



N E W S L E T T E R

☪☪☪ Fall—Winter • 2006 ☪☪☪

SAVE THESE DATES!!!!

February 9, 2007

Film night at the Iowa City Public Library;
sponsored by the Maitri Yoga Education Fund

5:30pm snacks and socializing

6:30pm Film about BKS Iyengar

May 11-13, 2007

Ninth Annual Friendship Yoga Retreat
at Prairiewoods, Hiawatha, Iowa

With guest teacher Mary Obendorfer,

Co-director B.K.S. Iyengar Centers of San Diego,

Senior Certified Iyengar Teacher

Why Do We Practice Iyengar Yoga?

Nancy Footner DIRECTOR, FRIENDSHIP YOGA

As students of Iyengar yoga we are in the unique position of having a curriculum that is simultaneously ancient and relevant; timeless and progressive. We are the beneficiaries of dedicated teachers, B.K.S. Iyengar, his daughter Geeta Iyengar, and his son Praschant Iyengar who through their own practice and teaching continue to investigate and discover; reevaluate and redefine what yoga is. On December 14th Mr Iyengar, his family, and his students all over the world will celebrate his 88th birthday. I was in India at the Institute for Mr. Iyengar's 84th birthday. It was wild! There were more people packed into a room than I even want to think about. As every year passes it gets to be a bigger party!

Geeta Iyengar has accepted an invitation to come to the United States to teach at the Iyengar Yoga National Association of the United States tri-annual convention which will be held in Las Vegas the first week of May. For more information you can check the IYNAUS website.

Guruji, (as he is affectionately called), is still very active, still practicing every day, still writing and occasionally teaching. He remains an inspirational role model. Yoga has become part of the popular culture of the western world, but the purity of the Iyengars' dedication and the intensity of their work can't be diluted by the commercialism that has turned yoga into an industry.

Light On Yoga, written in 1966 continues to be a primary reference for any serious student. *Light on Life*, Mr. Iyengar's most recent book, is exceptional for how clearly he weaves his nearly 70 years of practice and teaching through the fabric of yoga philosophy. He clarifies how the yoga postures are one aspect of a much larger system, a philosophy that studies the mind, and he delineates, in a completely accessible way, how we come to control and pacify our state of mind through this fascinating discipline.

As beginners we learn to use our feet and legs, hands and arms to shape and support the postures. We start at the periphery (the body) and seek to penetrate the core of our existence (the mind). Transcending mere exercise, the *asanas* challenge us to coordinate movement with bio-mechanically sound principles of alignment. We learn to be still, and from that stillness we begin to discriminate between extension and



"To a yogi, freedom implies not being battered by the dualities of life, its ups and downs, its pleasures and suffering. It implies equanimity and ultimately that there is a inner serene core of one's being that is never out of touch with the unchanging eternal infinite." B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on Life*

Approaching our first (Yoga) decade... together

(Our Thank You to Nancy)

Sue Lind & Lauren Lawrence

Sue Lind

My first yoga class was in the Zen Center. Shock was my first impression. My body no longer was there to do my bidding. Nancy had gotten me in the nick of time—or rather I had come to Nancy in the nick of time. In my file cabinet I had a stack of yellowing pages from the 1960's with yoga poses and articles extolling their virtues. Filing was all I had ever done.

Learning to listen is a skill that yoga teaches. I had gotten a bit rusty with that as well. The names of the bones and muscles also needed to be refreshed. I can still hear my old anatomy teacher, Dr. Dolly Dawson, trying to get origins and insertions of muscles to stick in my brain.

Learning to calm one's body, as in savasana, has come to my aid several times. It greatly helped during a MRI and during a three day hospitalization. My theory was an unstressed body would heal faster than an agitated one. It worked!

Consistency in my practice is still hard for me to attain. I just take it day by day, week by week, and decade by decade. Throughout these years Lauren has been my stalwart supporter. I'd probably be immobile by now with a head full of fluff instead of the philosophy of Patanjali.

I must go now and shorten my fingernails. Lifting my chest at all times!

Lauren Lawrence

A little over nine years ago I moved back to my hometown, Iowa City. Quickly approaching 40 I had been thinking about “doing yoga.” I didn't know what that meant but I did think that it involved stretching, an ability that had never come to me naturally. My mom was approaching 60-something and agreed to try it with me.

The luck of the stars was with us in having Nancy as our instructor. The fact that yoga did not become just a check mark on a “Things to Try” list but a part of our lives is a testament to Nancy's incredible teaching. Over the many years we have marveled at her growth as a teacher and her ability to find new and interesting ways to teach and reteach asanas. There have been many times when it has been hard to keep up a home practice, times with physical challenges and all of the demands that are life, but we have never thought about not having yoga and Nancy in our lives. I don't want to imagine what would become of us.

Yoga has also been a wonderful experience to share with my mom. Besides being so good for both of us, it is also a guaranteed morning every week that we save for each other and yoga. It is a bit hard on me watching her do some of the asanas better than I, but I keep hoping that I have some of those great genes.

Nancy talks about thinking of your progress in terms of yoga decades. If that is the case the next 14 months are going to be amazing.

Namaste



My Life With a Dog

Jen Dutton

Sally, my dog of fourteen years, passed away this summer. Our relationship predated my marriage and my children and she was my very first adult tie to a life of responsibility. No matter where I was, or what I was doing, I had to come home to feed Sally and walk her and I couldn't leave her alone in my house for more than a few hours, not without losing a couch, or a shoe, or a chair leg. Owning Sally suddenly meant impromptu trips to the Caribbean were out unless I took the time to find not only a dog sitter, but the money to pay a dog sitter. The cat I owned prior to Sally I gave unremorsefully to my brother before moving to Alaska and graduate school, but Sally, the day I bought her home from the Fairbanks pound, insisted on a regimen of unconditional love and the ties that bind.

Years later, Sally would fall asleep on my husband's side of the bed when he was not in it. Her routines were established when "furniture" meant a flattened futon and a pile of carpet samples, and "husband" was a joke my friends and I made about unlikely and unsuspecting men in bars. Sally's favorite position was splayed out on her back, her head elevated on a pillow, her hind legs open and her hocks touching. If I snuck up on her in this position and held my index finger an inch or so above her stomach, without even opening her eyes or flicking her ears, she would propel herself inches into the air and flip upright. It was impressive—the prescience it took for her to sense me coming and the spinal strength it took for her to overcome the gravitational pull of sleep.

Two of the spinal stretches in the lexicon of yoga are named after dogs, but it was Sally's *supta bhadakonasana* that best defined her. There were times when I came into the bedroom and found her so out of body that I began to fear she had dropped from the ceiling and landed that way. Though I am not capable of Sally's depth of concentration and though to take the *asana* reminds me of her in a wistful way, *supta bhadakonasana* is also one of



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my favorites. I like the opening up of my hips and chest, the impression that my center is expanding towards the world above me. I like the feeling that I'm floating, a small leaf boat on the current of experience.

Thankfully no yoga instructor has ever snuck up on me and poked me with an index finger while I was in this state. Instead, moments of bliss seem to be a part of what the practice of Yoga has to offer me, though it's clearly not the whole enchilada. There is work to be done, fear to overcome, stress, and anxiety to deal with. As in dog ownership, yoga has its fair share of metaphoric chewed backpack straps, walks in subzero weather, carpet scrubbing episodes, and even to some extent emotional losses. In other words, the practice of yoga is like a long-term relationship, the unconditional acts of love you bestow upon a good friend, and the blessings you feel when you grow closer to something that is larger and more complicated than yourself.

Jen Dutton has just signed a contract to have her first novel published by Harper Collins in 2007.

Why We Practice... continued

tension. Even as we age, we can feel our bodies restructuring, our posture improves, we become more pliable and strong. By focusing on the details of alignment our minds become cultured and clear. Pain and disability cease to rule our existence. We learn to shift our focus from looking out, to looking within. The mind's eye becomes sharper. We observe. We discriminate. We refine. As we sharpen our inner vision, our ability to concentrate becomes more pronounced. We learn not to be distracted. As we lift our chest, we feel encouraged to take in more oxygen. Our systems become revitalized. Our brain becomes revitalized. Our spirit becomes revitalized. We feel resilient and calm.



School Uniforms are *IN!*

Designed by N. Footner M.F.A.
Limited edition \$18 plus tax.



Connie Roberts models the new Friendship Yoga t-shirt.



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Dear Friendship Yoga Community,

As members of the Board of the Maitri Yoga Education Fund, we thank all of you who have helped make the Theresa Semel Scholarship Fund a success. Over the past two years, the Board has awarded scholarships to eighteen Friendship Yoga students. The awards have permitted these students to continue attending classes during lean financial times or to participate in weekend workshops or retreats that otherwise would have been unaffordable to them.

MYEF came into existence two years ago with a bequest from a friend of Theresa Semel, a longtime, dedicated Friendship Yoga student who had passed away after a long illness. Taking this gift as an inducement it was decided to establish a non-profit organization that would be a separate entity from Friendship Yoga. Over the past two years, Board member Craig Willis has been patiently filing the necessary



papers to allow MYEF to become a 501C3 organization, which would have allowed donors to the Fund to deduct their gifts as charitable contributions.

Concurrently, the Maitri (Sanskrit for friendship) Board of Directors has come to a clearer understanding of what, given our limited resources, our objective should be. Since Intro classes at Friendship Yoga are affordable and there are work-study and payment plans available for those who need them, we concluded that the Maitri funds should be reserved for special situations.

Letters of thanks from scholarship recipients convinced the Board that the students we can serve best are those who have progressed beyond the Intro level. We do hope that the possibility of assistance in the future will make it easier for new students to consider joining us at Friendship Yoga!

Since we are not offering aid to the entry-level student and therefore to the general public, we have decided to continue as a non-profit (as approved by the State of Iowa) but to withdraw our application for IRS 501C (tax-deductible) status. While we can't offer a tax deduction, we can offer our most sincere thanks to all the individuals who have supported the Maitri Yoga Education Fund and through it the Friendship Yoga community.

As the year comes to an end, we hope you will consider making a gift that will enable a serious student who has the motivation, but not the means, to continue their study of Iyengar Yoga at Friendship Yoga in 2007. With your support, the Maitri Yoga Education Fund will carry on with its mission.

Namaste! from Board members Kevin Berbaum, Barbara Eckstein, Cheryl Hetherington, Craig Willis, and Barbara Yerkes

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Maitri
Y o g a
E d u c a t i o n
F u n d

Please make your check payable to the Maitri Yoga Education Fund and send to 1231 Gilbert Court, Iowa City, IA 52240.

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Telephone/email _____ Amount: _____

Please specify if you would like your donation to be reserved for the Theresa Semel Scholarship Fund.