



The Yogini and I
By John Edmonson

Two or three weeks ago, my wife, Betty, and I had a conversation that went something like this:

"Hey, John, I signed us up for a Thai Yoga Massage class."

"That's nice."

"It's on a Saturday, between 1:00 and 4:00."

"Sounds good."

I could have been doing any number of things during that little discussion | reading a newspaper, watching "Hardball," sleeping with my eyes open | but listening wasn't one of them. I did hear Betty say, last Saturday morning, that I needed to be ready by 12:30 to go to "our massage class."

Say what?

Betty reminded me what a good sport I'd been to agree to do something "as a couple." Then I heard, with crystal-clear acuity, the words "yoga" and "three hours," and all I could think about was getting permanently twisted up like a pretzel and becoming an attraction in a circus freak show. On the way to Yoga Sanctuary in Windham, I mentioned to Betty how much I wanted to see the new Scorsese movie, "The Departed."

"Fine, pick a time," Betty said.

"How about now?" I asked.

Betty laughed. I died a little inside, worried that I wouldn't be able to exit the lotus position.

Walking through the front door of Yoga Sanctuary brought me back about 40 years, to the torture chamber euphemistically called the gymnastics phase of gym class. There were mats all over the floor, and I just knew that Priscilla Flynn, the owner and Yogini, was going to demand that I do the impossible | a backward roll. But I was wrong. Priscilla explained that yoga, the physical manifestation of an ancient Indian philosophy, is the perfect antidote for the high-sprung, stressed-out Western lifestyle. There's no "you must do this." It's more, "Try this in a way that's comfortable for you. If it hurts, don't do it."

It turned out that I didn't need to be a contortionist after all. This was a massage class, the focus of which was to promote relaxation, for the giver and receiver. My greatest challenge was getting comfortable in the "open diamond" position. I wonder if David Carradine's toes cramped up like mine did as he filmed that yellowbook.com commercial.

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Anyway, the three hours went by faster than any Washington Redskins football game. And I left happy and relaxed, not angry and tense, wanting to kick the television in. Who knew that a simple hand massage could feel better than a hot shower?

And want to know a sure-fire way to get your partner to moan in ecstasy and beg for more? No, not that way. Massage their ears. Yeah, you heard me. Have him/her lay on their back . Sit behind their head and gently, using a circular motion, knead their ears. Then, for the coup de grace, hold each ear between your thumbs and forefingers and slowly pull, letting your fingers ever so gradually glide across the ears. Call me crazy, but try it. You'll like it.

The session ended with a savasana. We lay on our backs with "eye bags" | think tiny silken beanbag chairs | to exert gentle pressure on our ocular region. I can't describe how good that feels. Would I like a warm blanket as well? Yes, please. Then, resting in a sea of blackness, Priscilla lightly struck the crystal singing bowl, an instrument that sent waves of melodious vibrations cascading through the room. I went to a mountaintop in Tibet and floated on my back in a natural hot spring. I'd still be there if Betty hadn't interrupted my reverie by telling me that Priscilla needed help folding blankets.

Before I go to sleep tonight, will I give Betty the "Roll ing Pin" or the "Jade Pillow"? Maybe a little "Cow Face" in between? I'm asking for the "Side Lying Back Pedal." These and other Thai Yoga massage techniques are yours for the asking at Yoga Sanctuary in Windham. Tell Priscilla that John, the wannabe yoga master, sent you.

John Edmondson is a teacher in Hampstead. His column appears Wednesdays in the Derry News.