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Master yogi visits Yk

Top teacher gives workshop at Racquet Club

by Jennifer Geens
Northern News Services

One of the top names in yoga visited the Racquet Club last weekend to give a workshop for the club's instructors and a Friday night master class for club members.

"I'm trying to give them a holistic sample of different styles of yoga," said Doug Swenson, a yoga practitioner and instructor for more than 40 years. "More physical, less physical, more meditative, how to teach people, the words you use, how to adjust people in yoga postures."

Swenson said he also cov-

ers the different motivations of students.

"Some want to lose weight, some want to get more fit, so we do an accumulation of all those things to create more of a balance. Because it's all about balance."

Dana Britton, fitness coordinator at the Racquet Club, said the club brings experts north annually to provide professional development to its instructors. She said she appreciated Swenson's inclusive approach, which makes his style accessible to beginners. She was attending his workshops along with the

club's yoga instructors.

"Coming from a fitness background, I find it great but challenging," she said.

She said she finds yoga a good way to increase her flexibility to avoid injury in her other sports.

Doug Swenson, an American, began learning yoga as a child in the early 1960s, from a friend of his family who attended the same Unitarian congregation.

"I was an aspiring surfer, and I found my agility got better, my balance got better and my self-confidence."

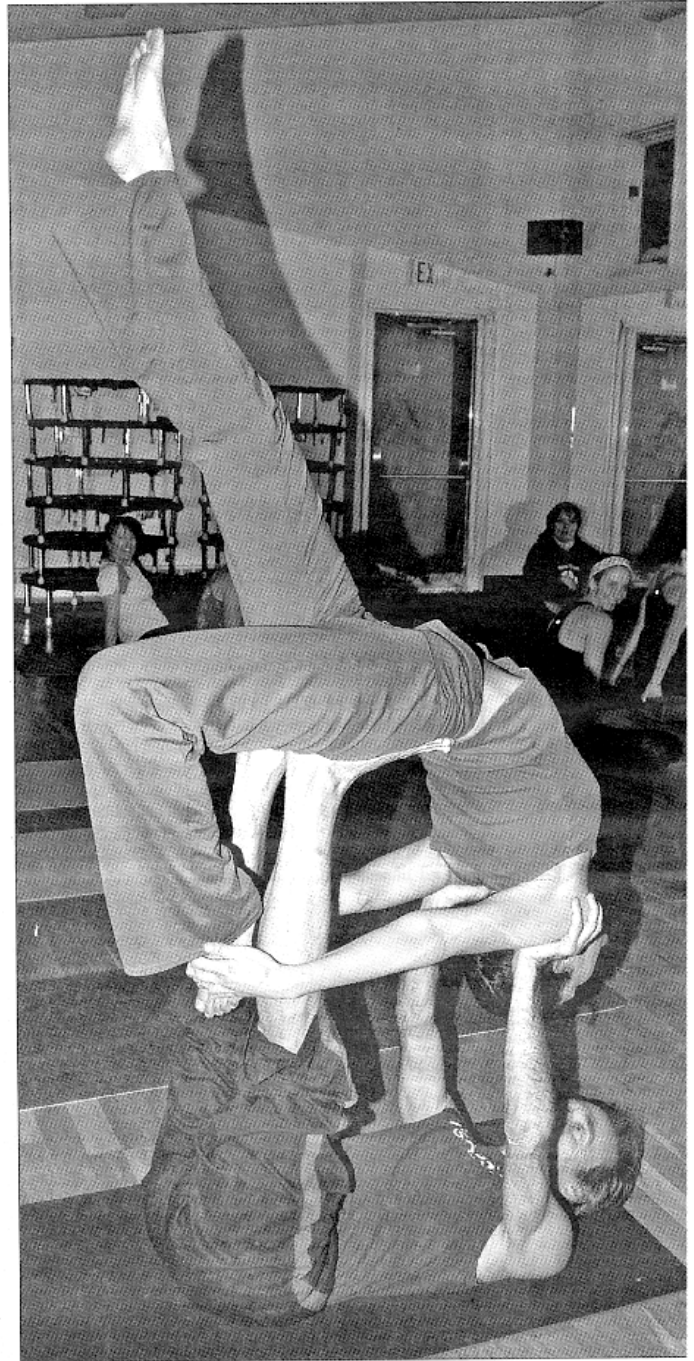
He taught what he learned to his younger brother David, and the two eventually studied with the eminent yogis of the day in India and the Western hemisphere. When yoga exploded into the mainstream in the 1990s, he and his brother became two of the go-to experts sought out by magazines and conferences.

"If you go to Hollywood, they're just people, but we make them into untouchable icons," he said. "It's the same thing in yoga. There's Yoga

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Master yoga teacher Doug Swenson goofos around with Racquet Club instructor Aiyana Lajeunesse, lifting her into a backbend.

Jennifer Geens/NNSI photo



Yoga offers multiple benefits: master

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magazine and Yoga Journal and they pick people, just like you'd pick Britney Spears for a record label, and then promote them to the public. But they're all just people.

While David became the poster boy for Ashtanga yoga, Doug embrac-

es all styles including vigorous and sweaty vinyasa flow and slow and meditative yin.

He said the benefits of yoga are many-fold.

"Initially what you notice is a release of stress and tension," he said.

"The way you perceive the world

before and after yoga class is totally different."

Later comes increased energy, flexibility, and a lowered heart rate.

"Overall it makes you better at everything. You're better at writing, better at reading, fitness, thinking."

Swenson, approaching 60, maintains his personal practice despite

his professional obligations, which this month have him travelling from Thailand to Yellowknife to Washington, D.C., to Hawaii.

"We're all students and we're all teachers," he said. "When you travel, you get to see different cultures and how people perceive things differently. It's very rewarding. But you have

to be very attentive ... when you have free time to take care of yourself, so that you're still somebody that does yoga and practises what they preach. When you're out teaching you have to build reserves. You have your own personal sanctuary.

"It's like storing food in your backpack," he laughed.