

Meaningful Ceremonies
With Bobbie Ellis



Memorial for Jean Van eps
June 18 1930-feb 15 2015

In Jean's later life she became interested in yoga and became a yoga teacher. My name is Bobbie ellis and I am also a yoga teacher for 31 years along with being an ordained interfaith minister. David And Jim Dunham invited me to be the officiant for this gathering. I am deeply honored to be in the position of a spiritual guide.

Yoga tells us the body is made of thousands and thousands of tiny points of light and energy moving through. When we can feel or imagine ourselves as this beautiful merging, we let all of the world cares, responsibilities and mental stress go by the wayside.

Take a few deeper breathes and follow your breath deep down into your belly, let it move out of your nose slowly and connect with your body, breath is the universal movement of life coming in and going out...

The practice of yoga asks that we look the serpent right in the mouth until we realize it has no poison. we can be present even when death squeezes the last exhalation from the body. It is through a deep investigation of what it means to be structured in a life of impermanence that we are moved to open fully to the reality of what is our everyday, every moment experience. In the face of death, there is nothing left to avoid and certainly nothing left to hold on to.

There is not much incentive in contemporary culture to contemplate our own mortality. So when someone close to us dies, in yoga, we see this as an opportunity to live more fully, with honesty, to become close to those we love, knowing that our time is limited. In the physical practice of yoga, at the end of every class, we practice a pose called savasana or corpse pose. in Patanjai's yoga sutras, he says this is "to practice death, a little bit each day".

In one of Raymond Carvers last poems called "last fragment" he writes:

"And did you get what you wanted from this life, even so?

I did.

And what did you want?

To call myself beloved, to feel myself beloved on the earth".

When we practice yoga sincerely, what we want in life becomes simpler and simpler. The practice teaches us to stop looking outside the heart for satisfaction, instead look inside. As Jean did...to experience everyday in detail, with grand creativity, knowing that birth and death occur with each passing breath.

Today we are gathered here to remember and honor the life of Jean Van Eps, born on June 18th, 1930 and departed from this earthly plane on February 15, 2015.

Jean grew up in Queens NY, and later moved to Plainfield NJ and married Robert Dunham, gave birth to 5 wonderful children, Jim, Peter, Dave, Bruce and Billy. in 1955 she moved to Levittown PA and in 61 moved to Heightstown NJ where she raised her children. Jean was a wife, mother and homemaker for 25 years. She became a civil rights activist during that time too.

later moving to Princeton and then to California. Once settled in Ca she really came into her own, and blossomed in her creative endeavors. That is where she fell in love with yoga, joined a senior citizens dance troupe. She got married for a second time to Ted Harpainter.

Jean was an accomplished inspiring artist and dancer, loved laughter and had a wonderful sense of humor. in her later years she developed and taught an aerobic exercise program called "Afro-cise" ...Jean has been coined as being feisty and full of life. she sketched, sculpted and painted. She loved to do charcoal sketching the most and became quite talented. Her family has her cherished drawings to remember her great talent and commitment to her artistic life.

her early spiritual roots were in the presbyterian and Unitarian church, but it was yoga that became her deepest spiritual contact. The philosophy of yoga says "lifting your arms in a complete moment of presence you can know God within, looking at a flower in its purest essence, feel the expression of enlightened living. it is here that Jean thrived and deepened her connection with spirit.

she leaves behind her loving family Peter, David and Jim, 8 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. A sister Susan in Connecticut and Brother John in California.

Yoga tells us from the book of the upanishad:

Beyond the senses are the objects
beyond the objects is the mind
Beyond the mind, the intellect
beyond the intellect, the atman
Beyond the atman, the non-manifest
Beyond the non-manifest, the spirit
Beyond the spirit there is nothing
This is the end, pure awareness

Jim - reading

dave - reading

Other family members reading or speaking?

From the radiance sutras:

Worship does not mean offering flowers
It means offering your heart
To the vast mystery of the universe

It means letting your heart pulse
With the life of the universe
Without thought and without reservation

It means being so in love
That you are willing to dissolve
And be recreated in every moment

chant:

Gayatri mantra

OM BHUR BHUVAHA SWAHA TAT SAVITUR VARENYAM BHARGHO DEVASYA DHIMAHI
DHIYO YONAH PRATCHODAYAT OM

Translation: " everything above, below and in between arises from an every renewable source, once we realize that we are not separate, but a part of that source, we will become the peace we are seeking in this instant."