done... ☺

Congratulations

To all of Canada's newly certified teachers of Iyengar Yoga:

Gaye Barter (Toronto),
Ty Chandler (Victoria),
James Currie-Johnson (Victoria),
Jo Anna Hope (Victoria),
Christopher Lea (Victoria),
Kelly Murphy (Nanaimo),
Jane Robinson (St John's),
Alison Yarwood (Denman Island)

Short Workshops at the Victoria Yoga Centre

Sunday, November 4th
Menopause with Marlene Miller
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

This workshop will explore the many differences women experience during this vital phase in their life cycle. Yoga offers a variety of practices to assist and facilitate this natural transition.

Sunday, November 25th
Practicing Back Care with Ann Kilbertus
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

This workshop will help individuals become aware of their own backs through understanding the principles of back care, basic back anatomy and a graded sequence of asanas offering tools to maintain and improve back health.



Saturday, December 1st
Fundraiser for Santas Anonymous
with Lauren Cox
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Come restore yourself with a yoga practice in the heart of town. Take a break from the hustle and bustle to do something good for yourself and others. All proceeds benefit Santas Anonymous.

Sunday, December 9th
Open Shoulders, Open Armpits, Open Chest
with Wies Pukesh
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

This workshop will focus on the shoulder girdle and how yoga can help to lighten the load on your shoulders. This practice will free up your breathing and generally increase your energy and well being.

Cost for short workshops is:
2 hours \$30+gst; 3 hours \$45+gst

The Victoria Yoga Centre

202-919 Fort Street

250 386 YOGA

Tribute To Jessica

by unknown author

This article first appeared in the September 1987 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter

The first yoga classes at Victoria YM-YWCA were offered in the late sixties under a disguised name: psychomotor exercises. Yoga was foreign, it was not Christian! Jessica Tucker brought Yoga to the Y after studying under Dr. Bina Nelson in Vancouver. Bina knew Shirley Main who liked the idea of teaching yoga classes at the Y, but others in the organization at the time were very much against it. During an Open House demonstration, Jessica introduced the benefits of yoga disguised as psychomotor exercise. After the demonstration, one of the Y administrators came over and complimented her on doing such good and sensible exercises. Jessica said, "Oh no, that was yoga" and all resistance ended. Yoga was in.

Carole Miller, Shirley Daventry French and Leslie Hogle met with Jessica recently and talked about the history of yoga in Victoria. The three of them, along with Donna Fornelli, have been studying yoga since those early years. Carole asked Jessica what had led her to yoga in the first place. She explained that her husband had a boat and she found she was afraid to be in the water. "I was desperate to get over my fear of the water, and someone suggested I try yoga to help me relax." Yoga became a very important part of her life, but Jessica never did learn to like the water.

Bina and her method of teaching yoga impressed

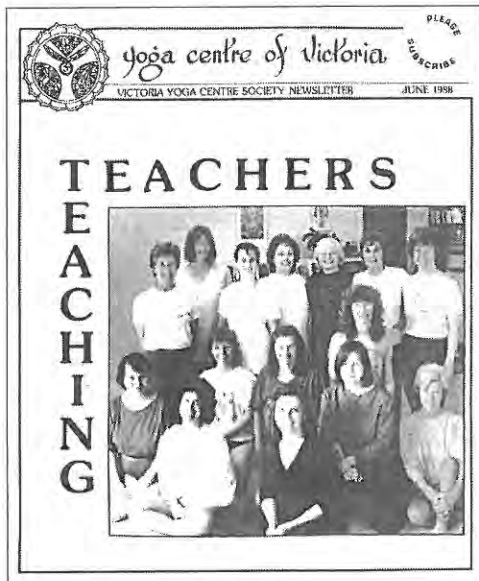
Jessica. It is slower paced than Mr. Iyengar's method and in the late 1960s classes were only an hour long. The first ten to twenty minutes were spent doing a yoga walk, which was a slow, meditative type of walking, toe to heel. A group of poses was done in the traditional order, which Mr. Iyengar also stresses. Jessica did not teach many different poses because her teacher, Bina, felt that a few poses were sufficient and could be practiced until they were perfect, before introducing new ones. "We were so

Western," laughed Jessica, "wanting to progress."

The first class taught in 1968 was for women only. Later, as time went on, a men's class was added, then children's classes. Jessica had to begin training others to help meet the demand, all of the teachers volunteered their time. The students chipped in to help purchase the first white styrofoam mats. There were no props of any kind. The classes were taught in the auditorium on the cold hard floor. Classes in the lounge had to work around couches, chairs and floor lamps.

The other aspects of yoga were important to Jessica. She felt it was essential that asanas were practised along with an understanding of yogic philosophy. She introduced this in her classes with the aid of charts on the eight limbs of yoga, the *yamas* and *niyamas* and so on. Jessica invited Swami Radha to Victoria and Shirley Daventry French was in the first Straight Walk workshop offered here. Encouragement to explore was one of Jessica's hallmarks. She sent her pupils to try different teachers. Carole Miller remembers Jessica sending her to another local teacher, Goddon Limbrick. Carole went very reluctantly!

In 1974, Jessica retired because of hip surgery and



June 1988

because she had decided that the Y was for the young. By then, she had trained teachers and left a program of some twenty-five classes per week for men, women and children. She also left a legacy of sincerity, generosity and spirituality for us all.

At the end of the meeting, Shirley asked Jessica if she could take her picture. Jessica said no. Carole interjected, "But we talk about you all the time and people don't even know what you look like." "Let me remain mythical!" Jessica laughed, but at last agreed to find a photo from when she taught at the Y. ☺

Our Yoga Centre

by Dennis Fafard

This article first appeared in the September 1985 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Society Newsletter

Members are beginning to feel the urge to put down roots and give the Yoga Centre a physical presence in the city of Victoria.

As a result of interest shown at a meeting in May, two committees were formed to explore possibilities: a finance and organization committee, and a site committee. Both of these committees met at the end of July.

Discussion in these meetings ranged widely from talk of owning a building to renting space in the downtown core, attendant with all of the fantasies of what an ideal space would be.

Critical to any plan of this type is the question, What do members expect and hope for from such a location? As well, because such a project is really so large and risky both financially and organizationally in comparison to anything the Centre has done to date, it is very important to have a much broader active support by members. This is said regardless of whether the Centre owns or rents, because the support is going to be necessary continuously; it will not be possible to temporarily slow down or back off

when there is rent or mortgage to be paid and classes or events to be organized regularly. As with any new venture, there might be numerous set backs and difficulties. With broad, enthused support, however, such set backs can be viewed as new challenges.

At the finance organization meeting in July, a variety of issues were discussed. The core issue seemed to be, What kind of a centre do members want? It was concluded that more information was needed, so various people at the meeting committed themselves to exploring such areas as: how have other small organizations made their first steps into their own space; what kind of financial support are members willing to give; can donations be used as deductions for income tax purposes?

Some conclusions that were arrived at were:

- 1) If such a centre is to be established it should be centrally located.
- 2) The growth of such a centre should be slow and progressive.
- 3) A broad involvement and support of members is essential for success.
- 4) Both committees should come together as one at this time.

Interested members should contact the executive. If you know of any reasonably priced space to rent or to buy, or if you know of any individuals or organizations willing to provide financial help, please let us know. ☺



The
Victoria Yoga Centre
is pleased to welcome

Mahyar Raz

An all-levels workshop
open to those with at least six months
experience in Iyengar Yoga.



One of Canada's most senior teachers, Mahyar Raz is
Director of the Iyengar Yoga School of Toronto and
founder of the Yoga Institute in Tehran, Iran.

Her studies include time in Pune and work
with 'Modern Techniques in Medical
Yoga' at the Gupta Yoga Hospital in
Lonavla, India. She interprets
the work of B.K.S.

Iyengar, Prashant and
Geeta with
artistic flair and
promises all a
charming and
challenging
weekend.

January 11-13, 2002

Friday 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Saturday 10am - 1:00pm

3:00 - 5:00pm

Sunday 10:30 am - 1:30 pm

Registration: Begins Nov. 15, 2001

Cost: Members: \$150.00

Non-members: \$180.00 (includes
cost of membership)

All prices must add 7% GST

Contact: Leslie Hogya
50 Cambridge Street
Victoria BC V8V 4A8
250 383 6301

The Victoria Yoga Centre 202-919 Fort Street 250 386 YOGA

Importance of Asana

by B.K.S. Iyengar

This article is an excerpt from the book IYENGAR - His Life and Work, published by Timeless Books. This reprint first appeared in the February 1992 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.

What is it that keeps us from pain and sorrow? Health of the body, mind and soul alone can make us live happily from birth till death. Health alone can enable us to die nobly and majestically. Health is not a commodity which is gained by swallowing pills. It has to be earned by hard work and discipline.

One has to exercise in order to keep the muscles, the organs, the nerves, the glands, the flow of blood, and the systems of the body in proper condition. The entire human system should be well-regulated like the rising and setting of the sun. Then the mind becomes free from the shackles of the body, unattached from the dictates of the senses, and it gets attached to the source of all knowledge, all actions and all emotions, that is Atma (the soul).

The body is the only capital that the Soul possesses and it has to be taken care of, whether it is used for pleasure of the body or realisation of the Self.

Today we live an artificial life, have artificial foods, stimulants for sex, and tranquilisers for sleep. Yoga asanas have stood the test of time; they stimulate the system as well as tranquilise it as the occasion demands.

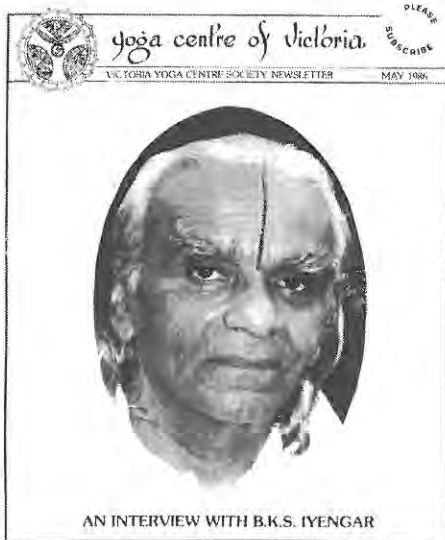
Asanas restore the balance in the system, making the body fresh and clean. Asanas have to be

performed with even, flowing energy and with dynamism, creating new avenues and hopes as mankind is ever dynamic and looks for further expansion in knowledge and experience. Asanas should never be done mechanically for then the body rusts and the mind stagnates.

If *Sirsasana* is done accurately and precisely no weight of the body is felt and the brain gets the sharpness. If *Dwipada Viparita Dandasana* is done, it not only makes the brain sharp, but alert and active. If *Sarvagāsana* is done, the brain remains sober with no negative or positive changes in the brain (both are evenly balanced) whereas in *Halāsana* or

Uttanasana the brain becomes empty, silent, non-creative and one hundred percent receptive. If *Setu-Bandha Sarvangāsana* is done, the brain becomes full, non-oscillating, silent and one hundred percent creative. When *Paschimottāsana* is done the whole physical body feels peace and poise in each life cell. If *Baddha Konāsana* is performed the bodily desire for sexual union diminishes, while in *Pranayama* the mental desire for sexual union diminishes. Like this each aspirant can trace the effects of asanas by religiously performing them with an open mind to see what comes.

There are two ways of doing asanas, either with *ajana* (without any thought behind them) or with *prajana* (with fullness of thought). While performing asanas, the spine, the arms and fingers, the legs and toes, the skin, the fibres, the membranes of nerves and muscles, the organs, the intelligence, even the very Self, should be sharp, mobile, alert, alive, observant and receptive. Activity and passivity must go together to get the best effect from each asana.



AN INTERVIEW WITH B.K.S. IYENGAR

May 1986

And that is Yoga - Union, or total integration while performing the asanas.

As a healthy tree alone bears healthy flowers and fruits, only accurate performance of asanas gives one a healthy personality, peace to the mind, and poise to the body. Perform asanas with uninterrupted awareness and undivided attention. Do not perform asanas mechanically, with the mind wandering elsewhere. Perform with total movement and involvement.

Penetrate the intelligence from one end of the body to the other, vertically, horizontally, circumferentially as well as crosswise. This will bring uniformity and harmony to the body; it will sculpt the body to bring out its latent beauty. Just as a goldsmith beats and melts the gold to remove impurities, the yogi performs asanas to remove toxins that accumulate in the body. It acts as nature's gift, dissolving all types of complexities and enables us to come to simple living and high thinking.

Perfect performance of asanas does not bring one to the state of body consciousness alone. It rather frees one from the limitations of the body and sets one free, sublimating the mind with the Self. As a devotee surrenders his or her all at the feet of the Lord, the practitioner surrenders, merges, and becomes one with the asana. There is then no difference between the knowable, the knower and the knowledge. There is only the experience of that which is true, good and beautiful.

The asanas effect not only physical, physiological and biological changes, but also psychological ones. The aspirant does not take up the practice of the postures for the sake of sensual pleasure or showmanship. Rather his practice is directed towards life and in the spirit. It is fallacious to believe that the maintaining of a posture in comfort for a given length of time means mastery in yoga, for a sitting posture alone will not eradicate the scores of evils and infirmities man is heir to. Nor is health to be mistaken for mere existence. Health is the delicate balance in harmony of body, mind and spirit, where physical disabilities and mental distractions have

for Guruji



Birthday wishes
from the
Victoria Yoga Centre

vanished and the gate of the spirit is open.

The most important effect of performing asanas is to bring the mind closer to the core of being as it naturally likes to remain attached to the body, senses of perception and organs of action.

According to Patanjali, the mastery of the asanas leads to freedom of dualities. The duality between the body and the mind and of the mind and the soul vanishes and results in tranquillity. To live in the Infinite is the result of yoga. This happens only when the aspirants attempts become effortless. Though he gains in health, strength, firmness and lightness, his knowledge becomes more sharp, yet at the same time humility increases as the ego slowly dissolves. Thus the practice of yoga makes possible service and sacrifice. ☉



The Victoria Yoga Centre is pleased to present

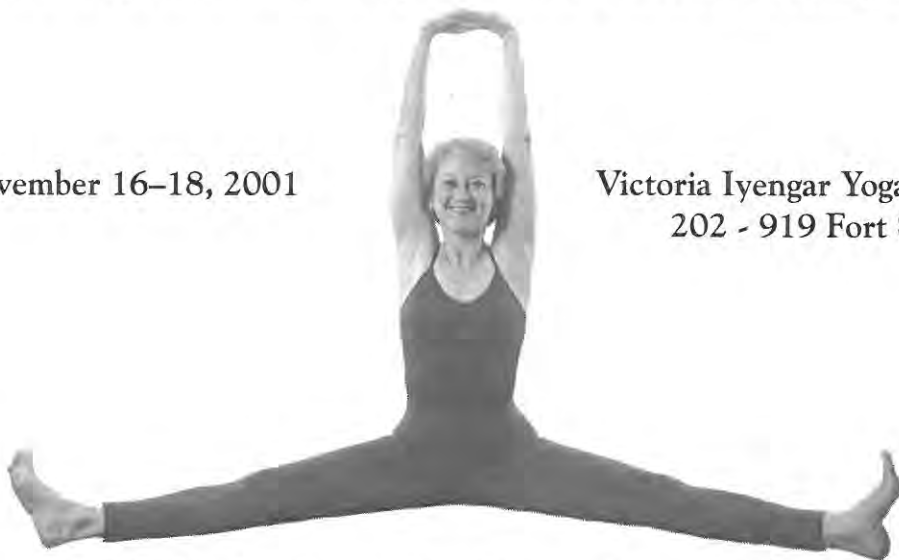
An Intermediate Workshop

with *Chris Saudek*

for teachers, student teachers, and serious students of Iyengar Yoga

November 16–18, 2001

Victoria Iyengar Yoga Centre
202 - 919 Fort Street



Chris Saudek has been a devoted student of the Iyengars for more than 20 years. She has studied extensively at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, including two times when she stayed for more than five months each. The training Chris received as a physical therapist gave her valuable background for her study of yoga. Chris is a precise and disciplined, caring and innovative teacher. She is the director of the Yoga Place in La Crosse, Wisconsin and certified as a senior intermediate teacher of the Iyengar method.

Fri. Nov 16 6:30-9pm
Sat. Nov 17 10am-1pm and 3-5pm
Sun. Nov 18 9am-12pm and 1:30-3pm

Fees: \$180 (+gst) Yoga Centre Members
\$210 (+gst) Non-Members
(includes membership)

Registration begins September 4th. Cancellations will be refunded only if your place can be filled. Cheque payable to the Victoria Yoga Centre.

Mail to:
Ann Kilbertus
766 St. Patrick Street
Victoria BC V8S 4X5

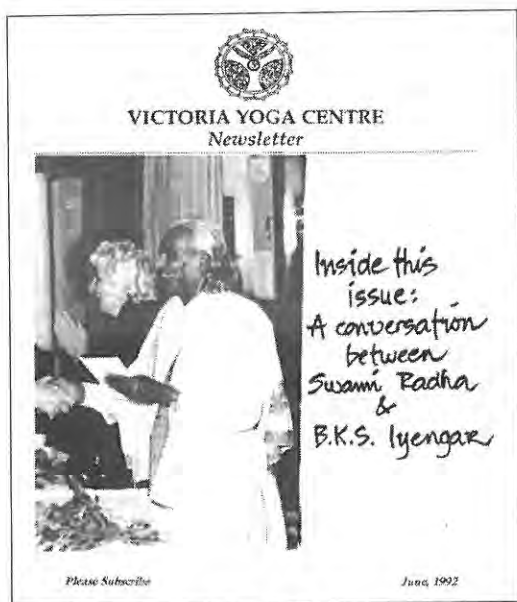
For more information contact: Ann 1-(250)-598-0976 or wq556@victoria.tc.ca

Finding Spirituality in Asana

by Leslie Hogya

*This article first appeared in the October 1990 issue
of the Yoga Centre of Victoria Newsletter*

When Swami Radha came to Canada in the mid-fifties and founded the Yasodhara Ashram, she taught her followers the Hatha Yoga taught by her Guru, Swami Sivananda of Rishikish, India.



June 1992

In the seventies, Iyengar's method arrived in Canada and its influence was felt at the Ashram via Norma Hodge and others. In the eighties, several of Swami Radha's disciples went to Pune and studied with Iyengar at his Institute.

However, Swami Radha felt she could not give a teacher's certificate in any method except the one in which she herself trained and practised, so she went back to teaching only Sivananda yoga at the

Ashram. When her book, *The Hidden Language*, was published a few years ago, Iyengar's method was no longer taught at any of her centres.

This has caused some confusion among students who have been students of both Iyengar and Swami Radha. While I was in Edmonton this July I discussed this with a few people. I feel very fortunate to be in Victoria, a community where the Yoga Centre has strong ties to Shambala House (founded by Swami Radha) and yet our classes and workshops are given by Iyengar trained teachers. Many of the Yoga Centre executive have been both to Pune and Kootenay Bay to study at the Ashram or take ongoing Kundalini classes locally.

I went to the Ashram this summer. I take Kundalini yoga classes and have done some Hidden Language classes. I have also studied with Shirley Davenport French, an Iyengar teacher. Nothing about this is a conflict for me. Instead, I find they each enhance the other. Studying Kundalini, particularly, has helped me bring teachings into my everyday life and interactions with my family. I am a complex being, the things to be learned and the understandings are seemingly limitless. I need lots of instruction on many levels.

From Iyengar in Edmonton I learned I cannot yet stand in *Tadasana*, so how can I come close to glimpsing the soul? In *Satsang* this summer at Ashram, I realized how much I still want to be in control, in charge. How then can I surrender to the Divine?

Swami Radha's and Mr. Iyengar's methods are different, their ultimate purpose is the same.

The qualities that make them great as teachers are similar. They are dedicated to yoga and to their pupils. They spend long hours in their own forms of personal practice. They have the highest ethical standard for themselves. They are both living examples of what they teach.

Mr. Iyengar seeks ultimate divine union through the asanas, Swami Radha seeks the divine through understanding of the self: mind, motion, senses.

Iyengar demands that we learn the inner workings of each cell and fibre of our being. Swami Radha uses written reflection, mantra, to get at the inner workings of the mind. In both cases, the goal is to know thyself, to enter the temples of the soul within. They also personally respect each other and the other's work.

For me, it is important to do both. I tend to be physically lazy and not very athletic in Iyengar classes. I must overcome these tendencies. I am constantly challenging myself and gaining understandings. It also helps me feel more healthy by both energizing and quietening my entire self

In a Hidden Language class this summer, I got in touch with my ego which wants to be lazy and not do practices. By coming at it through both systems I am helped to learn on more than one level, so it penetrates into more areas.

In India, spirituality is interwoven into daily life. I see that in the pupils who have spent the most time in India with Mr. Iyengar, especially in those who are Indian. Yoga is a spiritual practice and it is evident in the Institute and in Mr. Iyengar and his family.

However, in North America, spirituality has been separated from daily life, so it has been more difficult for us to grasp the spiritual aspects of a discipline that begins with asanas, with the body. This is why, for me, Swami Radha's work has been so important. The work begins with simple steps (and sometimes large ones) to reintroduce the divine that is within us to ourselves. Swami Radha gives practises which help the aspirant to get in touch with that aspect. It is evident in both systems but, for me and many who have been helped by Swami Radha, a vocabulary and tools were needed to find out I was a spiritual being.

These tools help me see Mr. Iyengar's work as more than physical. I feel both systems have helped me lay a sound foundation for my inner temple.

OM OM. ☉

Additional Classes at the Victoria Yoga Centre



As we settle into our new home, additional classes will be added to our regular schedule on a slow but ongoing basis. Interested individuals are directed to our website (www.victoriayogacentre.bc.ca) for more current information. Up to date schedules will also be made available through the centre office.

202-919 Fort Street 250 386 YOGA

The Guru Puja

*This article is an excerpt from **Ascent: The Journal of Yasodhara Ashram Society** (Volume XXI, Number 3, 1991.) This reprint first appeared in the February 1992 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.*

The following is taken from a talk that Swami Radha gave at the puja celebration of her 80th birthday, July 1991.

First of all, let me say its great to come back here and see changes that I never thought would take place. In the past I have sometimes felt almost desperate, wondering, What are people doing? How little they understand. Why don't they listen and think deeply and find out what the purpose of their life is? Why don't they read old scriptural texts of any religion to see what the purpose of one's life is? With this weekend I can see there have been many good changes.

In this kind of celebration you kindle the finer feelings within yourself. But I want you to remember that I am only a symbol, even though the symbol is sometimes helpful in that our physical senses need something to focus on. It doesn't matter what kind of an image you have, it keeps you focused and that's the major thing.

Tonight we have had many new *gopis* and *gopas*. Just remember that you will remain a gopi and a gopa because these are Radha and Krishnas helpmates. Be a handmaiden of Divine Mother. She is a symbol of the manifestation. I am only a symbol of the little Ashram here. But, when you put it all together you can see that it is all the energy of the union of Radha and Krishna, the invisible power that Krishna represents and the visible power that Radha presents in the Creation.

The question that always comes up is, How do I unite yoga and daily life? Well, I'm sitting here and I'm not wearing a sari to remind me of the changes I decided to make in my life. I used to wear the sari, as you know, and it was good for me for a certain

length of time - I followed that tradition in the beginning because I could understand it best and I had no other example. But many things can remind us of our decisions, and you can really do anything you want to remind yourself of the changes you have decided to make in your life without needing an entire robe.

When I was in India, I had the same problems that you probably have today. I know of few of them. Sivananda - the great master as he was called, the great Guru - seemed to be almost unapproachable. Yet, I also had the opportunity to meet Sivananda in his very human form and that enabled me to see his spiritual greatness in perspective. You see, if the human aspect is denied then the spiritual aspect isn't there either. Unless you make a great effort to discover the Divine in yourself, you cannot discover the Divine in anyone else. All of your impressions of the human personality will stand in the way.

I can give you a little example as an illustration. Sai Baba was visited by a number of people and they said to him, "What is wrong with you? Why do people leave you?" Sai Baba didn't answer directly. Instead he stepped out of his kutir and pointed to a flowering tree with many of its flowers fallen to the ground. Sai Baba said, "Is it the fault of the tree that the flowers fell off?"

Before I met Swami Sivananda in person, I had read all the books about fasting and discipline with food and eating and all this sort of thing. When I did meet him I was simply shocked because he was so big and fat. I thought to myself that he must eat more than necessary, so why would he tell me not indulge in any food? But I reflected on this and could see that I hadn't come to India to investigate the human aspects of Sivananda. In time, I saw enough of what was going on in the Ashram in India to understand that perhaps some outlet for him was necessary. People with their diverse self-wills and their desire to display their power gave him a lot of frustration. So there is no question that he sometimes ate more than he should have.

There were many other little incidents. At first, I



VICTORIA YOGA CENTRE NEWSLETTER

December, 1995 - January 1996

Please Subscribe



Swami Sivananda Radha
1911 - 1995

December 1995 - January 1996

used to think, how can he ever be a great yogi and do those things? But, if I had not seen that human aspect of Sivananda, I would never have thought that it was worthwhile to pursue this path. The Divine uses the human body to give all the expressions and emanations of itself. It's all evolution - evolution is your spiritual path. You have to see that you cooperate with your own evolution.

It is for each of you to decide if you will pursue your spiritual life, even if you are married, or have children, or even if you have a career. None of these should stand in the way. Let me tell you, the Ashram has given me very little opportunity for meditation and for certain practices. I was extremely busy. My days were often twelve and sometimes fourteen hours long. The only thing I could do was to dedicate whatever my activity was to the Most High. And that is something that is open for you too. You

can dedicate anything you do, even the smallest action, to the Most High and bring the greatest quality possible into your life. Gurudev Sivananda used to say, "If you cannot recognize the miracle of your hand, what do you think you can experience somewhere else?"

And it's no use to go searching from one place to another, from one teacher to another, or from one personality to another. It doesn't work. The knowledge that you need will not be given to you. You can't find it outside; it's not in the books nor in the old texts. But there is a hidden place in the mind where you can receive that knowledge. The mind has many, many layers and your state of mind is your own. You have to search within yourself and I hope someday all of you will find that hidden place.

Another point I would like to make is that people worry about the bad things they have done in their lives. All right, if you know you did something wrong and you are sincerely regretful, then you can put that individual or the situation in the Light and let the Light take care of it. But do it only if you are really sincere about wanting to balance the wrong. Otherwise the expression has no particular effect. If you are critical of yourself then you can be sure you will be critical of others, too, and the judgement that you put on other people is the judgement by which your own actions will be condemned. There is no God who will punish you - it is your own state of mind that does that. If, according to you, something is wrong for someone else, then it's wrong for you too. The time of daily reflection is very, very important. You have to think about what you do, who you are and what you have done with your time. Have you learned something from your use of time, even time spent in casual conversation? Can it help you to correct yourself? Be strict with yourself rather than others.

Your evolution and your cooperation with your evolution is the purpose of your life. When you truly know this, you will meet that place, that hidden place in your own mind, where you receive that special knowledge.

But there is a guardian at the entrance to that hidden place in your mind. The guardian is your intellect and it will fight tooth and nail to maintain supremacy. The intellect does not want, under any circumstances, to be defeated. But if you stay very aware and watch other people around you, you will see that in the end the intellect will let you down. You can use the intellect to bring the Divine in you to the surface and to practice awareness. But the intellect is only a tool - it is not the Divine in you.

When you bring even a little bit of light into a big, dark room, you can begin to see something. The purpose is not only to look at all the bad things that are in there: the spiders, scorpions, snakes and what have you. The purpose is also, simply, to bring in more Light. When you bring in the Light, all these creatures will disappear - they don't like the Light. It is very simple. You have to approach the Divine in yourself, your own soul. You are nothing, but the Divine in you is something. You can think of the Divine in yourself as that little grain of rice - not all the rice in the world but that little grain that gives you a taste and puts you in touch with something that is much greater than this little self.

Don't waste this life. If you sometimes find yourself in doubt, take a sheet of paper and fold it in the middle. On one side, write all the wonderful experiences you have had and on the other side write all the negative experiences. You may find that the wonderful experience exacted a tremendous price. Do you want to keep paying that price? It becomes very costly. Rather, pay the price for the pearl of divinity, the pearl that you find in the lotus of your own being.

There have been times when I have asked, Where are all the Radhas? There should be more, there should be lots. Today the world needs lots of Radhas who draw on Krishna. The separation that you see in the Radha-Krishna dance is only temporarily apparent to the senses. If you are fearful of being in the net of Krishna, of that Divine Power, I'd like to tell you that its your only safe place. If Radha is caught in the net of Krishna, she's safe. If manifestation, this little world of the Ashram, is

caught in that net, you are safe, because you stay focused. You do not need to give up the human existence that you are also a part of. The Divine has to encompass your humanness. When I became Swami Radha, my former name and identity, Sylvia, could not just be ignored and forgotten it had to be incorporated. When you approach the Divine, the Divine incorporates that which is very human in you. Your body, your human being, is Krishna's flute. You have to keep that flute perfect so that he can play the melodies he wants even though these melodies are sometimes not necessarily what you want to hear or what you want to say. But, being Krishna's flute is what you have dedicated yourself to and that dedication is not determined by convenience or personal comfort.

Hari Om, Hari Om, Hari Om ☉

Open House

The Victoria Yoga Centre
is pleased to offer

A Free Lunch Hour Class

with
Leslie Hogya



Friday, Nov. 23
Noon-1pm

202-919 Fort Street 250 386 YOGA

Where is the Victoria Yoga Centre?

by Shirley Daventry French

This article originally appeared in the December 1981 issue of the Victoria Yoga Centre newsletter

I am often asked Where is the Victoria Yoga Centre? It's difficult to answer that question briefly. Sometimes it's at my home; sometimes at the Ingimundson's or the Miller's or Ann Rosemary Conway's or at the Y or any number of other places where we gather as a group to study, practice and explore the teachings of Yoga. But really it's in the hearts and minds of the people who are it's members.

It's Penny Carter helping Norman McKenzie move by driving out to Metchosin after a week's work and an intensive weekend workshop and then in the rain and fog heaving a station-wagon load of heavy boxes into the house. A week later it's Bruce and Sue Ingimundson, whose occupations include engineering, nursing, teaching yoga and (last) but not least) bringing up four young daughters, taking time out of their weekend respite to help another Yoga Centre member Marlene Miller move into her new apartment.

Marlene and Norman themselves embody the spirit of the Yoga Centre by their work in preparing and distributing newsletters, organizing, chairing and recording meetings, teaching yoga and helping out in a number of ways - all in addition to holding

down full-time employment. The Yoga Centre is Lavona Parker putting a book from the Yoga Teachers Course booklist at Yasodhara Ashram on tape for a blind man who would like to take the course. It's Karen Moreau Abel and Susen Riley (formerly Dettweiler) scrubbing out my kitchen in preparation for a visit by Swami Radha.

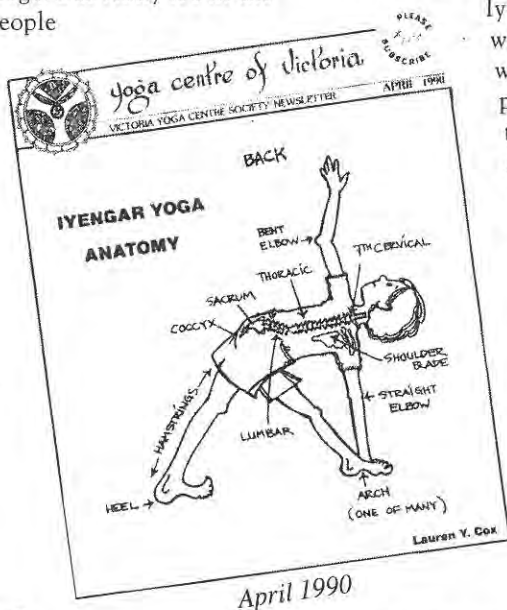
It's Carole Miller, experienced yoga teacher and school teacher, who brings many talents to our group and who in the midst of a busy personal and professional life always finds time to listen, to offer support to others and whose perseverance I have always admired.

The Yoga Centre is a group of us participating in an Iyengar Yoga workshop. It's doing the work necessary to bring these workshops about such as organization, putting people up in our homes and the less attractive jobs like moving a carload of blocks and sandbags from the Y to James Bay and back again. It's the sustained effort of preparing to go to India and study with Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar himself and the willingness to prepare for this experience without any guarantee that you will be one of those selected to go.

It's sixteen people staying at my house for a workshop with Swami Radha and, without my having to ask, preparing food, clearing up etc. Everything which needs to be done gets done quietly and

efficiently, our combined efforts making it possible for all of us to get the most out of the visit of this great teacher.

It's Derek French and Trish and Bill Graham personifying the spirit of Karma Yoga by freely offering their professional services to the Yoga Centre and Yoga community in general. Derek, a physician and longtime yoga practitioner, by teaching anatomy, physiology, care of the back and



April 1990

other health-related topics to yoga teachers and students. Bill and Trish, professional designers and printers, giving generously of their time and expertise to produce our newsletter. Many others too, like Frances Walsh who has poured over a typewriter for many hours on various of our endeavours; Ann Rosemary Conway, an artist who designed our lovely seal along with many brochures and posters and who, like Richard Reeves, helps us unravel the mystery of our dreams. And to unravel another mystery - that of my bookkeeping - Dennis Fafard, professional accountant, has offered his services.

It's also the students who open their bodies and minds to our efforts at teaching, the out-of-town members who invite us to give workshops or who travel long distances to participate in workshops here, who support us by their donations and the many, many others who contribute in countless ways to the shared commitment to search for truth through the study and practice of Yoga.

The Yoga Centre came into being a few years ago when I returned from taking the 1976 Yoga Teachers Course at Yasodhara Ashram. Swami Radha encouraged me to build bridges to bring people of like mind together for spiritual growth and learning. On occasions during these past five years I have felt that I was building these bridges almost single-handed. I no longer feel like that. In Victoria we now have a team of skillful bridge-builders, who along with a number of apprentices are building and maintaining a variety of bridges. I thank you all.

I'd like to end with a prayer which I have heard often at Yasodhara Ashram and which always reawakens in me a feeling of gratitude: May all be blessed as we are blessed!

On Tat Sat ☉

Our Yoga Centre

by Linda Benn

This article originally appeared in the May/June 2000 issues of the Victoria Yoga Centre Newsletter.

I recently organized and presented a Sunday workshop to begin raising funds for our own Yoga Centre in Victoria. As an underlying theme to the workshop I quoted Mr. Iyengar: "If the foundation is firm, the building can withstand calamities. The practice of Yoga is the foundation, so that the Self is not shaken under any circumstances."

During the workshop we practiced the asanas looking at the importance of the foundation of each pose. I also discussed the importance of the *yamas* and the *niyamas* as being the ethical ground for the practice of all limbs of yoga practice. Mr. Iyengar himself is our inspiration and the foundation of our understanding and practice of Yoga.

At the beginning of the workshop I read out a description of the Institute in Pune, India where Mr. Iyengar and his family live and teach yoga to students from everywhere in the world. I have been at the Institute once but did not at that time appreciate the symbolic significance of its architecture. The following is quoted from the official B.K.S. Iyengar web site:

The Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute is dedicated to the beloved wife of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar who died not long after laying the foundation stone for the Institute in 1973.

The building has a unique architectural design symbolizing the 8 aspects or limbs of Ashtanga Yoga. It resembles a semi circular shaped pyramid or a vertical section through a Mandala. The building has 3 tiers representing the 3 layers of *sadhana* or practice, the internal, the external, and the innermost quest of a yoga practitioner. The 71 feet in elevation and the 88 steps also have significance. From the central column, eight large beams radiate. These eight beams and corresponding 8 outer columns represent the eight limbs: *yamas* (ethical

disciplines), *niyamas* (ethical observances), *asanas* (postures), *pranayama* (restraint of breath), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (absorption of consciousness with the Higher Self).

Outside and inside the Institute are sculptures, art work and many awards honouring Mr. Iyengar. The basement houses a large library where Mr. Iyengar can often be found working. The entrance to the main hall has a statue of the sage Patanjali. Patanjali is honoured as the Father of Yoga at the beginning of every class and ceremony. The main hall has a high ceiling with fans, the outer wall is windows with grill work over them, the floor is hard but cool slate. The teacher stands on a large raised platform so that he/she can easily oversee the up to 50 students. The airy spaces work well for the classes but everyone has stories about the challenges of the small equipment room and the inadequate washrooms. Recently returned students said that there are plans being made for renovations. The Institute has become a place of pilgrimage for the practitioners of yoga who patiently await their opportunity to attend classes.

Many of our Iyengar Yoga classes and workshops take place at the Victoria YW/ YMCA. We have had a wonderful working relationship with the Y that has been very beneficial for both parties. However, the Y can no longer provide enough space and time for the number of classes that we could potentially offer in

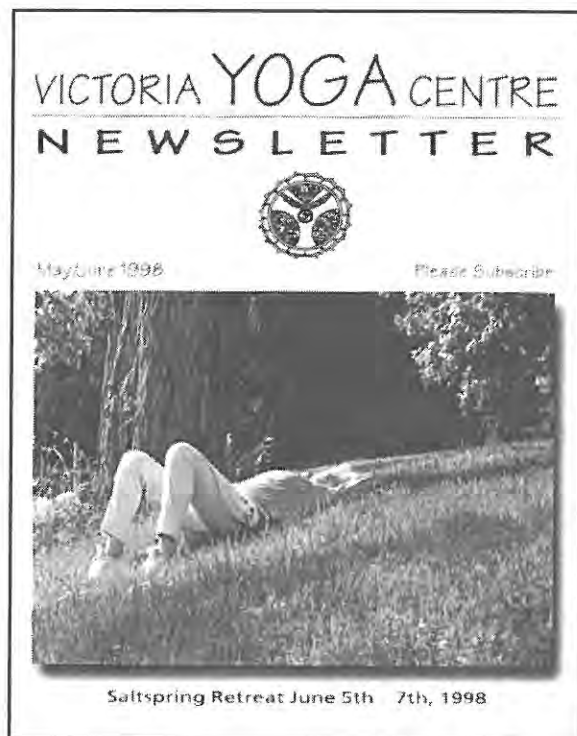
Victoria. Our classes and workshops are consistently full. In our own place and we could create a yoga atmosphere, controlling the use of space and time to suit our needs.

At the workshop I asked the participants to describe their vision on the perfect yoga centre. They suggested the Yoga Centre should:

- Be in a forested area with a view and lots of light
- Be centrally located (in the city of Victoria)
- A circular building
- Have good parking
- Be wheel chair/handicap accessible etc.
- Have changerooms, showers, cloakroom
- Kitchen

The first two are probably contradictory. I would add other ideas such as having at least two spaces for teaching, room for our Library, an area for retail sales, at least one office area, good floors, light, heat and ventilation and a convenient area for prop storage.

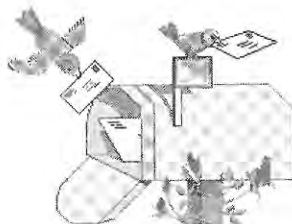
These are very ambitious goals but in the long term I think that we can do it, as many communities and private groups have already done. Victoria may have to start with a smaller plan that we can manage and then build on. We have a foundation of a very strong organization plus very capable people. What has held us back is that the core group of teachers in our community have been using their time and energy to focus on other jobs, yoga teaching, teacher training, and actively assisting the



May/June 1998

creation of the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers Association and the certification process.

The result of this work is that now there is a new group of committed teachers and students developing, some of whom have indicated great interest in a Yoga Centre. It is this new energy that I hope moves us all forward to create a Victoria Yoga Centre. Do you have expertise, energy, ideas or resources that could help us? ☺



In Our Mailbox

A Letter of Thanks

October 11, 2001

This letter is written to thank all of you – family, friends, colleagues and students who planned and came the surprise party in honour of my 70th birthday, who worked on the special edition of the newsletter and wrote articles. Also many thanks to those who sent flowers and cards.

I knew that there was going to be some reference to my birthday in the next newsletter because Caren had asked for an interview and Gwynneth had come to take some photographs. Early in the summer I got an inkling that a little more might be going on and said to Derek that I was going to send a letter to the newsletter committee saying that although I had agreed to the interview I did not want the newsletter to focus on me. He suggested I back off and stop interfering. Recently he admitted that by that time he had already written and submitted his article. Knowing my tendency to jump in and assert myself, I thought about it and decided to trust them, let go and surrender. In any case, I reasoned, with the new yoga space opening there is much more on everyone's mind.

So much for that. There it was, at the party, a special tribute which brought blushes to my cheeks and tears to my eyes. I am moved and grateful for the appreciation shown to me, confirming that yoga with its message on the need to express gratitude has reached so many people. My hope is that having ventured to express themselves in print these articulate and literary people will continue to spread the teachings of yoga. As recent world events have



The Victoria Yoga Centre

*Is pleased to announce
the following scholarships:*

Chris Saudek Workshop

November 15 – 16

1 scholarship @ \$100

Please apply by Oct. 15

B.K.S. Iyengar Birthday

1 scholarship @ \$500

Teachers please apply by Dec. 3

Apply in writing to The Scholarship
Committee. Give to your teacher or mail to:

**Scholarship Committee
Victoria Yoga Centre Society
202-919 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8V 3K3**

All applicants must supply a current phone
number and address. For additional
information contact Wendy Boyer 598-9321
or Amanda Mills 727-0222.



Some of the family gather at Shirley's birthday celebration.

made it abundantly clear, we are more in need of these teachings than ever.

I also loved the skit lampooning the newsletter committee meetings. Not that there was a grain of truth in it — but it was very, very funny. The late great sage Swami Vivekananda warned us never to trust a spiritual teacher without a sense humour. It is just as important for us to retain our own sense of humour as students, taking the practice seriously rather than ourselves.

The event was made complete by the presence of my personal family and my yoga family, together with the spirit of my revered Guruji manifest in his congratulatory letter.

With love and gratitude,
In the Light of yoga,
Shirley Daventry French

Kudos From Derek

I have just read through the newsletter celebrating Shirley's 70th birthday for the second time and to borrow a phrase from a younger generation, "It blew me away." Such a marvelous and moving collection of tributes, memories, photos and an outpouring of respect, honour, humour and love.

After living a with someone for many years it would be easy to slip into a state where many aspects of a partner are taken for granted. As your

newsletter reveals, the young woman that I married has evolved into quite a presence.

Indeed I am writing this letter at work and I wonder if, on my return home, I should prostrate myself and kiss her feet.

Of course the response would be unpredictable. Romantic Shirley might be enchanted, Humorous Shirley would be amused, Imperial Shirley might say "about time", Pragmatic Shirley might suggest I use this energy to clean out the attic. Whatever!

But I digress. My purpose in writing this letter is to thank you, the newsletter committee and all the contributors for producing such a superb journal. I will treasure it.

Namaste,
Derek French

Mr Iyengar's Birthday Celebration

December 14th, 2000

by Glenda Hingley

The usual reasons for attending a birthday celebration are simple - it is a chance to gather and enjoy good company, give gifts and share food to honour someone we care about and treasure in our lives.

Mr. Iyengar's birthday celebration was all of that and more! The workshop began with Levels I and II joining Maggi Feehan in "Finding the Breath," while Levels III and IV concentrated on "Discovering Your Strength" with Marlene Miller.

As a teacher trainee, I felt it would be beneficial for me to work with Maggi in the Level I and II group, as both participant and observer. Of course, what I ultimately found was that attention and focus must be on alignment and precision, as always. When a pose is performed with good form, the breath is there.

James Curry-Johnson's restorative practice for the whole group in the auditorium reminded us once again that "restorative" does not necessarily mean "easy." Downward Dog, even with the head supported on a bolster, is hard work when held for three minutes. The work however, was well worth the effort as always. Our well-earned *Savasana* prepared us for the treats that followed.

Moving back into the yoga lounge found a festive atmosphere. The smells of chai and rice pudding, the sparkle of confetti and the busy shoppers at the prop shop and bookstore gave the feeling of a winter carnival. Among the many conversations, I heard one newcomer to yoga describe how helpful yoga was for her neck problems and that she was beginning a home practice, two former neighbours became happily reacquainted and I had a chance to chat with someone I had met at a summer workshop with Ramanand Patel.

In addition to the good food, great atmosphere and wonderful company, we were also able to give the gift of financial support as our registration fees for the workshop contributed to the BKS Iyengar Scholarship Fund. This scholarship is reserved for teachers or trainees to use toward their education (trips to India to study in Pune, workshops or anything related to their professional development)

So the birthday celebration for Mr. Iyengar, though it lacked the guest of honour in person, contained all the essential ingredients for a great party plus giving us the chance to practice, with wonderful teachers, the work we love - Iyengar Yoga. ☺

Bon Voyage

to Chris Lea
as he embarks on
another journey of
study and practice at the
Ramamani Iyengar Memorial
Yoga Institute in Pune, India.



Margaret Lunam: A Birthday Appreciation

by Barbara Young

Autumn 2001 cele Kelowna Yoga House, a new yoga centre in Kelowna, and the culmination of the dream of an extraordinary woman - Margaret Lunam. In the winter of 2000, the idea for our new centre was born in the Light of a sojourn to the Yasodhara Ashram. I remember that dull February Sunday evening clearly. The telephone rang; it was Margaret calling from the ashram. After chatting briefly about her experience there, she declared that she'd come to a decision. She felt that Kelowna needed a yoga centre in the heart of the city. Before she died, she said, she wanted to see such a center built. She was prepared to be the project's benefactor if we in the community were prepared to throw our hearts into its realization.

The path Margaret travelled to arrive at her decision winds back many decades. She will be a lively eighty years old this fall as the new centre opens. Her studies in Iyengar Yoga began at the Victoria Y when she participated in a workshop with Judith Lassiter, and she subsequently attended classes there for several months with Shirley Daventry French and others. Shirley suggested she contact Norma Hodge on Gabriola Island to continue her learning, as Norma's studio was much closer than the Y to Margaret's home. For a number of years, Margaret went to Gabriola once a week, observing Norma's beginner Iyengar Yoga class in the morning, and then studying both Kundalini and Iyengar Yoga with Norma in the afternoon and evening. She began teaching Iyengar Yoga in the Comox Valley, enlivened by Norma's teaching and informed by her own experience as a physiotherapist.

Margaret moved to the Okanagan in 1987 and began teaching shortly thereafter in community centres throughout the city. In 1993, she transformed the lower level of her home into an exquisitely sunlit yoga studio overlooking Okanagan Lake. It was there that her dedication to the work of BKS Iyengar put down deep, abiding roots and the Kelowna Iyengar Yoga

community found its first real home.

The years in Margaret's studio stand out in my mind as an extraordinary period. Like many others, I was sent to her yoga classes by John Coghlan, a physical medicine doctor and yoga practitioner, following the rupture of a spinal disk and two months of excruciating pain. One of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras often comes to mind when I think of Margaret's teaching. Sutra II:16 reads "*Heyam, dukham anagatum*", translated by BKS Iyengar as "The pains which are yet to come can be and are to be avoided" In the context of the *Sadhana Pada*, Patanjali was referring to spiritual suffering rather than upper backs, but one thing we learn through the practice of Iyengar Yoga is that the body can teach us volumes about the mind and spirit!

In those early days there were no waivers or medical forms to sign, but Margaret insisted upon talking to each new student before the first class. With gentle, penetrating insight, she discussed not only physical conditions she needed to understand, but important emotional stresses and strains as well. With all these clearly fixed in her mind, Margaret taught without ever referring to them. When students protested that they couldn't do this or that asana because, for instance, their back was out she'd say, "Where do you suppose it went?" then simply carry on teaching with attention and precision, modifying poses as necessary so that students could work safely. She has an uncanny sense of people's limitations, of when they are working below them and of when they are at risk by exceeding them. Once we began using waivers at the studio, Margaret reminded us time and again that waivers or no waivers, it was our responsibility to make sure people didn't hurt themselves in class. Through her careful teaching of Iyengar Yoga, Margaret has indeed helped countless students help themselves to avoid pain and suffering with which they would undoubtedly had to contend for years to come. What a tremendous gift.

As time passed, Margaret took every opportunity to encourage her dedicated students to embark on teaching and attending Iyengar Yoga workshops. Over the years, her studio welcomed a steady stream of wonderful teachers from the Canadian and international Iyengar Yoga community, and she herself

went to Edmonton in 1980 to study with Guruji. She was always of the unshakeable conviction that our studio be and remain an Iyengar Yoga studio. A new wave of Kelowna students has become interested in teaching in recent times, and Kelowna was well represented at the 2001 Victoria Yoga Centre training week, with six of our community in attendance, all but one new to teaching. Several of her students have gone on to become certified teachers through the Canadian Iyengar Yoga Teachers' Association.

Margaret's commitment to training apprentices is legendary. Before the CIYTA developed teacher training guidelines, Margaret followed her own rigorous process. When she felt one of us was ready to teach, she would suggest that we take on a class of our own, but insisted on being present in that class during the

first year. She rarely missed being there to provide an extra (and much more experienced) set of eyes, to modify poses for certain students, to explain principles of anatomy and physiology and, after class, to provide valuable feedback on our teaching. She has spent countless hours attending classes in this capacity over the years, and has plans to continue working with apprentice teachers this fall.

Margaret's life of selfless service in Kelowna is felt far beyond the Iyengar Yoga community. As I write this article, she is working the phones and collecting petitions in response to yet another environmental crisis in our city. The location of the new yoga centre had an environmental focus as well - Margaret felt it should be located somewhere people could reach by bike and public transit. Her own home is a testament to her passion for the beauty of the natural world and her sense of urgency that we all become proactive in protecting it. She has taken years to transform the lawn in the front of her house into a wildflower meadow. Behind the house, she's engaged in a ongoing battle with knapweed, a promiscuous and destructive plant which overtakes native species. Now, at certain times of year, the hill behind Margaret's home is filled with sky-blue flax cascading toward the lake.

Margaret's work in the area of environmental protection and habitat conservation is as deeply lived as her commitment to yoga, and the two are inextricably linked. When we set out on the creation of the new Kelowna Yoga House, someone told us we needed a mission statement. We came up with something rather dull and standard, then Margaret offered what we've fondly come to refer to as our "Heartfelt Mission Statement". It expresses, simply and eloquently, the integral relationship between yoga, the individual, the community and the world, our collective home.

"A house wherein we can gather to grow spiritually. We can't fix the world except by fixing ourselves. For that we need the support of one another"

Happy 80th birthday Margaret, and *namaste* from all of us. ☺

A Weekend Workshop

with

Aadil Palkhivalla

in

Cumberland, BC

Dates: April 12-14, 2002

Location: Cumberland Cultural Centre

Cost: \$200.00

For information and registration
contact:

Vicky Catchpole

250 338 7973

vjpalmpole@hotmail.com

Radha Yoga Centre



Yoga at Victoria's Radha Yoga Centre

Divine Light Invocation Workshop

Sunday, November 18

10:30 am - 2:30 pm

Learn to help yourself and others using an ancient practice of the Light. This practice includes visualization and a mantra of the Light. You will learn both the full practice and how to use it as a reflective tool.

Bring lunch; tea provided

Fee: \$30.00

Celebration of the Light

Sunday, December 9

7:00-9:00 pm

Come to the Radha Yoga Centre for our annual carol and bhajan party. We will chant a mantra and reflect on the Light in our lives. Bring your favourite tea time treat (enough for four).

No charge

A Reminder for the New Year

Call us for information about our Winter 2002 schedule, beginning January 14.

- Basic Hatha Yoga
- Kundalini Yoga
- Hidden Language Hatha Yoga

Mats For Sale

Radha Yoga Centre Victoria has a new shipment of hatha mats for sale.

Price: \$30.00 (tax included)

ascent magazine

Canada's yoga magazine presents the thoughts and reflections of today's spiritual leaders.

In previous issues:

Tenzin Palmo, dance, the Sutras Kundalini, Gopi Krishna, Natalie Goldberg, the path of music, devotional hatha

In every issue:

material from Swami Radha's taped talks, Swami Radhananda on current issues, The Hidden Language of Hatha Yoga

Available from Radha Yoga Centre Victoria
Current issue: \$5.00 Back issues: \$3.00 each

To subscribe:

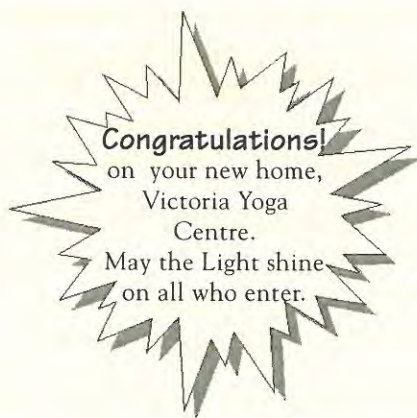
e-mail: subscriptions@ascentmagazine.com

phone toll free: 1-800-661-8711

For story and art queries:

e-mail: editor@ascentmagazine.com

regular mail: Box 9, Kootenay Bay, BC, V0B 1X0



YOGA CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2001

- 4 Menopause with Marlene Miller
- 16-18 Workshop with Chris Saudek
- 23 Open House: Free Lunch Hour
with Leslie Hogya
- 24 Teachers' Meeting
- 25 Practicing Back Care
with Ann Kilbertus

DECEMBER 2001

- 1 Fundraiser for Santas Anonymous
with Lauren Cox
- 9 Open Shoulders. Open Armpits.
Open Chest.
with Wies Pukesh
- 16 In the Light of Yoga: Workshop
Celebrating Mr Iyengar's Birthday

JANUARY 2002

- 12-14 Workshop with Mahyar Raz

APRIL 2001

- 19-22 Junior Intermediate Assessment
in Victoria

JUNE 2001

- 7-9 Salt Spring Retreat
with Shirley Daventry French
- 14-17 Intermediate Assessment in Saskatoon

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society,
c/o Constance Barker, 1029 Holmes Street, Victoria BC V8X 2S4

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Country: _____ Phone: _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my Y class.

☐ Receipt Required.

Dear Yoga Centre Members

As 2001 comes to a close, so does your membership in the Victoria Yoga Centre. As we are a non-profit society, we have the policy that all memberships expire on December 31. In order to continue receiving our newsletter and benefiting from early and discounted registration for workshops, your memberships need to be renewed.

With a membership you help defray costs of publishing the newsletter. Your membership also supports training teachers, scholarships and our program of Iyengar Yoga classes and workshops. We welcome volunteers and new ideas.

Thank you for your past support. Please help us to continue the work of Yoga in Victoria.

Renew! Renew! Renew!

Member *Debbie*

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM:

Please complete this form and send it with your cheque or money order to the Victoria Yoga Centre Society, c/o Membership Co-ordinator, #202 – 919 Fort Street, Victoria, BC Canada V8V 3K3

Membership/Subscription fee is \$30 and renewable each January

Name: _____

Address: _____ Province: _____

Country: _____ Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

e-mail address: _____

☐ Do not mail me my newsletter during sessions, I'll pick one up at my class

☐ Receipt Required