

Bikram Yoga

Last August, Jim Moore climbed the tallest mountain in the continental United States. Yet, for Moore, taking the first few breaths of cold, sweet air at the precipice was more than an accomplishment of physical prowess. Moore was celebrating a miraculous return to health after a surprisingly simple life change.

BY WINTRESS ODOM

Not everyone gets the chance to climb Mount Whitney. First, you need a special permit. Even then, less than a third of the aspiring adventures who take the first steps up the winding trails reach the famous North American peak. Yet scaling the 14,505-foot behemoth was more than just a challenge to Moore. When he stood at the top and looked down at the breathtaking California valley, this 62-year-old Woodlands native said his final goodbyes to years of obesity and hypertension.

In May of 2006, just three months before his excursion, Moore was taking 150mg of Diovan to keep his blood pressure from spiraling out of control. When his daughter Jennifer bought him a 10-day yoga package at Bikram Yoga The Woodlands (BYTW) to “improve his health,” he was inwardly mortified. He hated the idea of yoga.

Still, he couldn’t bring himself to turn her down. “Jennifer knows I’m somewhat thrifty,” says Moore. “I couldn’t find anyone to give them [the sessions] to, so I was stuck.”

Moore admits the first few days were the hardest. But amazingly after just seven days of yoga, his blood pressure had dropped from 160/110 to 116/64 – and he’d stopped taking his medication. Moore reports, “My cardiologist wasn’t excited about my self adjustment of medication without consulting her first. But after we made it through that, she finally concluded that I could remain off the medication.” He felt great.

Moore isn’t the only BYTW success story. Laura Connely, RN and nurse administrator, has arthritis, Sjogren’s, and IBS. Yet after just six weeks of yoga at BYTW, she reduced her pain medication to a one-half tablet, and she says she hasn’t needed her IBS medication in four months.

Buck Fechik, Woodlands resident, is also an enthusiastic Bikram fan. He lost 17 pounds in two months, and his daily insulin requirements plunged by 30 percent.

These stories may seem more like tales of miracle healings than plausible, scientific accounts. But Jennifer and Arnie Ballew, owners of BYTW, say they see cases like these all the time. Bikram yoga is famous for its healing properties. When its founder, Bikram Choudhury, shattered his knee in a weightlifting accident, Western doctors told him he’d never walk again. But after practicing yoga for six months, Bikram had completely recovered.

Unique from other yogas, Bikram is practiced in a heated room. The purpose of the heat is threefold. First, the heat inspires a hearty cardiovascular workout – it’s not unusual for a practitioner to burn 1500 calories in a session. Second, the heat causes muscles to remain warm, allowing for a deeper level of stretching without injury. Third, the heat causes perspiration which detoxifies the body.



BYTW takes Bikram yoga to the next level. Here healing of the body is accompanied by calming of the mind, as members enjoy a posh, spa-like atmosphere complete with the sounds of running waterfalls and soothing background music. Visitors are treated with white-glove service, enjoying amenities such as massage therapy, complimentary babysitting, and luxurious steam room facilities.

All ages and all fitness levels will enjoy this serene exercise studio, and the Ballews welcome new members daily. Recently, the Ballews were thrilled by a surprise addition to their classes. Jim Moore’s cardiologist, who months ago berated Moore for his self-medication methods, is now striking the 26 poses along with the Ballews’ other students.

For a limited time, BYTW is offering a month-long unlimited class package for \$89.00 (regularly priced at \$180.00) to new students. Call Arnie or Jen at 281-363-BYTW (2989) or visit www.bytw.com to discover how you can be healthier through Bikram’s Yoga.

Shown left: Bikram Yoga’s lobby.