

My yoga journey

In the 70ties I was teaching Jazz dance at a studio that was owned by a friend of mine, Elsbeth Erne. In fact, I took her classes in rhythmic dance. I loved it, but also liked the jazz dance. If I asked Elsbeth, if she would think about teaching some Jazz dance, she said: why don't you teach a class in Jazz dance? Oops, I was not expecting an answer like that. But shortly after that conversation, I was teaching 1 class, 2 classes and soon after that 4 classes a week. The people loved it and so did I.

Some years passed and I felt like I wanted to take a class myself in Yoga. Rita Nägeli was a well respected yoga teacher in town and when I start taking her classes, I felt so good. I noticed that my dancing improved as well. More centered and more flexible. That was such an eye-opener for me. It is fun to dance and get a "work out" so to speak, but the slow moving pace at yoga came to me as a gift from heaven. I loved taking the time to be in a pose and observe the breathing, noticing how calm the mind became and the effect it had on the body and mind. Rita was a great teacher.

Forward to 1983 when I journeyed to the States. Every time I saw yoga advertised I went to a class to check it out. I met wonderful people and great teachers, but I did not really like the yoga. I was not aware at that time that there where so many different styles of yoga. So I just kept on trying, staying here and there a little longer, but I was never totally committed to it.

I met some other teachers along the way, like: Louise Hay, Dr. Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dyer, Eckhart Tolle, Adyashanti, Gangaji, Ohriah Mountaindreamer, Byron Kathy, Carolyn Myss, Barbara Ann Brennan, Jean Hayner, and more recently, Debra Poneman and many more.

Each on in their own way brought me to the point I am now. And I keep learning and evolving.

When Deepack Chopra had just opened his center in La Jolla (CA), in the 90ties, I had to go to La Jolla for another business, so I brought his address with me. (Remember this was before iPhones) Deepack's center happened to be in the same street as the Hotel I stayed in. When I visited their facility, they showed me all around their beautiful center. Perfectly designed according to Ayurvedic architecture and placement called Vastu. It was a very harmonic and beautiful healing place. They offered me to use the meditation room while I was in town, which was wonderful. However, I asked If I could participate in the yoga classes as well while I was visiting there. They told me that the yoga teachers came from 2 doors down the street. So I went to give them a visit. It was called Master Yoga at the time. They had many classes going each day. So I had the pleasure of trying a few classes while I was in La Jolla. I loved the style, I loved the way I felt and couldn't stop thinking about it, even when I was back home again. That was quite an impression I had from that yoga class, and no teacher around the Chicago area was teaching it. I liked it so much that I flew out there 2 times after that first experience, for a weekend just to take some yoga classes. The last time

I lingered in the store a little bit, a lady that works there started to talk to me. When we discovered that we both came from the same country, Holland, we switched to our mother language. She asked if I thought about taking the teacher training. I answered, oh no, I am so busy with my skin care business, I wouldn't know how to manage that.

When I was back home again after that weekend, I went back to my clients and did what I always have done since 1977. Doing facials, reflexology, Shiatsu etc, etc. One day in the middle of a facial, the thought came up that I can do the Yoga training for myself, I don't really need to teach it at all. It was like a lightbulb went off, sure I could do that. And so I applied for the course, was accepted and started the training. It was intensive, and very long days and transforming to say the least.

When it was time to go home after the training, I did not want to leave. We had such a great group of people, 28 of them. I would miss them so much. But all comes to an end, and I went back home.

It was hard to get back into life as I knew it again, I did the best I could. One of my clients asked me when I was going to teach yoga. I told her that I was not planning on that. Well, that was not the answer she expected to hear. She said, you really have to share this with us. She knew that a local Hospital was planning to open a fitness center close to my house. They needed a yoga teacher. So here I was in December 1998 teaching 2 classes at the Palos Community Fitness Center. It was great, 20-30 people in the class. It was a good start. When I moved to Oak Park in 2000, I still came back to Orland Park to teach for a while. That was about a 40 min drive each way. Until I found a studio in River Forest on Lake Street. November 15, 2000 I opened "Heaven on Earth Yoga" and from starting at 4 classes a week, it soon became 8 classes. Plus many people that liked the yoga so much that they went for training themselves. It was and still is a great journey. We had many intensive trainings along the way with Master teacher trainers coming to the studio to teach, I loved hosting them all. It was a special time. Several of my students went into yoga training, most of them started at some point in my studio to teach. Which helped them to get their feet wet, so to speak, and then went onto their own journey. Now forward into 2021, I am still teaching. Things have changed a bit. From 2 studios, back to a home studio and now since COVID 19 teaching only on Zoom. It has been a wonderful journey. So many wonderful people came on my path and still walking with me. And believe it or not, I am amazed by the technology. By taking some online classes, I have met some people that now join the yoga classes on Zoom. Some "old time" students, that moved away from the area, also join on Zoom. So, from a physical studio address, the address has changed to "Any location in the world". This was unthinkable several years ago. I just love it. You can connect from anywhere, even when you are on vacation, you still can tune into the class. When you know the basics, you sure can accommodate and get creative with different props. Of course, the blankets we are using are a great support to your body and a wise investment, however, for one time or another you can substitute the props for a chair or cushions.

Connecting to the body has always been an important part in my life.
And the more I learn, the more I understand. The more I feel, the more I know.

Marianne