

Patty Anderson – The Legend

Rumour has it that Patty is retiring. That however has yet to be confirmed by the universe. For those of you who have never had the pleasure of attending her classes, we invite you now to join this “parting” class.

Patty's devoted disciples in Kilbarrack and Baldoyle never knew what to expect aside from an entertaining, educational, therapeutic and spiritual masterpiece all wrapped up into a 90 minute mind/body “workout”. After roll call and pre GDPR question: “How are you feeling?” (the craic ensued with sharing our general woes...) we went straight into centering.

And just in case anyone had forgotten how to sit in Sukhasana, she would remind us every week how to find our seat bones, cross our legs at the shins and of course never failing to mention that Indian men who thanks to this and other squatting poses don't have prostate cancer. “This pose stimulates the abdominal organs, ovaries, prostate gland, don't forget you're your own pharmacy” (of course these days men in India also have discovered the pain that comes from sitting on chairs)

The Rishis, she told us, went up to the Himalayas to study the breath and then came back down bringing two sacred sounds. “SA and HA.” SA breathing in and HA breathing out. Breathing through our noses, following our breath from belly to nostrils to ears while listening to her soothing mantra of SA & HA she brought us gently from our busy lives into her class.

Hands into Anjali mudra – we chant 3 Oms - “Lie down now for warm ups” “We're not in India, is the heating on? We need to do proper warm ups before we can do Yoga.”

Lying in semi supine, we always knew and never knew what to expect but we'd be guaranteed a fine selection of leg raises, crunch ups, cross patterned moves including Kapalabhati to get our skulls nice and shiny and a gentle slapping of our own bodies to release the muscles and/or excess fat: “Slap that old body, slap away the cake, gin, ice cream, you know what I'm talking about and then fluff it all up, fluff up your auras”

If you thought warm ups were just an afterthought, you're mistaken. This was all part of Patty's cunning plan for us to become body aware so we would actually feel the asana practice that might eventually follow about 30 minutes later. Warm ups were followed with Kryas or cleansing breaths as Patty calls them, this could be one of the following: “Inhale, spread out your arms, hold the breath, gather all the toxins and then exhale by blowing out your 99th birthday candles. Inhale, spread out your arms, hold the breath, gather all the toxins and then exhale like the laughing policeman. Inhale, lift your arms over head, Ha, throw yourself forward into a forward bend and let it all go, allow the facial muscles to release and give your face a holiday.”

Asana

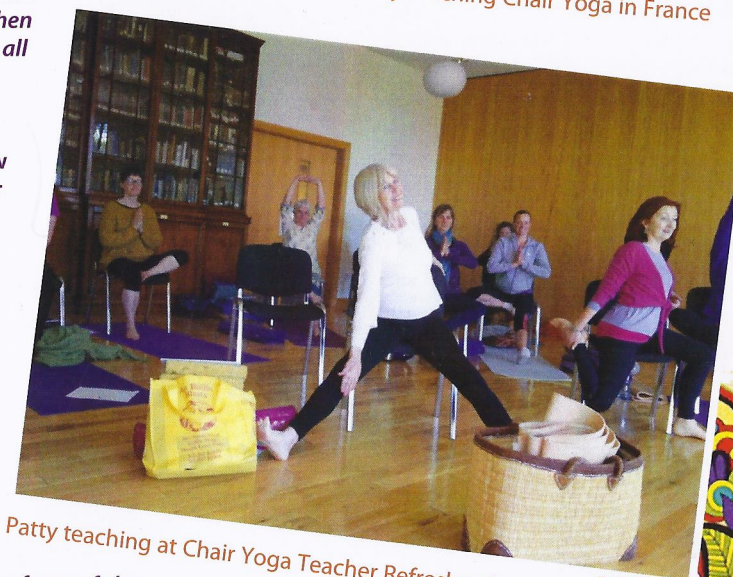
We always started with Tadasana, supta or not, she always made us all very aware of our Pada bandha, which as we all know is the foundation for all standing poses “Stand on your own two feet and feel the earth beneath your feet”. But don't think her instructions were always served with political correctness, mimicking her slouching students, swinging her arms in mockery, asking “What are those two things at the side of your head? They are for listening I believe.” But despite the slugging and all the laughter, we always knew she really cared about helping us to feel the poses in our body. Even if we only got 2 or 3 asana, we could be sure they would be quality poses.

Her caring carried right through the class. Pose of a child was always an option. The lovely touch of her healing hands was eagerly awaited by everyone in the room. Who didn't stay up or down in Adho Mukha Svanasana, just to receive that gentle lifting push from her?

On the subject of resting in poses, while in Balasana, she would share this little story with us “Feel the floor and mat supporting the length of the shins. Feel the back of the thighs being supported by the calf muscles. Feel the trunk of the body being supported by the front of the thighs. And feel the back of the body being massaged by the universe...”



Patty teaching Chair Yoga in France



Patty teaching at Chair Yoga Teacher Refresher Day



Although we knew all about Mula bandha, Pada bandha, Trikonasana, Bhujangasana, she always managed to bring the yoga back to North County Dublin, so you might get instructions like "Look up! It's AerLingus" "Ashwini Mudra - You need to pull everything up, close the genitals ... do I need to go around and check or can I trust you have done that? ... That's the only way to keep a juicy vagina." "Pelvic tilting is like being in a rocking chair, so do it gently; surely you wouldn't push your granny off the rocking chair."

And as with every class there were always flailing students, but fear not, Patty had those covered too. Every pose had a couple of options and a supportive commentary "Believe in yourself and just listen to your body." "Tell yourself ... I am, I can, I will!"

And of course there was always her overriding mantra: "Don't believe everything I say, just try it yourself."

Savasana

"Put on all your clothes and wrap up, I hope the heating is on."

You can't teach yoga without understanding the body and Patty not only understands the body but knows it intimately, Savasana is reminiscent of the "Fantastic Voyage" or an Anatomy class; not a single part would be left out and each part needs to be gently asked to "Let go, let go, let go ..." "Body, mind and spirit all relaxing together ... letting go, letting go, letting go"



Patty with flower bulbs presented to her by her students. "We planted them for her as reminder of how much she has given to us. As they say ... what goes around comes around."

Closing the class involved returning to Sukhasana, hands in Anjali Mudra, for her wonderful rendition of the peace mantra, which she reminded us every week was a translation and that the he in it had a different meaning from week to week, the he could be your breath, the he could be your mind, the he could be she, it did and doesn't matter, as we're all one.

*May he protect us all, May he take pleasure in us all
May spiritual knowledge reign before us, May we show courage together
May our learning be brilliant, May we never quarrel with one another
And may peace and peace and peace be everywhere
Om Shanti*

"If you're sore tomorrow, have a bath tonight."
Karen and Nike would like to thank all the teachers and students who contributed to this little homage to the living legend that is Patty.

Nike Ruf & Karen Kelly - Teacher Training Students 2018- 2022