

November / December 2014

Yoga Spirit Academy

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Congratulations Alyssa

Alyssa Worth graduated in October 2014 from Yoga Spirit Academy's 200-hour teacher training program. This enthusiastic young woman first got into Yoga when her grandmother bought her a mat and yoga DVD for Christmas, 2011. She took her first yoga class in July of the next year. For her personally, Yoga gives her confidence and has helped her feel less uptight and more compassionate. As a teacher, she looks for those "Aha! moments" which often

occur when a student is practicing a pose. What an honor it is for her to facilitate these life-changing experiences for them! Becoming a Certified Yoga Teacher is a first step toward much more learning, growing and teaching. It has opened her up to the many possibilities that lie before her in Yoga and in life. For now, she's living the dream as she tours the country with her band. She's a talented, passionate drummer! She enjoys her



day job cleaning houses, going to church and hanging out with good folks. As Alyssa puts it, Yoga "helped me become a better version of myself." Who could ask for anything more?

Certified Yoga Teacher Training

December 13-14

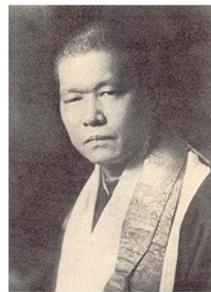
January 10-11

We accept new students every month

How will Yoga change your life?

SOKEI-AN SASAKI American's First Meditation Teacher By Victor M Parachin

The first Japanese Zen master to arrive and remain in the United States was Sokei-An Sasaki. He felt it was his life mission to bring Zen to Americans. Though he is unique in being the first, he is largely unknown by Americans committed to Zen practices because Sokei-An fell victim to the times. He arrived in San Francisco in 1906 shortly after a great earthquake destroyed much of the city leaving residents to focus on basic human needs and not Zen meditation. Also, the beginning of



the 20th century was a time of unparalleled and cruel anti-Asian discrimination in

America. Furthermore, World War II would disrupt his ability to teach because of his Japanese ancestry. In spite of those nearly insurmountable issues, Sokei-An was eventually able to establish a Zen center in New

York City and attracted a small but dedicated group of students.

Recognizing the difficult times in which he labored, Sokei-An predicted: "I brought Buddhism to America. It has no value here now, America will slowly realize its value and say that Buddhism gives us something that we can certainly use as a base or a foundation for our mind. This effort is like holding a lotus to a rock and hoping it will take root."

Sokei-An was born in Japan in 1882. His father, Tsunamichi Sasaki, was a Shinto priest and teacher of languages. Because his wife was *continues on page two*

*Without love, wisdom is like a sword, which destroys but cannot create.
Without wisdom, love is like a fire, which burns everything but does not give life.
-Sokei -An Sasaki*

Pacifying VATA in the Fall

By Janet W Parachin



According to Ayurveda, "the science of life," late fall and winter are considered a Vata time of year. Certain characteristics predominate this

time of year: windy, cool and dry. As a result, skin, hair, nails and eyes become dry too. Feet and hands can become cold. Healthwise, one can experience constipation, lower back pain and aching joints. Mentally, nervous energy, anxiety and insomnia can increase. Knowing this, we can take steps to counteract excessive Vata:

-Stay warm by wearing layers and partaking in warm food and drink. Save the raw salads for summer.

-Nutmeg, cardamom and cinnamon can be added to tea and spicy foods warm the body

-Add olive oil and flax seed to foods

-Massage the body with sesame oil every day before the shower

-Try to stick to a regular schedule by getting up and going to bed at the same time each day, and having regular times for meals, gentle exercise (like Yoga!), and meditation

You're invited to set up an Ayurvedic consultation with Janet this fall. We'll determine your constitution and address any imbalances you're feeling in body, mind and spirit. Receive individualized instructions for diet, herbs, oils, meditation, breathing and yoga postures. *Janet Parachin is a certified Ayurvedic Health Consultant. Her consultations are for educational purposes only and do not replace counsel from your health care professional.*

Sokei-An Sasaki, continued

unable to conceive a child, Tsunamichi took a sixteen-year-old girl as a concubine who gave birth to Sokei-An. During this arrangement, Tsunamichi's wife moved out of the house. Two years later she returned to raise their only child. The loss of his biological mother may have been the source of Sokei-An's innate restlessness and inward focus. His father taught him to read Chinese and Japanese.

When he was fifteen his father died leaving the family in poverty. Fortunately, Sokei-An was old enough to apprentice as a wood carver of Buddhist temple furniture. Troubled by the death of his father and by the circumstances of his birth, Sokei-An turned to Zen in order to calm his mind. He began Zen training in 1901. A few years later, his teacher asked Sokei-An if he would be interested in bringing Zen to America. He readily agreed arriving in San Francisco in 1906. There he had little success promoting Zen and experienced "bitter discrimination" recalling "if we tried to go to the theater or the movie, the girl at the window looked at our face and said, 'You have your own theaters. Go there.' Churches? The churches were

Possess a pliant,
soft mind; soft like
air, pliant as the
weeping willow:
this is the best attitude
of mind.

- Sokei-An Sasaki

worst of all. Now and then with an American friend I could sneak into the theater or movie, but never the church. We were stopped on the step! 'You have your own churches! Go there!' " Discouraged, Sokei-An began to wander alone through the American West supporting himself variously by selling newspaper subscriptions, woodcarving, writing poetry and articles for Japanese American newspapers.

By 1916 Sokei-An settled into New York's Greenwich Village. There he began teaching Zen by initially giving free talks in Central Park and at an Oriental Bookstore. Little by little, he

gained a following including Ruth Fuller Everett, the wife of a prominent and successful attorney. She became a devoted student of Sokei-An and helped him establish a Zen center at her townhouse. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, it was not long before Sokei-An was interviewed by the FBI. He was arrested and incarcerated on June 15, 1942. Because the internment was taking a toll on his health, Sokei-An's friends began an intense lobby effort to have him released and finally, on August 15, 1943, he was released. However, the stress of incarceration weakened him physically. He experienced a stroke and, a few months later, a heart attack. On May 16, 1945 Sokei-An gave what would be his final Zen teaching and died that evening.

Nearly six decades after his death, his autobiography was published – *Holding The Lotus To The Rock*. In the editor's forward, he is described as "America's first Zen master."