

May 2014

# Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada Newsletter/Les nouvelles de l'ACYI

## **In This Issue**

Dear IYAC Member

Q &A with  
Ingelise  
Nherlan

As you prepare for the Halifax Convention, we hope you can find a little time to read the inspiring stories we have for you in this issue.

1,000 Days  
of Home  
Practice,  
and  
Counting

Establishing a home practice is a common challenge, even for long-time students. Stewart Buchanan (Vancouver) offers, from his personal experience, a practical, effective, and "surprisingly easy" approach.

Studying  
with Father  
Joe in Goa

For a taste of India, see Mary Steckle's account of yoga with Father Joe in Goa, India - far from her home-town of Chester, Nova Scotia.

Donna  
Fornelli  
workshop  
report

Lastly, Kara Thorsen writes thoughtfully of a Montreal workshop with long-time senior teacher Donna Fornelli (Ottawa).

But first up, Ingelise Nherlan (Vancouver) responds enthusiastically to our Q&A. Her witty style and wise words are guaranteed to inform your practice and improve your teaching!

Assessment  
News

The upcoming Halifax AGM will be the focus of our June issue; Raya Uma Datta's superb teaching, the deep learning, the work, the laughter, the sharing, and, yes, the 'business' of our national association (fees, funds, assessments, bylaws, board changes).

Submission  
Guidelines  
for IYAC  
News/Les  
nouvelles  
de l'ACYI

Going to Halifax? Please - when you get home - send us your letters, reviews, and photos for this 'special issue.' (Deadline May 30th). We love to hear from you!

Meanwhile, as Guruji says, love, labour and laugh!

Karyn Woodland and Eve Johnson  
Co-Editors

## Q & A with Senior Teacher Ingelise Nherlan



*Ingelise Nherlan has dedicated herself to the practice of yoga since 1970. She has studied many times at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) in Pune, India, and continues to study with many senior level teachers.*

*In the late 70s/early 80s, Ingelise introduced Iyengar Yoga to her native country, Denmark, where she taught weeklong seminars. She was awarded a Senior Intermediate III Certificate from BKS Iyengar in 1997.*

*Ingelise's inspiring approach integrates the philosophy of yoga with asana and pranayama in an accessible way. Her teaching style is energetic and thorough, with a generous dash of humour. Emphasis is on discovering the hidden energies that lie dormant within the mind and body.*

*Ingelise teaches at [Room for Yoga](#) in West Vancouver.*



Canadian Intensive, 1977

### 1. Please tell us a little about your yoga background.

In 1962 I flew to Rangoon, Burma, where my fiancé, Bent, had lived for six months. We were married there. I met an American lady who told me that she studied at The Shwedagon Pagoda. Sadly, I did not join her there and missed out on learning from the monks. But her enthusiasm and interesting stories inspired me to open my eyes and ears to the concepts of spiritual philosophy.

In 1968 Bent and I, and our two children, Peter and Anetta, moved to a small community on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. No access by road; only boat or amphibian plane. At a social gathering a friendly neighbor came up and jokingly asked, "Why does Otto [another neighbour] stand on his head in a corner every morning?"

Otto, a rough and rugged gentle giant of a man, said to me, "You should try it!"

So I did try standing on my head. And a whole new world opened up.



Canadian Intensive, 1979

In 1970 we moved to Vancouver, and I found a yoga class taught by Maureen Carruthers who became my teacher and guide. A couple years later she said, "Everyone is aiming for Iyengar." I remember thinking, "Who is Iyengar?" My yoga reading until then had been *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, (now there is an eye opening introduction to yoga!), and Richard Hittleman's *28-day Exercise Plan on Yoga Asanas*. I took classes and practiced at home. And I read, and read, and read!

Donald Moyer would occasionally visit Vancouver and give us 'a class after the class,' (one half hour) introducing 'The Iyengar Method,' and what he had learned from his teacher in England.

I taught my first class in 1973 in an old school building one half hour drive from my home. Tuesday evenings. Long corridors. Cold and rather spooky. Six dollars per hour.

In 1975 I found myself in San Francisco for my first weeklong study with BKS Iyengar. (In those days, "Mr. Iyengar, Sir.") I was 35. I had an overwhelming feeling/knowing - This is it. I've come home! The rest, as they say, is history



*Ingelise and Guruji*

*2. Do you have a favourite story, or anecdote, about BKS Iyengar?*

Yes. So many! I should like to share a few.

1) After my first RIMYI intensive (1977), our group went to Mumbai, knowing that Guruji would travel there every weekend to teach in a school room. (Do I remember correctly, on the 4th floor?) Towards the end of class I was placed in a side room on a Setubandha bench. Time passed. Guruji came, and stood, hands on hips, as is his habit. He said nothing. Just the famous nod, as in, "Hhmm. What's up?"

I said something like, "I should like to stay." He replied, with a look of compassion, understanding, caring, and acceptance, "You must go home now. But you must come back." That moment is in my soul forever. And then the lightness, and the smile. "Now you can enjoy your flight."

2) Once in Pune, in open practice, I felt unwell and 'curled up' in a forward bend. Then a 'foot-kick.' Guruji. Again, no words, just the familiar, but unspoken, "Hhmm. What's up?"

I told the truth. "Everything inside of me is turning."

Guruji, with that chuckle (many of you will recognize), walked away. End of

moment. I believe I felt better.



Ingelise at the feet of her guru

3) In later years, again in open practice, a photographer was there. Guruji, who must have been in his 80s at the time, was holding Raja Kapotasana. The photographer and his assistant were discussing from which angle to best take picture.

I couldn't keep quiet. "He can't hold this forever," I said. "Take the picture!"

Oops. I could be in trouble. I waited until after the photographer had left. Best get it over with. Then Guruji left the hall. He said nothing. So I went for mango ice cream.

4) Once at RIMYI someone dropped one of the solid wooden blocks on my foot. It broke my big toe and my foot turned a nasty purple. Guruji looked and said, "Don't you think I have suffered? Do Virabhadrasana II!"

Class began. You know how they say it in 'show biz,' Ya had to be there. It hurt. I did not suffer. Toe healed. I learned.

As BKS Iyengar says, "Do your practice and everything will follow."

5) One morning after a grueling intensive class Guruji said, "Now you can lie down and relax, and you can't even do that."  
 And I am sure I hear him walking down the stairs, laughing to himself.  
 The famous: "The Lion and The lamb" - deeply demanding of us to learn, to understand. and also so light and easygoing.



See anyone you recognize here?

### *3. What is some of the best advice you have received from BKS Iyengar:*

#### *- for your teaching?*

Interestingly, nothing 'verbal' in particular stands out. You would go to class. You would absorb what you could. There was no "Anybody have any questions?" after class. As I think back ... Class was given. Teacher leaves. End of class.

I came to understand that we were meant to take responsibility for our own learning. Basically, "You come here to learn. Now learn how to learn. Don't come here to be spoonfed. What you didn't get today, maybe you'll get tomorrow, or next time."

We would gather after and compare notes of what we had understood and remembered. Yes, actually remembered from a class that ended only one hour ago! (The intensive classes were three hours and frequently longer; Pranayama, two hours.)



Halasana without height: the early days.

*- for your personal practice?*

In my late 40s I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Surgery, treatment, and more surgery followed. In 1990 Gururji gave me three poses - "Do these twice a day for six months, and nothing else. Then you will become so sensitive that even if one cancer cell comes back, you will know."

I took all the advice I could get from all sources. I trusted everyone treating me. But Gururji's advice gave me the edge, as when I practiced, it was me healing me. So even more than trusting, I came to do - and from there, to understand.

Isn't that the way? It is only from experience that we can truly know. Therefore, whether our health (on all levels), is strong or weak or anything in between, we must practice, as best we can, for body, mind and soul to remain whole.



Two years later: shoulder stand with height.

*4. What advice would you give junior teachers?*

Let go of the class plan. Only then will you find out what you know. Or, more

importantly, what you don't know.

Teach from Duty, Joy and Generosity.

5. Do you have any recommendations;

*- for those preparing for Assessment?*

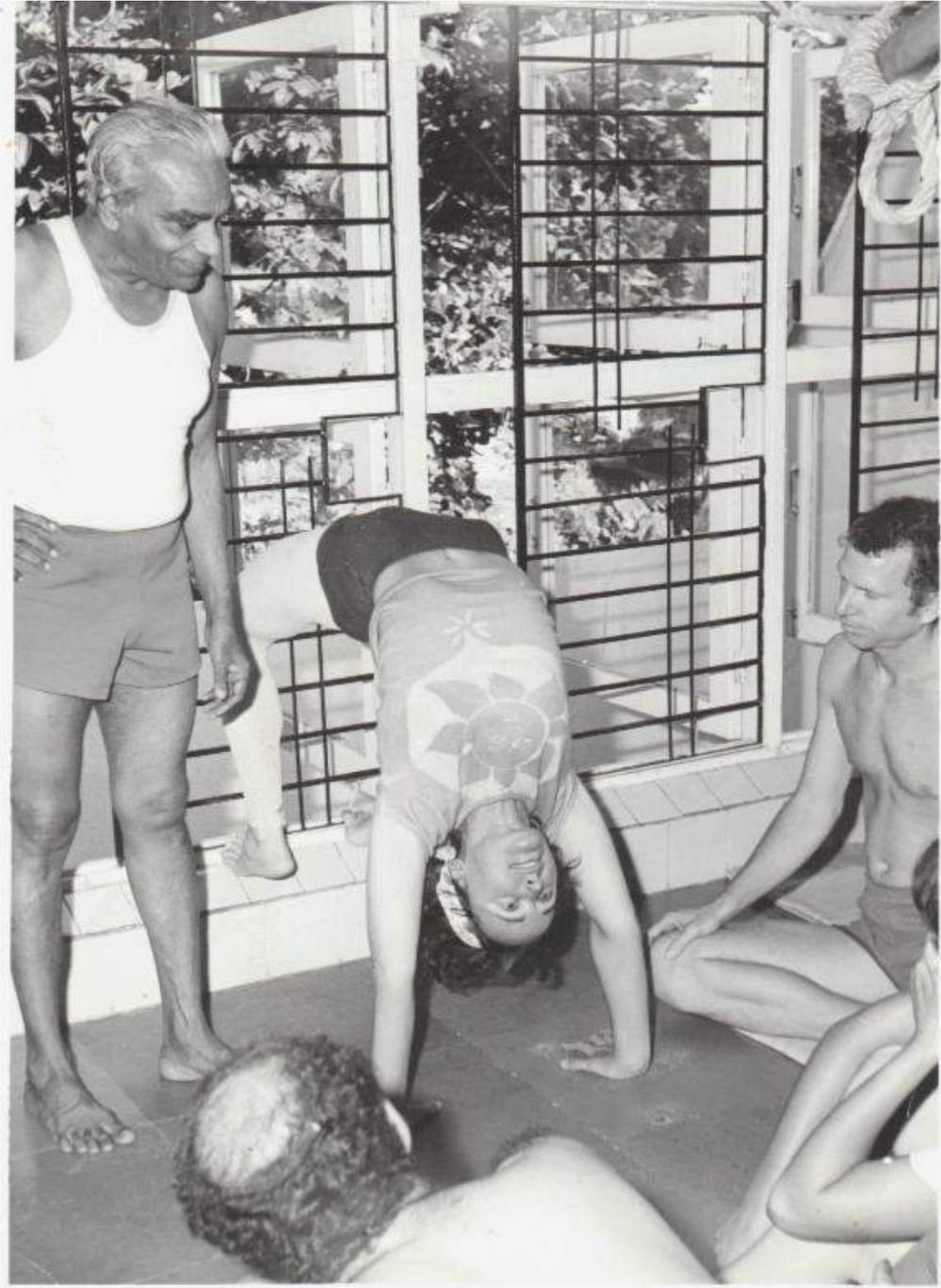
First: Walk in and know the assessors want you to pass. There is a need for competent and devoted teachers in Canada. If at first you don't succeed, try again. Don't let yourself get discouraged.

Second: Practise at least one level above your syllabus. Look at the photos in Light On Yoga (often!). Chose an asana from your syllabus; look through LOY and discover all the asanas that relate back to it. Even the most difficult of asanas had their beginning at the beginning of the book, so to speak. Gurujī's work, is right there on each and every page; sequencing made visible.

Third: Teach to the requirements of your level, but know more than you teach.

*- for those travelling to the Ramamani Institute in Pune?*

Go to Pune with no expectations. Rather, be open to new experiences - in abundance. The Institute is a magical place. To study there can be/is hard, confusing, painful, joyful, exciting, but always enlightening. You are learning from the source. Does it get any better? The more often I went to Pune, the more vast the learning field became.



*Backbends at RIMYI*

*6. What is your vision for the future of Iyengar Yoga in Canada?*

*Guruji's* lifelong example of suffering, seeking, succeeding can never be forgotten. Like anything in life, it may wax or wane, but the teaching of how to

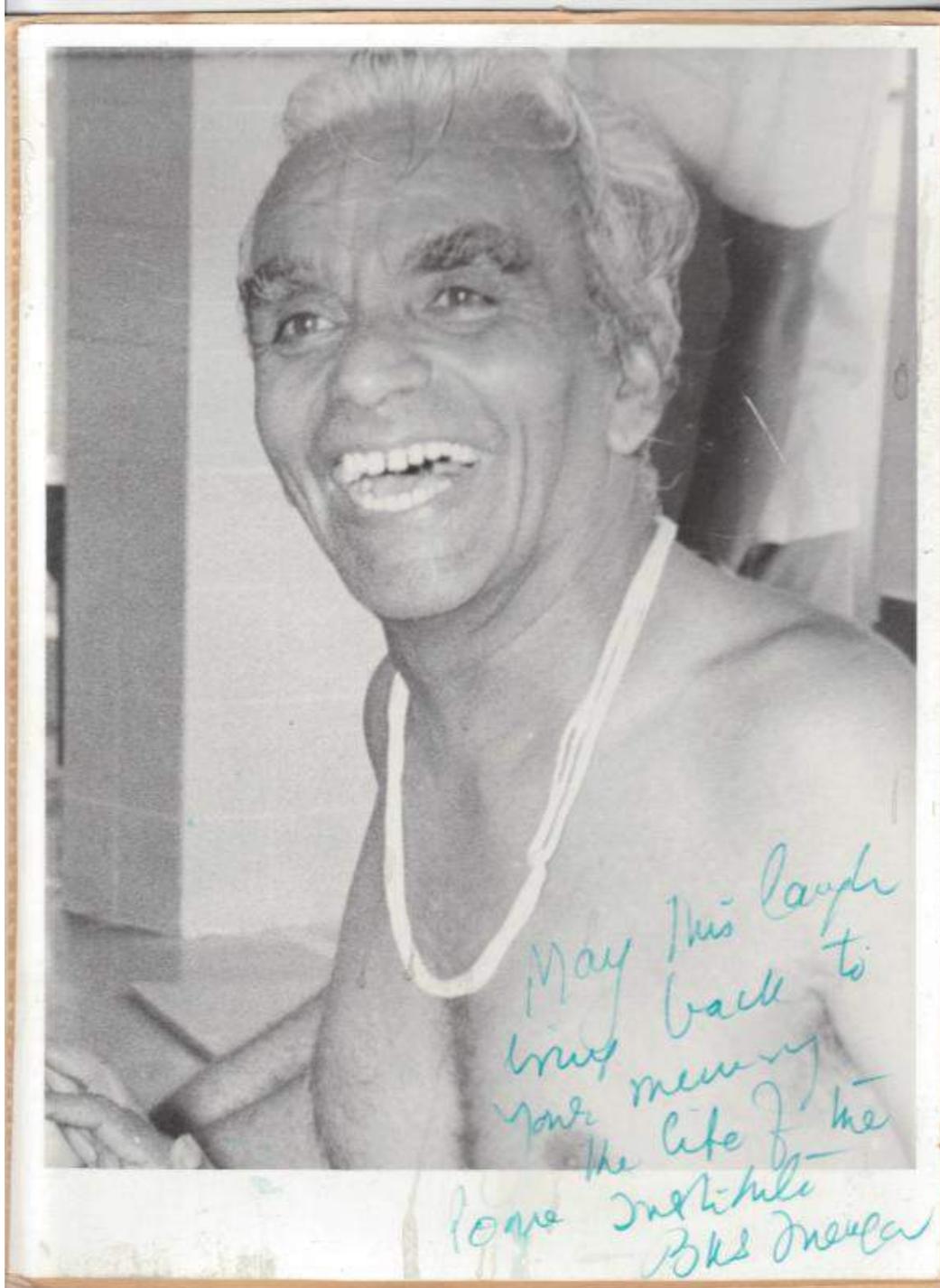
learn from yoga to live a more fulfilling life is here to stay. *Guruji's* teaching is becoming imbedded in the human consciousness, and made accessible through teachers, books, videos and much more. His impact will be long-lasting.

As *Geetaji* once said, "If it is not your duty then who's duty is it?" And *Prashantji* also said, "Not everything can be taught. You also have to learn." Which I understood as, "Go home and study. Practice, and evolve in yourself."

An old saying goes, "Nobody knows another person unless they have walked a mile in their moccasins. I would like to say it in the way of yoga. "Nobody knows another person unless they have walked a lifetime on their bare feet. That person is *Guruji*."

But perhaps the singular most important teaching of *Guruji's* is this: "From freedom of the body comes freedom of the mind, and then, the Ultimate Freedom..."

He wants us to learn and grow as individuals, finding ourselves within his precise teaching. From there we can honour his life's work and pass it on.



After one class, I asked Guruji to sign this photograph as he left the hall. He wrote on it, "May this laugh bring back to your memory the life of me," and added, "Pune Institute," and his signature.

Then he said, "See. Now I'm so tired I can't even write my name."

How can such unconditional, open giving not touch deeply inside?

## 1,000 Days and Counting: The Challenges - and Rewards - of Establishing a Home Practice

by Stewart Buchanan

Like many mid-level yoga students, my home practice used to be a little sporadic, and I sometimes arrived for a yoga class wishing I had practiced more during the previous week. Yet the thought of a daily practice was daunting.

Then, a few years ago I was at a pranayama class at The Yoga Space when my teacher, Louie Ettling, asked how many of us had a daily pranayama practice. Since only a few students practiced daily, Louie suggested that the rest of us try to do a little pranayama each day; even just five or ten minutes.

Around that time I had completed some 100-day projects with very positive results and was looking for something new to work on. So, on the way home from Louie's class that evening I persuaded my wife Gill, (who also studies with Louie), that we both try for 100 consecutive days of pranayama practice. The next day we began our journey.

At first we needed reminders about practice, and small notes appeared here and there around the house with a single word written on them - pranayama. We even got out of bed at around midnight one night and did the practice we had almost forgotten.

As the days passed and our practice grew, pranayama became such a part of our daily life that reminders were no longer needed. In fact, this was one of the first benefits we felt; the routine of daily practice - which we began to do simply as matter of course without agonizing over it. And the more days we accumulated, the less we felt like missing one.

As our pranayama was going so well I thought we should also try for 100 days of asana practice, and Gill, who had been practicing asana regularly for a few weeks already, agreed to join me once again.



Stewart Buchanan and Gillian Kent practicing Virabhadrasana II at Boundary Bay near Vancouver, BC

Our 100-day goals in both pranayama and asana practice were achieved surprisingly easily, and we found that even on the busiest days we could always make space for our practice. In fact, we both feel that it is on those really busy days, after a hard workday, or a long flight or drive, that we get the greatest benefit, and no matter how tired we are before practice, we are always glad we did it.

Other benefits of a daily practice for me have been many; my lower back problems are much reduced, my list of aches and pains is much shorter, heart palpitations have gone, and we have both found more flexibility, stability, and strength in the poses, as one might expect.

But there is something else that comes, almost imperceptibly at first, and that is the way the practice becomes part of the fabric of life, rather than an isolated event that takes place in a class once or twice a week.

I have also found that my daily asana and pranayama practice has become a support during the life events and challenges we all go through, and pranayama often feels like a barometer of wellbeing, and at times, a refuge.

Now that we have passed 100 days, we try not to be too attached to the number - it's about the yoga, after all. But just for the record, we are close to 1100 days straight for asana practice, and not far off 1200 for pranayama.

So, if you don't have a regular home practice, may I reiterate Louie's suggestion that you try a period of daily asana and pranayama. It doesn't have to be 100 days, it could be a week or a month to start, but do it every day. Once you have made the commitment, maintaining a daily practice may be less daunting than you think.

*Stewart Buchanan and Gillian Kent have been practicing yoga (for 8 and 6 years, respectively), in Vancouver, BC. The inspiration for their (now well-established) home practice comes from weekly classes with Louie Ettling at [The Yoga Space](#).*

## Studying with Father Joe Pereira in Goa, India

by Mary Steckle

In January of this year, I ventured on my first trip to India to study yoga with Father Joe at The Kripa Centre in Anjuna, Goa; a week-long workshop organized by Leigh Milne of The Sadhana Centre in Chester, Nova Scotia.



On the steps of Casa Albuquerque, The Anjuna Kripa Centre, Goa (Photo by Bosco Dsouza) Father Joe (back row, 2nd from left), Mary Steckle (2nd row, 2nd from right), Leigh Anne Milne (front row, centre)

I was nervous about the trip because it was a journey into the unknown. Would I like India? Would I get sick? Where were we staying? Would I like the people in our group? Would I be able to do a handstand? A lot of white noise was rushing around in my head.

As the week progressed the noise started to fade. Each day we practiced

asana for three hours in the morning and then ate a hearty breakfast served by graduate residents of The Kripa Centre (all the meals were delicious). Afterwards we had free time to relax on beautiful Anjuna Beach, to explore the endless stalls of the Anjuna Market, or simply to wander to our favourite café for a delicious coffee until it was time for the afternoon medical class and our daily pranayama practice.

Local people often joined us and, from time to time, we had a baby as part of our group. Hearing a babe coo and laugh while you are holding a backbend takes the heaviness out of the pose!



Yoga with a baby: it's lighter, even in backbends.

Although I had studied with Father Joe in Chester, Nova Scotia, and the instruction was not dissimilar, it felt very different.

"Breathe, and free yourself from your attachments," said Father Joe in his melodious voice. I didn't have all the conveniences and comforts of home. I didn't even have all the props I am accustomed to, but I felt an incredible sense of freedom and stillness. Perhaps the history of yoga in India envelops you and takes you inward.

At no time was I more aware of how incredibly fortunate I am than when the residents of The Kripa Centre treated our group to an evening of singing,

music, dancing, and a sharing of their painful stories, stories of how addiction had torn apart their lives and often their families. Nothing was more evident than the joy the residents felt at having another chance. This chance is the result of The Kripa Foundation led by Father Joe.

The respect, the tenderness, and the love these men felt for Father Joe was evident as they joked about and spoke about their mentor. The evening summed up the importance of Father Joe's mission. He works tirelessly to bring back a sense of self-worth to these people. Only by seeing Father Joe in his own environment can you truly appreciate his dedication to this cause.



Morning Tadasana in the Courtyard (Photo by Bosco Dsouza)

What a wonderful experience to have shared with an amazing group (including my husband). When you share bathrooms, common areas, meal times, and yoga at 6:30 in the morning, you develop a very special bond.

Thank you to Father Joe, to the residents of The Anjuna Kripa Centre, and to each person in our group for taking me to a different place both in my yoga practice and in my life journey.



Mary Steckle dancing with husband Gary Foshay (Photo by Bosco Dsouza)

*Mary Steckle lives in Chester, Nova Scotia and practices yoga with Melissa Schoales at Iyengar Yoga Halifax. Her experiences in India will draw her back there again.*

**Note:** Father Joe welcomes yoga groups to The Anjuna Kripa Centre in Goa. Interested teachers can contact him directly: **JOE H. PEREIRA**  
[frjoe.kripafoundation@gmail.com](mailto:frjoe.kripafoundation@gmail.com)

## Montreal Studio hosts Donna Fornelli for a Three-Day Intensive

by Kara Thorsen

Tim Ruddy of [planetyoga.com](http://planetyoga.com) in Montreal, our 'patron saint' of yoga workshop hosting, invited Donna Fornelli (Ottawa) for a three-day intensive in February.

My experience with Donna had been limited to assessments. During my own assessment I remember Donna questioning another candidate about coming back in Parsarita Padottonasana. She was looking for a specific answer; finally she had to give it: press the inner thighs out to lift the pelvic floor. Her answer has stayed with me through every Prasarita Padottonasana since, so I was looking forward to studying with her.

Donna has this smile that can break all dis-ease. She was encouraging and forgiving, yet never let us slack in our work. We held poses for long periods while she would repeat Asana is firmness of body, steadiness of intelligence and benevolence of spirit (Sutra II:46). Each time it brought us deeper into our practice, helping us understand our intentions through our actions.

"Svadyaya - study yourselves," she would say when we were in Adho Mukha Svanasana to rest our brains and bodies.

"Find what works," and, "it's not wrong," we were told when addressing different anatomical structures. "Be encouraged that you are here and doing the best possible for right now."



Donna Fornelli addressing anatomical structure; Kara on the left in the red tee-shirt.

Donna has a very personalized approach to teaching. Each student was given individualized instruction, making their practice undisturbed yet strong.

All who attended the workshop now have a special spot marked Donna in their

hearts, which surely warrants another session together. I look forward to being her student again when the moment comes.

*Kara Thorsen teaches at [The Little Yoga Room](#) in Montreal.*

## Assessment News: Congratulations to the Successful Candidates!

### **Intermediate Junior III**

February 7-9 \* TORONTO

Sylvia Guenther, Toronto, ON  
Lisa Towson, Dauphin, MB  
Samantha Lopeter-Lloyd, Fernie, BC

### **Intermediate Junior I**

March 21-23 \* KELOWNA

Photini McCullough, Kelowna, BC  
Lily Dos Remedios, Vancouver, BC  
Michelle Hagenson, Vancouver, BC  
Alisen Stewart-Milne, Vancouver, BC  
Bridget Donald, Vancouver, BC  
Diana Tsui, Toronto, ON  
Stephanie Tencer, Toronto, ON  
Zhanna Zeleke, Toronto, ON

### **Introductory II**

March 21-23 \* SASKATOON

Debbie Nordstrom, Saskatoon, SK  
Kari Dul, Edmonton, AB  
Jo Ann Telfer, Calgary, AB  
Nives Vilicic, Calgary, AB  
Brandon J. Overland, Vancouver, BC  
Natasha Tousaw, Vancouver, BC  
Karina Paradis, Abbotsford, BC

Thanks to Fay Gascho, Assessment Coordinator

## IYAC News/les nouvelle de l'ACYI Submission Guidelines

We welcome feedback, IYAC news, updates, articles, workshop reviews, interviews, recipes, and RIMYI practice sequences, (in either of our official languages).

**Next issue: June 2014**

**Love, Labour, Laugh IYAC Convention in Halifax**

**Submission deadline - May 30th.**

SEND TO: [kwoodland@telus.net](mailto:kwoodland@telus.net)

- \* Please keep submissions to 500 words or less.
- \* Single space between lines, and after periods.
- \* Please include your name, and a brief bio.
- \* We welcome photos (jpeg format).
- \* Please identify subjects of photos.

This newsletter is published in January, April, September and November.  
This year we are publishing a special post-AGM issue.  
We currently do not have a classified section.

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