

## Our Yoga Journey

**Yoga is a journey in many ways – a personal journey that challenges, supports and accompanies you throughout your life. A lifetime of learning and discovery, influenced by teachers who share their wisdom and experience, guiding you along the many paths that yoga offers. Wendy Jacob talks to Diane Long about her own yoga journey, influences and commitment to yoga.**

Diane Long is in the UK staying with friends in their idyllic, newly constructed cottage outside Bath. Injury has encouraged her to cut back on some of her teaching, although there is little sign of any lasting damage. She moves with grace and poetic ease, offering a warm welcome and sparking an inner connection as she communicates her deep felt and enduring commitment to Vanda Scaravelli who has influenced her life and teaching.

She is best known for teaching Intuitive Yoga, following 23 years as a devoted student of Vanda Scaravelli. Born in North Carolina, Diane moved to Italy in the early 1970s where she met Vanda, who invited her to become her student. Diane began teaching in the late 70's in Italy and later in Canada, England and the United States.

Diane rarely uses the word 'yoga', but describes the depth and fluidity of movement as being a personal experience: "It is about knowledge of our own body and personal expression. There is a need to search – exploration without ambition – which never stops."

Diane was 29 and Vanda 68 when they met. Diane was athletic – Iyengar and Tai Chi challenging a naturally strong and flexible body. A chance meeting, when Vanda noticed her at a class and an invitation to lunch initiating a lifetime of commitment: "When I saw her move, I knew what I was looking for," Diane recalls. She explains that other influences in body movement had not offered the 'riches' of what she describes as the Scaravelli 'approach'. "It is not a system or definable. It allows you to free places within yourself and wake up and address these. When I met Vanda, I could 'do'. I had to find something different in myself which allowed me to transform within these postures."

Diane is humble about her own teaching, explaining that when Vanda encouraged her to teach in London, instead of her, she did not feel ready. "I am a slow learner", she explains. "I loved the teaching, but felt the responsibility and wanted to learn more." And the learning continued, with Diane seeing Vanda two or three times a week and gaining to trust in her own ability. "Vanda was in her 80s and I realised she wouldn't live forever. You are really lucky if you find something rich and profound on this mysterious journey of life – it is also about our own ability to find something."

"You must teach everywhere", said Vanda (not so easy with two small children to care for and coping with divorce). But Diane carried on: "I went wherever anyone asked me, amazed that people were paying me for this!" Since then she has travelled the world and despite cutting back, her diary looks full and those that she has taught and

influenced ensure that Vanda's work continues to attract and inspire further generations looking for depth and inner connection through movement.

Vanda Scaravelli died in Italy in 1999 at the age of 91. Her book *Awakening the Spine* shows her in her 80s performing poses that demonstrate her amazing flexibility and strength. Diane's teaching carries on this work, exploring the body, encouraging integration and release, evolvment and access to deeper levels of connection.

Although she says she is slowing down, she is spending six months at her home in Rome this summer, where she will teach small groups. "You need to use your energy wisely," she counsels. "My energy and time of life has allowed me to sow a lot of seeds. I am here to help anyone who wants to go deeper who arrives at my door."

Although Diane has been reluctant to put into words the essence of this work, she has been persuaded and will be publishing a book later this year.

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