

PHOENIX RISING YOGA THERAPY NEWSLETTER

Deciding to test out future retirement possibilities, my husband and I house-swapped with a couple from Portugal. Although we took their house in June 2002, they won't be using our Berkshire Mt. home until August 2003. "Non-simultaneous swap" is the correct lingo, I believe... easier for them, having a guest house on their property, then for us... living fully in both our homes on Long Island and the Berkshires... but an experimental journey nonetheless.

As both Jerry and I are both somewhat fatalistic as well as adventurous, NOW seemed the best time. So from June 6 – June 20, 2002, we became the official family-in-residence at Cavalos dos Lobos (Cave of the Wolffs), in Maveira da Sierra, Portugal.

A six-hour excruciating plane ride began our journey. The pain in the back of my lower right shoulder blade (behind right lung) radiating down my right arm began early on our travel day June 6th. I decided to stretch it out, taking an early morning yoga class before last minute packing and leaving for the airport. The smallish seats on (the official Portugese airline) only exacerbated my discomfort, and by the time our plane landed at the Lisbon Airport, I was forced to halt and pay attention. The pain had intensified and so had my (and my husband's) concern. My only somewhat irrational fear (of the genetic lung cancer all my family members die of) and pain had become our first compass points on this unfamiliar travel map... staying fully focused moment to moment... our mandate.

Storing luggage at the Lisbon Airport, we taxied to a local hospital... the taxi driver being our first guardian angel on the journey. Instead of going to the large public hospital (Santa Maria) recommended by the airport staff (which, according to our taxi angel would have provided at least a three hour wait), he took us to a Hospital Cuf, a private facility in which his wife worked.

Ninety minutes and 135 dollars later provided me with two physician consultations, a set of x-rays (taken, developed, read and in our possession), an injection for the pain, two prescriptions for treating the problem and reassurance. My lungs were clear. My neck was acutely misaligned causing the pain radiating down my back

arm. I felt relieved, well cared for and ready to continue our journey... making room for both the pain and my breath (as I became aware of holding it). Silently, I said gratitude prayers.

The most amazing experience of all, was that our guardian angel taxi driver accompanied and assisted us throughout the journey. He not only suggested and drove us to the best hospital, but escorted us through check-in, waiting for us post examination, test and treatment, and then took Jerry and I to a local Farmacia (pharmacy) before driving us back to the airport to pick up our luggage and rental car so that we could “begin” our two week Portuguese adventure. My first lessons on this new land (familiar Phoenix Rising Yoga tenets... breathe, be present to your experience, partner your Inner Wisdom, use the pain and fear as guides to stay conscious (focus awareness), discover what’s happening now (WHN), and have faith in the loving, healing, compassionate presence of self and others.

One of the other aspects of the Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy (P.R.Y.T.) Training that was very important to me and (in my opinion) not highlighted enough, is the quality of people who participate in the training. The P.R.Y.T. community is made up of persons who not only share a common passion for yoga, but who have participated in a rigorous personal growth experience, and who value body/mind/spirit health. These are the people I want to hang with... no matter where I am on the globe.

After about 5 days of self-care/healing in Portugal, I was feeling somewhat isolated. Although my daily sadhana practice (journal writing, yoga and flower cutting and arranging) provided me with a deep relationship to myself, and even though Jerry and I had established a wonderful balance of intimacy (internal) and exploration (external) in our new “home”, additionally I felt the need for support services for my pain (which although decreasing daily... never left). For some social interaction with the English-speaking people (especially conscious females) who lived in Portugal.

It was about this time that the last e-mails I had time to print (not read) before I left New York fell out of my journal. Enclosed in this pile was Karen Hasskarl’s WHN newsletter and a P.R.Y.T.

graduate referral in Portugal she offered at my request. Marion Robbins' name, address appeared... as if by magic. Seemingly, she lived in the next town over the mountain. I called.

Marion is originally a Venezuelan woman who has been living in Portugal (after living in the U.S. for decades) since 1986. Teaching 4 yoga classes a week, busy with her family (expected to visit next week) and social life, she did not have time to see me, but was very helpful in offering the names and telephone numbers of health care providers she thought might help (i.e. osteopath, massage therapist and cranial-sacral body worker). I was appreciative, yet disappointed to not meet her in person, recognizing that she was indeed our second guardian angel.

Remembering a Ram Dass story of how on his speaking engagements, he would sometimes wind up in ugly, plastic furnished, dimly lit, musty rooms and witness his judgments and desire for the comforts of home... helped. As soon as he would become aware of this process, he would pack up his things, walk out of the room, turn around in the hallway and re-enter the same room with a more conscious attitude and demeanor saying out loud (to no one in particular), "Hi, I'm home!"

The meaning of the memory of this story was clear. "Home" is wherever you are in the moment... present, aware, conscious of WHN. I was home in this hillside village of Malviera da Sierra, Portugal; I couldn't speak the language; I was in pain, and Marion didn't have the time "to play" with me. So be it. This WAS my now. I breathed and did Sadhana practice.

"Awareness and acceptance are the first steps to change" (another P.R.Y.T. principle). As I placed my yoga mat down to practice early the next morning, the strange ring of the telephone resounded in my ear. It was Marion. She apologized for being unavailable yesterday... mostly she was exhausted; remembered her P.R.Y.T. training experience with joy and very much wanted to make herself and her husband available to meet and dine with Jerry and I the following Sunday evening. I accepted. In so doing, I became aware of my spirit lifting and lightness filling the inner space where

disappointment and longing had temporarily set up camp. Noticing this sensation offered me deep inner awareness.

Long before Sunday came, I had followed Marion's advice (i.e. gone for a bodywork session, called the osteopath, and rested more). I was feeling somewhat better, but still relied on medication daily for pain management. The more I made home with myself (and Jerry), the more the pain became background to the joys of living life in Portugal. Like the thorns on the roses in the gardens surrounded the house, whose presence never interfered with the garden's beauty, the pain in my back and arm just became part of the journey too. It helped me stay aware, be consistent with my yoga practice, and take particularly good care of myself.

When Sunday came, I was finally feeling better and found Marion (& Edward) Robbins to be as special as Karen Hasskarl remembered. Jerry and I thoroughly enjoyed our evening with them, visiting in their home and dining with them in their favorite local restaurant. Many of our questions were answered and many suggestions for enhancing our journey were offered and taken. We had a wonderful evening together and found we had more in common than yoga and even Phoenix Rising. Yet certainly, Phoenix Rising magnetized us both, and the community it does bring together shares a richness of belief, value and philosophy that weaves a most magnificent world-wide conscious tapestry.

My intention in taking the P.R.Y.T. training was to "pour consciousness into my body." I also hoped it would add dimension to both my yoga and psychotherapy practices. It has successfully met and surpassed these intentions by a mile. I would not have had as meaningful a Portuguese journey as I did without the Phoenix Rising skills I learned, practices I kept, people I met. Jerry and I were always aware of the option to return to New York. We didn't, and had one of the most transformational experiences of our lives together.

I never before had the desire to be a yoga teacher. After leaving Portugal and meeting Marion, I now want to take a yoga teacher training. When traveling the world and living in foreign cultures, I have discovered that teaching yoga draws the local community to you. Once there, Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy

connects people soul to soul. I want both the community and the soul contact. Jerry is happy. I am out of pain and feel that I can now live abroad. He might even be willing to do yoga himself. Wouldn't that be a kicker?!

Thank you, Phoenix Rising... for your network, for your net worth and for helping me stay in the present and learn from the pain.