

Teacher Profile ●

Joan Budilovsky; yoga on the Web

By Sharon Steffensen

When Joan Budilovsky took her first hatha yoga class as a college student in 1976, she never imagined she would return to the College of DuPage 20 years later to teach yoga to physical education students. Nor did she (or any of us!) imagine she would eventually have a yoga page on the World Wide Web.

Three years after her initial class, Joan moved to California where she discovered the Self-Realization Fellowship in Pacific Palisades. "Their philosophical look at life was so beautiful," says Joan, "but at the time I didn't realize it was about yoga. I just knew I felt very connected to the SRF philosophy, the meditations and the lectures." After reading founder Paramahansa Yogananda's book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, she made the association.

California offered other yoga experiences for Joan. She enjoyed several retreats in northern California at the Sivananada ashram yoga farm. "Those were outstanding yoga retreats," says Joan. "We were out in the country, we did chores together, we did yoga three times a day, different swamis lectured. It was wonderful!"



Joan Budilovsky adjusts student in butterfly pose at College of DuPage.

Back in Chicago in 1993, while driving down Kedzie Street, Joan spotted the words "Temple of Kriya Yoga" written above the blue door of a large, victorian house. She went in and there on the wall were photographs of Paramahansa Yogananda and the Kriya yoga lineage—the same photos she had seen at the SRF in Pacific Palisades. "I'm home!" thought Joan (although being a feminist, her mixed feelings about the "wall of men" also returned).

Joan didn't consider herself a potential yoga teacher, but when her hatha yoga instructor mentioned the upcoming hatha yoga teacher

certification class, she took the 14-month course. As she and her classmates practiced teaching the rest of the class, her shyness turned to confidence.

One would think shyness would not be an issue for Joan. She is a jazz singer and actress, having had roles in Woody Allen movies, off-Broadway plays, and television shows. Joan responds, "You're different when you're acting. When you're acting, you're somebody else. On my own, talking by myself, I was very nervous."

Although Joan still makes occasional commercials, most of her current activities are yoga-related. She teaches at

several locations: College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn; Eisenhower Jr. High School in Darien; the Wellness House in Hinsdale for cancer survivors and their families and friends; and the Spectrum Center in Oak Brook, a psychotherapy and counseling center.

Joan's newest class is at Lee's Martial Arts in Lombard. The center offers karate, aikido, t'ai chi, dance, gymnastics, and now yoga. Owner Sensei Lee feels yoga is a good adjunct to the martial arts classes, explaining the aim of martial arts is not to hurt others but to increase one's awareness, and that all the martial arts lead ultimately to meditation. In fact, he has created a special mediation room with a waterfall where the yoga classes are held. Joan is impressed with the children Lee teaches. "They have such a respect and love for him," she says, and plans are under way for children's yoga classes.

Joan believes yoga philosophy is vital to any hatha yoga class, but at College of DuPage the instruction is more structured. After attendance is taken—to which students reply "shanti" (peace) instead of "here"—the class learns about a yama or niyama (observance or restraint) or some other aspect of yoga philosophy. One day students may read what B.K.S. Iyengar has to say about non-violence; another day the

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reading may be about contentment according to Goswami Kriyananda or Swami Satchitananda. Students then discuss the philosophy and how it relates to their life, and later in the course they are tested on the material.

After discussing yoga philosophy, students practice asanas (yoga postures), then pranayama (breathing techniques) and final relaxation. Those who miss classes are required to write a paper on some aspect of yoga, one page for each class missed. Joan's class at C.O.D. is very popular, and most students sign up for Hatha Yoga II the next semester.

Joan's students and other kindred spirits can now contact her through her Web site which features a different asana (yoga posture) each week, yoga philosophy, a monthly vegetarian recipe contest that readers vote on, a quote of the week, and a question and answer section. "I don't have a lot of answers," says Joan, "but I have thoughts on the subject, and other readers have thoughts on the subject and it is open for dialog."

In addition to teaching yoga, Joan practices Swedish massage and conducts massage workshops. She has recorded two audiotapes, "The Art of Massage," and "Beginner's Yoga," currently selling at Border's Bookstores, Quest Bookstore in Wheaton, Magical Garden in Lombard, and College of DuPage. Her most recent project is authoring a 94-page, pocket-sized, illustrated book, entitled, *Fat-Free Yoga Containing All Natural Ingredients*, for which she is looking for a publisher. She is considering self-publishing and marketing the book with her tapes.

Joan's own yoga training has not stopped with her certification. She continues to take classes in Oak Park with William Hunt (one of her certification trainers), and is learning Kundalini yoga

at Global Yoga and Wellness Center in the Wicker Park neighborhood of Chicago.

Joan is happy with her new yoga career, which she describes as her "deepest love." But in looking back, she credits her acting career for increasing her understanding of ahimsa (non-violence.) "When you try to walk in the shoes of another, and begin to

unravel the motivating forces behind the actions, words, or thoughts of another human being, you can't help but feel compassion."

Joan Budilovsky can be reached at 630/963-1906, or at her Web site: <http://home.earthlink.net/~yoyoga/>.



Warrior II

1. Keeping the feet 3 to 4 feet apart, face the right foot out and bend right knee to a right angle.
2. Bring the toes of the left foot slightly in toward the right foot; push down on your left heel.
3. Bring your hands out to a T-formation and look toward your right hand.
4. Keep your shoulders pushed down away from your ears.
5. Keep the bag leg strong.
6. Breathe deeply and feel the strength gathering within your body.
7. Stay for a few deep breaths and then reverse to the other side.

Notice how open and focused you are. Your body is stepping forward, yet your back leg remains strongly rooted in this movement. As your strength in the movement builds, gather a sense of calmness, enabling your strength to be filled with wisdom.

(Excerpt from Fat-Free Yoga, Containing all Natural Ingredients)



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Mosquito bite yoga

By Joan Budilovsky

It was horrible, really horrible. I came home and vomited. It started out nice enough. In fact, rather lovely—6 A.M., waking up to my sweet cat curled up next to me and purring, birds singing outside, sun shining in. ...

I meet my yoga students at 7:15 A.M. for a three-mile hike through the Morton Arboretum. It is a beautiful, densely wooded forest where I take students each semester for a silent walk together. Each semester brings with it a new season and new students. Each walk is filled with treasured moments.

Just a few brief instructions from me before we begin ... "The walk is to be done in silence. If I walk too fast, feel free to walk as slow as you like. If I walk too slow, please do not pass me up. I will lead."

We walk a few yards up and gather near a beautiful tree by the pond for a few more words ... "The *niyama* (yoga observance) for today is contentment. To start us out, here is a poem by a Persian poet named Rumi:

"Be like the Sun for grace and mercy.
Be like the night to cover others' faults.
Be like running water for generosity.
Be like death for rage and anger.
Be like the Earth for modesty.
Appear as you are.
Be as you appear."

I ask the students to close their eyes. We all do. What a beautiful day; the breeze is lovely. I tell the students, "When you open your eyes, open them as if you are seeing the world for the first time ... now open your eyes." We pause, and off we go on our silent walk together.

A glorious walk in the arboretum. Big geese flapping their wings, squirrels everywhere, colorful birds of all sorts flying here and there, the roar of distant traffic reminding us of our time and space.

As I lead slowly and steadily, a few mosquitoes land on my sleeve. I gently push them away. We go deeper into the woods—and so do the mosquitoes. In fact,

I find myself walking into packs of them.

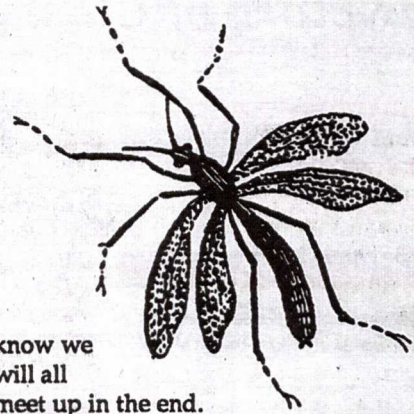
I breathe deeply and slowly wave my arms. This distraction I can certainly deal with. I remember the steady gaze of the swamis I have studied with. Certainly mosquitoes would not get the best of them (although I've never seen any swamis walk into packs of mosquitoes). The itch on my neck is excruciating. I instinctively reach back and unintentionally grab and kill three big mosquitoes—blood all over my hands. Yuck—and violence to boot. I go back to waving my hands; my walk quickens.

Deeper into the woods now, I look behind me and find all my students flailing their arms around (just like me). One student has his t-shirt raised over his head so his whole body is covered. It's a hysterical site. I burst out laughing. We can't turn back now; we are halfway through the woods. I continue on, faster. I silently ask myself, "How would Mahatma Gandhi handle this?" Although Gandhi was not born into a world of Starbucks Coffee, cell phones and road rage, he did have mosquitoes. Hmm. I breathe deeply again, I think I just breathed in a mosquito. I cough and I *strongly* move my arms around.

I look down at my feet. I am dressed in shorts and the entire front of my legs are covered with mosquitoes! I want to SCREAM! Instead, I start skipping—*fast*. Arms swinging with me. (It was fun being a child and skipping through parks. I don't remember them being like this, though.)

I look behind me. Some students have kept up with my pace, others I see further back, *all* scratching and itching. I remember Rumi: "appear as you are, be as you appear." Well, Rumi, this is killing me! All my studies in hatha yoga have prepared my legs for what I am about to do. RUN LIKE THE BEEGEEZUS OUT OF THESE WOODS!

I start running. A few star student athletes are close behind. We are laughing in agony. I look behind and watch the calmer students fade in the distance. I



know we will all meet up in the end. All paths lead to the same point and are of relatively equal distance. Feet, don't fail me now! Let's g-o-o-o-o-o!

We get to the parking lot. Wait a few long moments for all the students to catch up. We laugh and share a few thoughts. I instruct in a few ending yoga stretches—a few mosquitoes still lingering around. I encourage students to write their thoughts down on paper. The *niyama* for today: "contentment."

Joan Budilovsky teaches yoga to students at College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

Sequel: e-mail from Joan's student, Linda Barkoozis

Hi Joan, Before you feel too bad about this morning, it was a lovely idea. The arboretum is one of my favorite stops—often on the way to a busy school day at the college. Sometimes I leave to go for a walk during the afternoon, before evening class.

Regarding contentment, I love the arboretum so much that it was difficult for me to be upset at the mosquitoes for very long. In fact, after our class, I grabbed my book and bottle of water and decided to give the park another try to redeem itself. And it did. The mosquitoes went to bed, the breeze picked up, the sun burned off the humid haze, and I enjoyed a peaceful walk around the lake, ending at the picnic table to enjoy my book.

The moral of the story—the answer to what is contentment? Well, for me, contentment comes in knowing of what one really enjoys and being patient until the time is right to enjoy it.

FYI, your neck looked pretty bitten up this morning. A mild vinegar solution in tepid water sponged on the areas might help. You'll enjoy the added feature of smelling like a pickle for awhile!

Not for idiots only

By Sharon Steffensen

When Joan Budilovsky was first approached by Alpha Books, division of Simon and Schuster Macmillan Company, to write *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga*, she felt honored, yet perplexed. How could she, a yogi practicing non-violence, call anyone an idiot, not to mention a complete idiot? Joan and co-author Eve Adamson decided to put their egos aside and have fun with it. After all, Joan says, part of yoga is not judging a book by its cover. Apparently no one is offended because the books are selling like crazy. At Barnes & Noble on Clybourn they are out-selling *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Doing Your Taxes*, *Dating*, *Getting the Job You Want* and all the others in the series.

Joan and Eve approach yoga from a down-to-earth, keep-it-simple point of view, with a little humor added. Throughout the book, special boxes called "yoga jewels" offer tips, Sanskrit terms, precautions, and anecdotes about the fascinating world of yoga. And there are lots of pictures: amusing cartoons accompanying the yoga jewels, diagrams illustrating the proper way to do the postures, and numerous photos of Joan! (Macmillan refers to tall, blond Joan as a "real-life Dharma," as in *Dharma and Greg*, a popular sitcom about a yoga instructor and her husband.)

The book is divided into six parts, explaining what yoga is all about and why we do it, the history and styles of yoga, yoga philosophy, breathing practices, tips for finding a class, postures to build strength and endurance and to quiet the mind and body, incorporating yoga into your

life, yoga for special conditions, and yoga for children, the elderly, partners, etc. In fact, if the word "idiot" were removed from the title, "The Complete Guide to Yoga" would be accurate.

Georg Feuerstein, director of the Yoga Research Center, author of *Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga* and *Shambhala Guide to Yoga*, and internationally recognized authority on yoga, has written the foreword. And on the local level, Joan's teacher, well-known Chicago-area teacher William Hunt, is mentioned in the acknowledgments for his "high-caliber tech review."

Joan has been signing books all over the Chicago area and in Florida, where Eve Adamson lives. If you haven't been to one of Joan's local book signings, you can catch up with her at Whole Foods Market, Wheaton, March 14, 11 A.M.; Barnes & Noble, Rockford, March 15, 2 P.M.; and Barnes & Noble, Wheaton, March 21, 1 P.M. On March 18, from 6:30-8 P.M., Joan leads a special yoga seminar at Whole Foods Market in Wheaton, 6:30-8 P.M., \$15 advance registration.

How did Joan become involved in writing the book? Macmillan discovered her through her web page. They were so impressed, they called Joan to write TCIGTY; and now, because of the book's tremendous success, the publisher has commissioned Joan and Eve for another book. So far the subject and title are secret, but it's scheduled for release in the fall.

Meanwhile, check out Joan's web site, www.yoyoga.com. You'll find



Above: Joan Budilovsky at book signing at Barnes & Noble on Clybourn Street in Chicago. Below: Bookstore browsers and yoga enthusiasts are treated to a mini-yoga session with Joan.



yoga philosophy, an asana of the day, yoga tips, a vegetarian recipe contest, Joan's bookstore (a summary of all her books and tapes), information about Joan, and Joan's mail (Yo Joan!), where people write in questions about yoga and Joan answers them. And since the book has come out, Joan has been getting tons of mail from all over the country.

Go Joan!

Joan Budilovsky teaches yoga in the Western suburbs, including College of DuPage, The Wellness House, The Spectrum Center, and Summit Clinical Services. Joan is also a national certified massage therapist and a certified instructor of Swedish massage. She has written several books and recorded tapes on yoga and massage.

Coffee Karma



By Joan Budilovsky

I first started drinking coffee in grade school. The wonderful early morning smells of eggs, bacon, and coffee awakened my senses. Breakfast always included "half and half"—a cup of half coffee and half milk. After our warm and soothing breakfast, my sister and I had a long walk to school. In those days, even in the dead of winter, we wore mini skirts and go-go boots. Totally freezing yet totally hip, we made our 3/4 mile walk/run to grade school as fast as possible. We usually made it to school early. I credit our freezing legs and the 'half and half' for our extra zip in the mornings.

We did not use backpacks then, so we jostled our basic arithmetic book between our stack of Bobby Sherman and Davy Jones fan magazines as best we could. Although I struggled through basic arithmetic, I memorized the fractioned body measurements of Davy and Bobby effortlessly. For some reason almost every body part was specifically measured and reported in these

magazines. At recess, we traded magazines with friends, "I'll give you two Davys for one Bobby." Time out. I have begun to trace the root of a different passion...back to coffee.

As I grew up, coffee continued as a comfort drink. "Let's meet for a cup of coffee!" was an expression I often used. Coffee was a regular and important part of my life. I missed it when it was not there. Coffee energized me, got me movin' and groovin' to the city beat! I used it to its full advantage. If I was tired—a cup of coffee. Seeking consolation—a cup of coffee. Meeting friends—a pot of coffee. And none of this de-caf stuff...I preferred it strong, black, cream, and lots of caf-f-feine!

As the law of karma would have it, my yoga practice increased. My coffee habit became more of an irritation than a comfort. As my body and mind began the long and winding road of purification, I began to see clearly the relationship between coffee and my emotional swings. I'd find myself agitated before a cup and even more agitated after a cup. Just when I would decide to kick the coffee habit, a well-meaning friend would offer a new coffee flavor to entice my senses. Restrictions and resolutions are so downward-dog somber, after all. Second cup? Sure!

By now you are probably wondering, ok, yogini, tell me how you did it. How did you kick this habit? *Did you kick this habit? Well, I fasted for three days. I drank organic vegetable juice and fruit juices. In my mind, and probably in my body, I detoxified. This is not a pleasant sight, by the way. An agitated happy person does not a pretty picture make. This detoxing thing takes time ... lifetimes.*

What this story is meant to convey, is how strong the pull of karma can be. Even if we know with every apparent fiber of our being that something or someone is not helping us in realizing our fullest, brightest potential, there can be an overlooked strand somewhere that pulls us by a small thread into a karmic wheel of recurrence. Perhaps I kick coffee and instead start every morning with an agitation of another sort. Good morning, heartache?

We all come into this world on wheels of karma. People and situations do change in our lives. But, if you look closely, you will see the same themes playing out over and over again. Until one fine day you say, "Hey! I learned this one!" And then the wheel goes to a new level, and new lessons come on board—over and over again. Until one day you scratch your head and say, "Hey! Bingo! Got it. New lesson, please."

So, whether it's your love life, your career, your finances, or your coffee, it is possible to rise to new levels. I've seen it happen. It is possible, as dear Swami Beyondananda so eloquently proclaimed, to "drive your own karma." The first step is to hold onto the steering wheel and discover what karma you are driving. Different karmas require different handling. Through a consistent yoga practice, you learn to recognize and soften karma. Eventually karma is released. Does this mean you drive with no hands? No, no, no. That would be dangerous. After much study and practice, you learn to use your hands, your heart, your body, and your mind to build your very own karma.

And if, perchance, you find me someday reading a yoga book in some coffee shop somewhere, sipping a cup of herbal tea, seated next to a man who looks strangely like Bobby Sherman, you can be assured I drove my own karma there.

Joan Budilovsky is a yoga teacher, author, and Chicago area resident. She can be contacted via her award winning website "Yoyoga!" at www.yoyoga.com. She has requested that Bobby Sherman look-a-likes drive their karma in another direction.

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Book Review ●

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation

A book by Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson

Reviewed by Sharon Steffensen

Chicago-area yoga teacher Joan Budilovsky recently completed her trilogy of books with *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation*, following *TCIG to Yoga* and *TCIG to Massage*. Bernie Siegel, MD, writes in the forward that meditation has been part of the process of self-transformation for thousands of years. Joan and co-author Eve Adamson take the mystique out of meditation and explain it in every-day terms for modern meditators.

Starting with meditation as a stress-reliever, the book discusses the healing power of meditation, meditation as a path to self-discovery, and how mindfulness and living in the moment can transform our life. Joan explains the physiological changes in the physical body (as well as the astral and causal bodies) when in meditation. The book goes into detail about the body's energy (*prana, chi, qi*, etc.) and the chakra system, and how meditation on the chakras can increase awareness and balance specific areas of one's life. Self-quizzes are sprinkled throughout to enable readers to determine their stress levels, self awareness, blocks, etc.

In addition to meditation techniques, Joan tells how to set up a meditation space and seek out a meditation class.

Meditation poses, creative visualizations and breathing techniques are explained with accompanying photos and diagrams. The book talks about mantras, mandalas, diet and nutrition, yoga philosophy, auras, natural medicine techniques (such as Reiki, acupuncture, biofeedback and

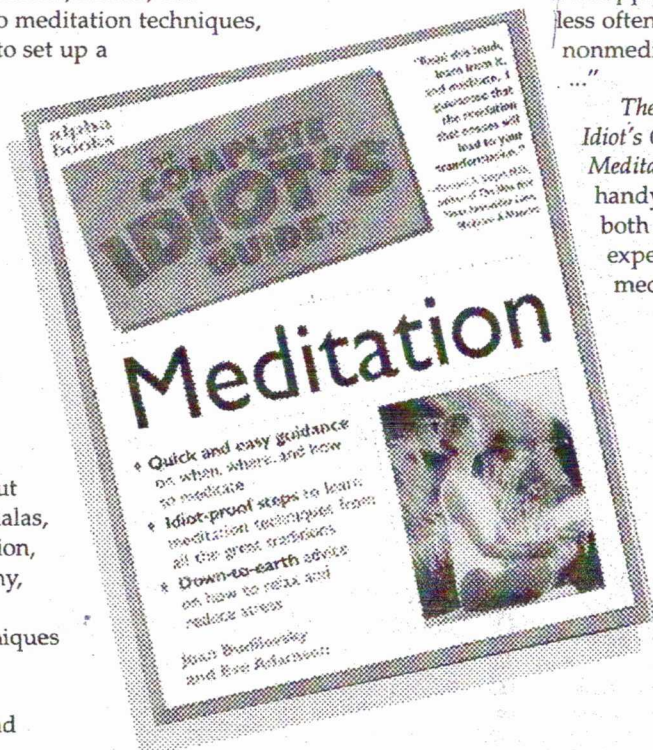
therapeutic touch), creative visualization, prayer and everything else you might want to know about that is related to meditation.

All of the world's great religions practice some technique for finding God, whether it is described in terms of getting in touch with one's higher self, turning within to find truth, or quieting the mind to experience the true reality. The book looks at traditions as practiced in yoga, the Kaballah, and African and Native American tribal cultures.

You can read the book from front to back, as a reference manual, or flip through and read the meditation wisdom scattered throughout the book in boxes called "bliss bytes" or "mindful minutes." They contain fun anecdotes and trivia about meditation around the world and throughout history.

Here's one: "... meditators between 19 and 39 years old visited their doctors 54.7% less often than non-meditators of the same age ... and meditators over age 40 visited their doctors a whopping 73.7% less often than their nonmeditating peers ..."

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation is a handy book for both new and experienced meditators.



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Notes from an Undertaker's Daughter...

By Joan Budilovsky

I remember an exhilarating game of double dutch jump rope with my sister, Jane, and our neighborhood friends Valerie and Mary Beth. We were about 10 years old. The sun was bright, the air was cool. We jumped and laughed and challenged each other to jump more. I remember looking up at the leisurely drifting clouds above us as my skip became faster and faster. It seemed the slower the clouds, the faster the ropes twirled. It took skill to jump between the two ropes, changing paces, yet remaining focused and steady—body and mind in harmony. The two opposing ropes came from opposite directions, uniting through the graceful movements of our bodies. It was an incredible time, an incredible game.

Afterwards, our friends returned to their homes and my sister and I ran around the corner to ours. Still laughing and beaming, we charged into our home. There, our smiles came face to face with the sullen faces of deep despair. A family sat in the front office mourning their loved one who had just passed away. A moving portrait of tear-stained faces, sobbing shoulders. Our home

was a funeral home. Our father, a most compassionate man, the Undertaker.

The reality of death flushed across my being like the winds had just flushed across my face. Stunned by the sobs, we quickly stopped laughing and bowed our heads. As quickly as we slowly could, we maneuvered our way to the staircase to run to our family apartment upstairs. I was embarrassed by my laughter halted so suddenly by the tears of the grief-stricken family. My father remained calm through our interruption. He softly introduced us as we scurried up the stairs. He never reprimanded us; instead he introduced us as his children. This was a scene that played out regularly in my childhood.

Later that day, "Why can't we live in a normal home!" I complained to my father.

"Because this *is* our home,"

my father would respond.

I didn't understand. I wanted to move. I wanted to be like Valerie and Mary Beth. I didn't want to be quiet because of a

lived in a funeral home. It never occurred to me then that someday I would be teaching "corpse pose." A pose that encompasses what it's like to transition from movement into stillness. Corpse pose (savasana) is an experience of relaxation within total awareness. It's a journey that takes us into the inner reaches of our



Joan Budilovsky in savasana (corpse pose)

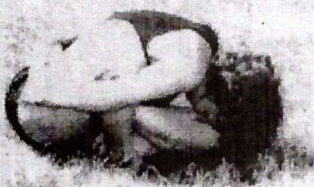
funeral going on downstairs. I didn't want to live so closely between joy and grief. I didn't understand these transitions. These shifts in balance were so difficult to comprehend—much more difficult than double dutch jump rope. Learning to control the body was relatively easy, but the mind....

Today, I study and teach hatha yoga—the yoga of balance. It has been important for me to understand transitions, or rather, to learn how to work with their inevitability. This summer, I am teaching preschoolers the delicate balance of nature. We are studying animals. How do animals move? What is it like to be in the body of a tiger, a butterfly, a dog? We act out these animals through yoga poses. We are studying the transitions of life in all its many forms. From elephant to cobra, from sleep to wakefulness. It's been many years since I

souls. It is a journey my father introduced me to many years ago. Two sides of the coin intimately connected ... life/death.

Joan Budilovsky is writing the third edition of The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga and 2nd edition of The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation, which will be in stores hopefully by Christmas. Joan writes a column about yoga for Suburban Life newspapers and served as U.S. consultant to B.K.S. Iyengar's Yoga, the Path to Holistic Health. She has also self-published several books and audiotapes Visit Joan's award-winning website: www.yoyoga.com

Yoga with Joan



Check out Joan Budilovsky's award-winning "Yoyoga!" website for many more books and tapes: www.yoyoga.com

<i>The Little Yogi Water Book, yoga poses in water</i>	\$7.50
<i>The Little Yogi Energy Book, yoga poses & chakras</i>	\$8.00
<i>Fat-Free Yoga</i> book of postures & principles	\$8.00
"Yoga with Joan," one-hour hatha yoga audiotape	\$10.00
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Journey of a Yoga Teacher

By Joan Budilovsky

I walk into the classroom with ease and comfort within my body. The room has a glow of things to come. I am early before any students arrive. I spend some time in silent meditation. As students begin to enter the room, I greet them with joy and full awareness, still very close to an inner core of understanding I have glimpsed in my silence. I observe each person around me, not rushed—each person taking my full attention. I observe their outward expression and then deeper, past their physical appearance. I glimpse the connection to this inner core of understanding. I see a deepening inner beauty radiating from each person before me.

"Can you bend forward in half?"

My body freezes. Where am I? A student is standing directly before me.

"Yes," I respond. Confounded by my ego. Questioning my confidence. Can I really? This is



Joan Budilovsky bending forward.

degrading. I realize I am being judgmental. This person does not know me, does not know where I have just been. Where have I been? I am here now confronted by a wall.

"Show me," she says.

I look at her. I lower my eyes in embarrassment. I realize I must prove my worthiness to teach. What am I teaching? I take a deep breath and bend forward, releasing my ego to her expectations...to my

expectations. I feel the puppet master lowering my strings. I bend my knees knowing that this is not the forward bend she was expecting. I rest my nose on my knees. Why am I doing this? She asked, I responded.

My ego fades in and out. As it enters me, I am able to see it fully and not judge it. I easily let it go, realizing that it does not define my existence. I inhale back up and the student has now melted into the background of other students. I take some deep breaths and remind myself of that distant core of understanding. I know it exists, where did it go?

I ask students

individually how they are, and when they answer, I listen. I try to remember their responses so that I may later address their concerns, their troubles, their joys, more fully within the expression of what I am here to teach.

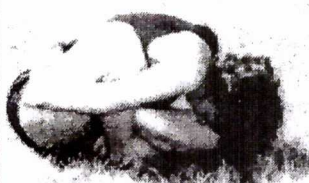
I turn my inner ear to the harp, and from deep within I strike meditative notes. Notes that are beginning mantras reflective of the experiences before me. We sit quietly and

begin to focus on sound. This sound becomes a wave in the room, stirring our hearts to movement. I move along each student, privately tutoring each student, resonating the sounds and flowing into postures that their individual bodies are comfortable in. I relinquish preconceived ideas of what a pose should be or do. I let the stir of the student's heart guide my instruction and further my understandings—our hearts beating as one.

I observe competitive thoughts and I do not let them guide me. I flow out of these thoughts and bring my mind and body back to this glimpsed core of understanding. This core that guides my deepest being. A being that I am comfortable with and wanting to share. A being that when I share, becomes one. Om. Om Namah Sivaya. Om.

.....
Joan Budilovsky is the author of three national, best-selling books in the "The Complete Idiot's Guide" series: *TCIG to Yoga* (now in its second edition), *TCIG to Meditation and TCIG to Massage*, and has self-published several other books and audiotapes. She writes a column about yoga for *Suburban Life* newspapers and served as U.S. consultant to B.K.S. Iyengar's *Yoga, the Path to Holistic Health*. Joan can be reached at www.yoyoga.com.

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The Wicked Witch of the West Wing

By Joan Budilovsky

I follow the yellow-lined road to the emergency room and enter the land of the hospital. It is a foreign land that makes me quickly long for home. I rush to my mother's bedside in intensive care. I am shocked to find her in such poor health. A nurse briskly tells me I can't stay long. Her stern words turn into a blur. I hold my mother's hand. I am not going anywhere. The nurse tells me again I must leave. I look at her. She oddly begins to resemble the Wicked Witch of the West. I stand firm. Another nurse comes by and in response to her gentle coaching, I reluctantly move to the waiting room.

While in the waiting room, I observe the large paintings of men in charge of the hospital. Which one is the real Wizard? Which intensive care curtain is he hiding behind? I remember back a year ago when my mother was in another life-and-death struggle. We were at this very same hospital. There was a beautiful, kind nurse who comforted us then. I even wrote

a letter of recommendation for her to the president of the hospital. Perhaps this kind nurse is here tonight! I pick up the hospital phone and try to locate this nurse. I am told she will be working from 11-6 the next day. A deep breath follows in knowing I will be seeing her gentle face tomorrow in this foreign land. Tired and scared, I slowly drift away into a deep sleep in the waiting room chair.



Maggie Hamilton, the original Wicked Witch of the West in the "Wizard of Oz," and a friend of Joan Budilovsky.

Upon awakening, the beautiful, kind nurse from my past walks up. I am so truly happy to see her gentle face. Her eyes shining brightly.

I jump up from my seat, "Remember me?" "Of course I remember you!" she replies.

I give her the biggest heart-felt hug. It is such a relief to see her steady presence amidst all the turmoil of personalities around me and in me. I feel true love for this kind nurse. She starts telling me that my mother is doing much better and that she is sorry she appeared cold last night. She was under a lot of stress....

Aaaaaaah! It's the WICKED WITCH! In my exhausted, delusional state, I thought she was the good nurse from the past! I begin to sob.

"I'm sorry, I c-c-can't help it," I sputter through my tears, embarrassed by my obvious weakness.

She quickly comforts me and tells me she understands how concerned and exhausted I must be. She does not know that I am so exhausted I thought she was someone else! She hugs me. Not a phony hug, but a hug that radiates sincere warmth and kindness. My fear, my defenses, melt away.

From that point on, the nurse of the west wing went out of her way to answer my questions and address my concerns. She continued to be caring to my sick mother. Her eyes met mine as a kindred spirit. I am thinking of writing a letter of recommendation.... Removing veils of illusions. Uncovering satya—truth. There's no place like om.

Joan Budilovsky is the author of three national, best-selling books in the "The Complete Idiot's Guide" series: TCIG to Yoga (now in its second edition), TCIG to Meditation and TCIG to Massage, and has self-published several other books and audiotapes. She writes a column about yoga for Suburban Life newspapers and served as U.S. consultant to B.K.S. Iyengar's Yoga, the Path to Holistic Health. Joan can be reached at www.yoyoga.com.

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 May 10-13, Jampa Kalsang will be in Madison, Wis.

Lectures held at 6:30pm, 6073 N. Paulina, \$15; personal consultations, \$120. Call or email for appointment, giving date, time and place of birth.

Jampa Kalsang is the co-author of "Tibetan Astronomy and Astrology" and is the author of "Tibetan Astro-Science," released by HH the Dalai Lama in 2001.

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The Great Esalen Escape

By Joan Budilovsky



Joan Budilovsky

It was the nudity that first attracted my attention—unashamed, open, uninhibited. I had heard of Esalen in this context. A retreat center cloistered in the cliffs of Big Sur, California. An oasis from the superficial constraints of the city. A place where people went to shed their clothes as they shed their illusions. A peaceful environment of workshops and transcendence. A place I didn't have the guts to go to.

So, it came as somewhat of a surprise that 13 years later, I actually did go to Esalen, wanting to shed illusions and become a truer expression of myself. The matter of shedding clothes had little to do with my visit. True, I saw clothes as symbols. However, I'm not an exhibitionist. Nor is Esalen a nudist camp. It simply has hot mineral baths on the far side of the property, where clothing is optional and all guests are welcome. I reasoned I didn't have to partake of the baths if I didn't want to.

I went to Esalen for a week-long yoga retreat given by Thomas Fortel. Although I had

been a yoga instructor for many years, I went as a beginner. I had broken my kneecap a year ago. Prior to that, the practice of yoga poses was becoming less interesting for me. The kneecap gave me an excuse to stop teaching yoga altogether. Now, here I was at a yoga retreat ready to explore a possible reentry into the physical aspects of hatha yoga study.

Esalen is three hours from San Francisco and six hours from LA, nestled along the cliffs of the ocean with breathtaking views of nature



Joan Budilovsky in warrior 2 pose (*virabhadrasana*).

all around. I loved watching the surf from the high cliffs, the strong waves flexing into gentle curves. I also had a bird's eye view of the seals frolicking in the surf below. I watched as they jumped over each other, comical faces bobbing in and out of the strong waves. (It took me some

time before I realized I was really watching seaweed. This was just one of the many fascinating things that this Midwesterner uncovered in Shangri-La.)

The workshop was entitled "Engaging the Hero's Journey." Yes! I relate to a theme of the warrior within—uncovering the inner strength of a yoga pose as compared to the outer restraint. Outside of the cloisters of Esalen, practicing yoga was becoming more difficult for me. It was not what it used to be—what with yoga kits, yoga mats, yoga clothes, yoga this, yoga that. Long gone were the days when I would tell people I did yoga and they would respond, "What's that?" Now the question is, "What kind?" Bikram, Iyengar,

Anusara, Kriya, Ananda, Yoyoga... (Yoyoga, you ask? That's a name I made up for the yoga I taught.) Living in a society where yoga was marketed as the way to a perfect body ran counter to my understanding of what "yoga" meant. Yoga = union of body/mind/spirit. Yoga does

not mean body perfection. Finding myself regularly judging how far my head could lower to the ground in a forward bend was discouraging me from continuing my practice. As my head got lower, my ambitions grew stronger, my competitive ego thrived and my realization of yoga grew ever more distant. Maybe this workshop in this magical retreat of Esalen would help me get back on track?

"Open your heart," Thomas called to us. I felt divine love radiating around and within the room, yet I was grounded in physical reality. Balance (hatha) was a continual theme. He explained in detailed anatomical terms the way to hold the body in various yoga poses.

"You want to go up into handstand?" Thomas asked, as I sauntered into the room. His blue eyes, intense and focused, called me to attention.

"I need a wall." I thought I needed another body, too.

"I'll be your wall," he confidently replied. In a matter of seconds, I was up in handstand in the middle of the room. It was heroic! I'm still trying to figure out how that happened. I came back down into child's pose and listened to sounds of mantra around me. The use of poetry, mantra, and music accented the class and supported the realized understanding that the body is simply a vehicle, a tool for a deeper expression of one's truer self. Artistic expressions were interwoven throughout Thomas's teachings like an exquisite embroidery.

As I regaled in the daily pranayama, the chanting, the poses, more than once I felt an energy soar within and settle around me. It was like a runner's high except it wasn't in the activity that it happened. It happened as I sat quietly in

meditation after a thorough class of asanas. Maybe someday I will be able to put into words exactly what happened. All I can say now is that my heart opened. It radiated. It magnified.

Did I end up going to the nude mineral baths as well? Yes. Did I feel inhibited going? Yes. Though the inhibitions soon dissolved and it became a more beautiful experience than I expected it to be. The illusions evaporated as the waves swelled steadily below. We all need a retreat now and then. A retreat that helps us explore illusions—physically, mentally, emotionally,

spiritually. A retreat that helps us become closer to our inner self, our radiant inner beauty. A retreat that helps us discover yoga.

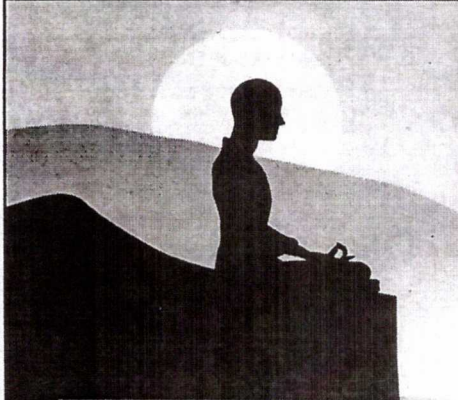
Information about Esalen workshops can be found at www.esalen.org, Thomas Fortel's workshops at www.yogawiththomas.com and Joan Budilovsky's workshops at www.yoyoga.com.

Joan will be participating this year in Borders' Spring Educator Appreciation Weekend,

Friday, March 28 through Sunday, March 30, when Borders all over the country will offer all educators a 25% discount on most items. Joan will be there to discuss and sign her books at the following times and locations: Thursday, March 27, 3-5 P.M., 150 N. State Street, Chicago; Saturday, March 29, 2-4 P.M., 830 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Beginning in May, Joan will be doing a massive booksigning blitz around Chicago for the third edition of Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga and the second edition of CIG to Meditation. Joan and her mother will be doing book signings together around Mother's Day at several suburban Borders to promote her mother's new book entitled My Mother Helena.

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YogaNews •



Joan and Leona Budilovsky

Yoga teacher and author Joan Budilovsky and her mother Leona Budilovsky will discuss and sign their new books on Mother's Day weekend and other dates. They will be celebrating the third edition of Joan's *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga* and the second edition of *TCIG to Meditation*. Leona Budilovsky is a new author of the heartfelt autobiographical novel, *My Mother, Helena*. The book signings will take place at the following Borders Bookstore: Saturday,

May 10, 4 P.M., Michigan Ave. store; Sunday, May 11, 2 P.M., LaGrange; Sunday, May 25, 2 P.M., Oak Brook; Sunday, June 8, 2 P.M., Oak Park; and Sunday, June 22, 4 P.M., Norridge. Congratulations to Joan and Leona!

Joan also writes a yoga column for the *Suburban Life* newspaper. See her award-winning Web site: www.yoyoga.com.

Yoga for Hope, held Saturday, April 12, was a big success! More than 30 yoga studios and fitness clubs participated in the City of Hope Cancer Center fundraiser, which raised more than \$22,000 for cancer research from yoga classes and an evening celebration at Transitions Learning Center. The evening event was nurturing and loving, and the energy was positive. Honorary chairman and yoga teacher Paul Weitz led a group meditation, Drone

Liberation supplied music and Devi 2000 led kirtan. A delicious vegetarian meal was catered by Food for Thought. Plans are already being made for 2004.

The Edward Cancer Center now offers free yoga classes for its patients on Thursday evenings, 6 to 7 P.M., at 120 Spalding Dr., Suite 409, on the Edward Hospital campus in Naperville. The instructor is Rhonda Opfer, who is volunteering her services.

On May 10, Edward Health & Fitness Center at Seven Bridges will host two yoga workshops led by Gabriel Halpern, director of the Yoga Circle. From 11 A.M. to 1:30 P.M., Gabriel will introduce a rigorous practice that focuses on yoga "tapas," a term that describes the fiery purification that accompanies focused physical effort. From 2 to 5 P.M., Gabriel will present

information on the art of teaching yoga. The workshop is open to teachers, apprentices and serious students, who will have an opportunity to teach and receive feedback on their presentation. For members, the cost is \$29 per session, or \$49 for both; for nonmembers, the cost is \$49 per session or \$79 for both. To register, call Tracey Carr, 630.646.5922.

Kalapriya, Center for Indian Performing Arts, presents "21 AD Asia," a fusion program curated by Pranita Jain, which explores modern and traditional dance forms of India, Indonesia and China. The performances will be held on Friday, May 9, and Saturday, May 10, at 8 P.M., and on Sunday, May 11, at 7 P.M. at Links Hall, 3435 N. Sheffield, Chicago. Admission is \$12, \$10 for seniors and students and \$5 for people under age 18. Call 773.281.0824 for reservations.



Gabriel Halpern
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Report from Pune w/Done Gura, Sun., 5/18
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- At peace vigils we will chant different versions of Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti and carry a banner of Yoga for Peace.

First meeting is Friday, May 9th, at 7pm in the Logan Square area. Call 312-409-9898 to register or email mdolan@angelfire.com.



A Love Letter to the Phone Company

Dear Phone Company,

It was a hassle waiting for you to repair our phone lines. We'd been without phone service in our home for three days. I had lots of work to finish at the office, yet I had to wait an indeterminate number of hours at home for your repair service to arrive. I know your time is valuable, but please permit me to take just a moment of it now to tell you what happened with my time that day. Annoyed with you, I sat down to read the paper. That sure didn't make me feel any better!

Upstairs, I heard a loud yelp. I wondered what my two cats had gotten into this time. I went upstairs to find my one cat under the bed and the other staring at him from across the room. Obviously, they got into a little tussle. I talked to them softly, felt the situation had become calm, and retreated to my cozy chair and angst-producing newspaper.

As I perused the troubles overseas, one of my cats limped over to the couch across from me. Why was he limping? I came closer. He was breathing very heavily. One of his front paws hung loosely. It looked like he'd broken his leg! Cats are incredibly agile. I never thought about either cat

breaking anything in their bodies; they were too busy breaking things *outside* their bodies. (Cats have such gentle ways of reminding us to be less materialistic.)

I immediately picked up the phone (which amazingly was working!) and called my vet, who referred me to a closer vet, who referred me.... Eventually I found someone who could help. As I was on the phone making these calls, I saw the phone repairman outside. For a brief moment I thought of going to speak to him, but almost immediately I got called back into the cat crisis at hand. This repairman obviously fixed the problem well, because there I was on the phone making numerous emergency calls. Ultimately, I got my cat the help he needed. It turned out not to be a broken paw, but an even more serious problem with his heart, which needed immediate attention.

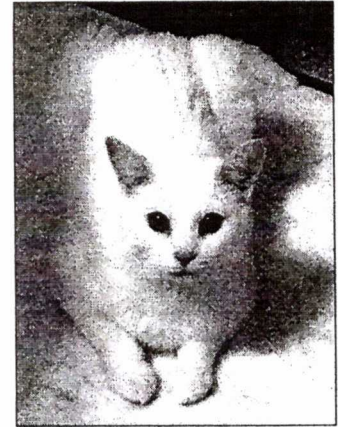
As irritated as I originally was with you for keeping me from going into the office that day, I realize now my presence at home waiting for your repair people enabled me to deal with my poor cat's medical crisis. Even irritations can be blessings in disguise. In fact, my husband often tells me to be grateful when hassles arise,

because they are reminders of qualities we need to develop in ourselves. I needed to learn to transcend defeat, gain perspective on disruptions in my daily life and act with compassion.

Even annoyances like waiting for phone repair service can be reminders that every moment is precious. With this awareness, one moment, even an irritable one, can save a life. The Rolling Stones understood this when they sang: "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometime you just might find, you get what you need."

So, thank you dear Phone Company. Because of your service—and lack of service—you helped to save my cat's life.

Sincerely, Joan Budilovsky



Simba

Joan Budilovsky is the author of several books, including The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation, TCIG to Massage and three editions of TCIG to Yoga. See her award-winning Web site, www.yoyoga.com.

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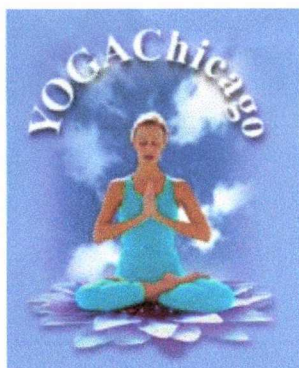
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Benny's from Heaven

By Joan Budilovsky



Shhhh.... I've something to share with you that is so intimate and special. It's best shared in a quiet space--a space where anything is possible and the very thought of these possibilities causes one to pause in profound silence.

This is the experience I share every Tuesday morning with my 8-month-old son, Ben, and our yoga teacher Yoli Maya Yeh. Yoli is the kind of yoga teacher you search the globe for and then find a few blocks from where you live. Hers is the kind of class you never want to miss and will walk to in the rain or snow or sunshine.

Yoli teaches numerous yoga classes for every age of childhood, from prenatal to baby to full-grown kids' yoga. The special class I attend is for mommy and baby. It's Ben's first yoga class of his new life and my first in my new life as a mother. Motherhood feels like a new lifetime for me, and so my yoga studies begin anew.

We live in a small apartment in Evanston where babydom rules, with hardly enough room for Benny to crawl, let alone do yoga poses with mommy and daddy. Nonetheless, we try our best, but coming to Yoli's class, where nothing has to be moved to make yoga space, is a relief in and of itself. And on top of this, to be taught by such a gifted teacher, Benny and I feel like we are in yoga heaven! Of course, babies are so close to heaven already, so doing yoga with Benny just makes me feel a bit closer, too.



Yoli teaches at Boocoo Café (1823 Church Street), a cafe Ben and I happened upon on one of our daily buggy strolls. Whether you have a baby or not, I highly recommend a stroll through Evanston. The charming character in the established homes and beautifully manicured lawns creates an invigorating walk. Boocoo fits well into this unique landscape. The café is filled with the hustle-bustle of local residents and students coming by to savor a special class and/or some of the delectable and affordable vegetarian and organic fare, such as

Homemade Curried Lentil Soup or Portobello sandwiches or Peanut Butter and Banana Smoothies.

When we first met our teacher, Yoli, her presence told us she was someone who was living her teachings. Her graceful stature and sense of joy radiated a kind warmth we immediately felt and were grateful for. You may wonder how one teaches yoga to a baby? Well, it's quite intuitive, for the baby often leads the class, and Yoli expertly takes the cues and creatively leads us into heartfelt poses of bonding and nourishment for our souls. Although there is no rush, cobra pose can quickly flip into boat pose through the



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rubbery limbs of a child. Yoli's watchful eye safely oversees these movements, while encouraging mom to join along in ways that are empowering to these harder adult bones.



So, thank you, Yoli, for such inspiring classes and for introducing Benny to this wonderful world of yoga. You have given us magnificent gifts--intertwining us in yoga postures of love and peace. Cheers to heaven on earth!

Yoli can be reached at Boocoo, www.boocoo.org, 1823 Church St., Evanston, 847.380.1602. Joan and Benny can be reached at www.yoyoga.com.

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