

## INTERVIEW WITH JEANNE MASLEN, 11/07/05, MANCHESTER

- Liz: You know, we know the story of Pen Reed ...
- Jeanne: Yes, well I sent you something didn't I?
- Liz: Yes. And then it started in Pen Reed's class and you became Pen Reed's apprentice.
- Jeanne: Student, yes, apprentice, whatever!
- Liz: Yes, and I guess we're really interested to know what it was that inspired you so much? How you knew this was what you wanted to follow?
- Jeanne: Well, I think it took a lot of persuading actually because I wasn't that interested.
- Liz: Right.
- Erica: She persuaded you?
- Jeanne: Yes, but not only Pen, I had friends in the class. I believe you know the story of – I was always running the keep fit class because the keep fit teacher was always ill. It was our Friday class that Pen came to give her demonstration, but it was really my friends that were in the class that persuaded me to go to this demonstration because I really wasn't interested. I had seen books from my friend who lived two doors from me here and she used to come here and show me these books and show me these weird positions and I wasn't at all interested, although I could do some of them! Actually my friend was quite annoyed because I could do them and she was the one who was interested while I wasn't. And she persuaded me at first "oh come on, we must see this demonstration, she's coming actually to the keep fit group". So I went and when I saw what Pen could do, it was a challenge. I thought "well, I've never done that sort of thing, like stand on your head and cross your legs and so forth". So I came home afterwards and tried headstand, and broke John's glasses! I began to show an interest, I suppose, each time Pen came, because of my friend's encouragement to do so, but I really still had a tongue-in-cheek attitude. It was, to me, dead after keep-fit. In keep-fit, you're moving, jumping around, a bit like Astanga Yoga. And I thought "no, it's too quiet", it wasn't really for me. And so it took, I think, several weeks before I really got interested. Pen was constantly asking me – and I think it was part of her way of encouraging – to show some of the postures that she knew I could do, and some of the others couldn't do, such as *Padmasana* you know, which seemed to be quite natural to me but not to others, although I didn't like the posture one bit. I thought it was ridiculous sitting there with your legs crossed in that way but I'm sure it was part of her plan to encourage me to take more interest, because the next thing was that she was asking me to help her in various classes, which was her way of training me to teach. She said that she was getting so many students, not only in Withington Further Education where we started, but all around. She was going to women's guilds and golf clubs and goodness knows where to show Yoga for the first time in Manchester and of course this type of Yoga she was doing was certainly not Iyengar. It was very much, I don't know whether I dare say it, but British Wheel, if you like, which is totally different to what we do, and I just felt it wasn't really enough. At that time I was getting far more from the keep-fit class, which we still ran, even though we were doing Yoga as well. We were only a small group of about 12, and Pen said she needed this help in other places, not just here in Withington. I'm trying to think where it was Davenport (in Stockport). Pen eventually let me take the class on my own because, although I was, I think, a good apprentice, I really was that sort of person. I could take over if you like. Probably that was because of the keep-fit teacher was always away, and I was having to teach anyhow. Not that I wanted to be a professional teacher or really learn how to teach. I felt I couldn't even be persuaded to teach keep-fit, so why was Pen wanting me to teach Yoga? – something that I felt was a much more complicated subject to deal with, all the things I kept hearing about it, and then I started reading about it, and I thought "no, I don't really want to get involved in all this". But I kept it up for – was it six months? It could have been six months, I'm not too sure. It wasn't that long, when we discovered Mr Iyengar's book. It must have been a very early edition, released by the publishers in

'66. I remember going in to our library here in Withington, where there was only this one copy, and I took it to the class and I showed it to Pen and I said "well, this looks as though it's got a bit more to it than what we're doing". I mean these silly little exercises we were doing, they really were neither here nor there, and so we started going through the book. It was one of those sort of books then, *Light on Yoga*, where all the pictures were at the back and the instructions at the front and we never bothered with the instructions, we just turned to the pictures! We just wanted to see how we could do these poses having not read the instructions, we didn't know you had to spread your feet so many feet apart or jump them or whatever. And we went through quite a lot. But I began then, I think, to get really interested, and I thought "well there's far more to it than what we've been seeing in some of these other books". Because the first book I'd seen was all in French – she was a French friend of mine who lived two doors away – and she was more wrapped up in that type of thing at first, that, my friend, she didn't really think all that much of what Mr Iyengar had to offer but I then started encouraging her to see that there was far more in this system of Iyengar's than there was in the stuff we'd been doing. So once we got the book, then I felt "yes, there is something here and I would like to start teaching it this way". We kept questioning about Mr Iyengar, whether he was alive etcetera, and in the end, we wrote to an address that Beatrice Harthan and Angela Marris had given us and it was actually these people who were running things down in London for him, and they gave us Mr Iyengar's address. So our Head of Withington Centre wrote to Mr Iyengar to see if next time he came to London, would he come to Manchester, and within eight days – and in those days, letters were taking a bit longer to come to this country – but within eight days we had a reply to say "yes, he'd come if we could set up a demonstration for him, and get enough people". Well we had 500 as you know, and we only charged 2 'n' 6 pence per person in those days! We weren't thinking of charging a lot, we just wanted people there because he'd said "get as many as possible" and I think he was overwhelmed when he saw the number of people interested at Spurley Hey School. It was after that demonstration that I got really interested and started to explore it even more, because we were invited to go down to London to see how he was teaching there etcetera. But, in the meantime, here in Manchester, we were soon struggling a bit because there were lots of other types of Yoga going on, and, although our Withington Centre it was just Pen and I, we knew other people were trying to get jobs to teach other types of Yoga in the Centre. There was one story – I don't whether I should say it now, it's probably out of context a little bit – but, as it built up, people were beginning to say whether they wanted, whether they wanted Hatha Yoga or Iyengar Yoga. Did I tell you that story? Have you heard that one? Mr Iyengar found that quite amusing in years gone by, later on. We were giving a demonstration, this is some years later now, forgotten where it was, oh in UMIST, because it was when the South Indian people were celebrating something, and I've forgotten what it was. Can you remember what it was [John] because you helped to shepherd Mr Iyengar backwards and forwards? He stayed here and we had to take him to UMIST because he was a special guest, an important guest to the Indian population. The Karnatakan, it was the Karnatakan Festival wasn't it? Anyway, Mr Iyengar was one of their honoured guests but Mr Iyengar asked me to make sure we'd got a group of people ready to give a demonstration. And so I got a group of people ready as quickly as possible and he was staying here and at breakfast he said to me, you know, "do you know exactly what you're doing etc?" and I thought "well, as far as I know, I think we know what we're doing"! But he asked "are you giving a talk beforehand?" so I said "yes" so I handed him what I was going to say and he said "oh you'll have to lighten this a little bit". He said "it needs a sense of humour with it". I thought "golly, how do you humour an Indian population?" I think their humour is very different to ours, having experienced some of it in India. So he said "well, tell that story about when you first were trying to interest the public to do Iyengar Yoga". So I remembered it immediately what it was, so he said "tell it to me now". So it goes like this: The Withington Centre had been told that if anyone phoned up wanting Yoga and they didn't know which to do, Hatha or Iyengar, tell them about Iyengar Yoga because we really need the people to do Iyengar Yoga. So somebody phoned up, and I can't remember now all the details of it, but this person said "yes, yes, I know Mr Iyengar but who is Mr Hatha?" And I thought that it was neither here nor there, but Iyengar laughed his head off, he thought it was so funny. So I had to tell this to this all-Indian audience, and he stood up after I'd told it, and he started laughing, so everybody laughed. I don't think they really understood at all! The group that were with me that were going to do this demonstration all laughed because Iyengar laughed and then of course the whole audience laughed. It wasn't that funny but he thought it was, that was his way of trying to convince an all-Indian audience that they ought to do Yoga, because there weren't many Indians doing Yoga in anybody's in any types of Yoga

– not many were interested. I found over the time of teaching that, even the Indians we have today, very few of them really want to do the physical side. They mainly want to do what they normally do, their prayers, but not to do anything physical, they're not that interested. And I think Mr Iyengar might have found that also in India to start with because he wasn't so popular, with his method, there. It is now, but in the early days, it certainly wasn't, and I'm sure he had the same problems because in the early days of being in India. 1975, the first time when he opened his Institute, we found that the western world were going but there weren't that many Indians in the classes. And even those that were, to the western world, they were lazy! They weren't doing the postures like we were doing. But on the other hand, they were happier doing, they had a different approach altogether, so you know, it's vastly different, I think, the way the Indians take to doing their Yoga to the way we do it. Even now, you know, and I've been there more recently, I still see that. Anyhow, going back to how it all went from there, I'm sorry I'm probably telling you all what you already know!

Erica: No, it's very interesting.

John: It was one o'clock in the morning before we got back from ...

Jeanne: ... from that Karnatakan Festival – oh yes. Mr Iyengar insisted on staying to the very end of everything so it was at least 1 o'clock in the morning before we got back here for him to go to bed. And it was three or four days he was here, so the next day, it was all day and all evening again. A lot of it was quite interesting to the west but there was quite a lot that wasn't! Understandable, you know, how they see life very differently. So that was why I say their humour is very different to our humour, and that's why I was a bit put off when he asked me to tell a joke if you like. I thought he can't do that! Anyhow, going back to where I went from, starting teaching.

Erica: Can I just ask you, you were always quite physically active and engaged in .... ?

Jeanne: Yes, my children would be 6 and 8, I think, when I really started to take up any real active interest in other things. They kept me too active at that age! I remember my daughter's age more because it was she who saw Mr Iyengar on the television – I'm sure I've told that story. I used to take her to the classes because she'd just started the school down here at Old Moat, and my classes were usually early evening or something, and I know she used to come to some of the classes. But before I took up Yoga, I took up swimming, I took up keep fit as I've already said. I was going to an evening class to learn French, partly because of my French neighbour! Yes, I wanted to do something more than just be at home, as my husband will verify. I've always been like that, you know, I felt well yes, the children are growing up, we don't think we're going to have any more, so I wanted to do something. But again, I wanted to do something that I could have fun with, not to go and teach and have responsibilities, that's why I think I shunned it at first, but that was to change. I was afraid then, I'm not so afraid now, but I really didn't want that sort of responsibility. I was having too much fun with the children growing up and I could go to the swimming if I wanted to. Keep fit classes were not an option – the keep fit teacher kept being ill, and so I had to go to those because the class wanted to keep going, they didn't want it to close down. In those days, they did not really mind whether you had trained to do whatever, they didn't mind as long as they had somebody willing to do it for them.

John: She died didn't she?

Jeanne: She died in the end, yes, she had cancer poor woman. I mean I kept grumbling because she never turned up and we didn't really know what was wrong with her and then she died. Joan Dann, her name, and she came from Whalley Range I think. But it was very tragic. Then of course soon after that, we decided to stop the keep fit and make it purely an Iyengar training course, which Pen was pushing to do because so many were asking for teachers here and teachers there and we just couldn't spread ourselves to that extent, so that's when we started this teacher training. But no, I think as activities go, I certainly enjoyed the swimming first, foremost, and the keep fit.

John: Camping.

Jeanne: Oh and camping, yes! That sort of activity. But certainly to do anything else, I'd never dreamed of that. So I really sort of fell into it I think by accident or I was destined to do it, I don't know. But it's been ongoing ever since to keep up with it because it just seemed to grow so fast. In those days, at Withington Centre, we had queues for the classes – you know where the old Centre used to be at 3 Mauldeth Road – the queues came right out on Wilmslow Road, and it was mainly for doing Yoga. We had long waiting lists; we just couldn't take the numbers in the hall. The old building was an old Jewish Synagogue at one time. Did you ever see in it, when it was there? It's an old people's home now – they've built on the land.

Erica: No.

Jeanne: But, yes, it was a nice old building. We loved it. We were there a number of years before they decided it had got to come down and something else built in its place.

Liz: Do you have a sense of why it was so, what was it about it that made it so popular? People recognised something they wanted.

Jeanne: Well at the same time as we were developing, there was this fellow Hittleman was on the television, Richard Hittleman, do you remember him back then?

Liz: No.

Jeanne: No. Well he was giving this programme, I think it was on TV. I don't know how many days a week, but it was on quite regularly, and of course he had these beautiful model girls that were doing all sorts of very pretty poses, very gentle – that is probably the better word for it, a gentle type of Yoga, and people were thinking we were doing the same, and then they got a rude awakening I'm afraid! At first, I mean, we were doing something very similar because that's what we thought it was all about and most of those people were following books, which were not books that were, what can I say, from a living person, They're written based on what postures they believed were done thousands of years ago with up-to-date models if you see what I mean. So there was nothing or nobody really behind those books, whereas Iyengar was a living person and he was practicing what he was preaching or what he'd written about, whereas these people weren't, you know. They were taking it from history and trying to bring it up-to-date but they weren't really getting the correct background of where it's all come from, and the same with Hittleman. When he was doing it, it was his own version of what he believed should have been. They weren't really following anybody then, only what they had gleaned from a few books, whereas Iyengar's book was the first really good book that showed postures, how they had developed right through history. I suppose one would say that's why we call it Iyengar Yoga, although he's never, ever called it Iyengar Yoga, it is purely Yoga. But he always would say to us that if we studied, we would find that there are not many of these people who'll say that they are doing Yoga, they are sitting and they're talking about doing it but they're not actually doing it, they're not teaching it from experience. Whereas Iyengar developed it where it was very educational, and this is what the educationalists liked about Iyengar Yoga, because it had a beginning, a middle and an end to it, you know, it was following something, so it was progressive but all these other types, they couldn't prove at all where they were getting their beginnings and what they were following. So when we had that meeting (which I think I talked about) when Pen and I talked with all the educationalists in Manchester, and they'd invited somebody from all these different types of Yoga to come and speak for themselves, they sat and listened to all that everybody had to say, and then they were asking "could we prove the progression?". Well Pen and I had been fairly well-prepared, we'd written out our syllabus, how it progressed, and how people were showing that it certainly was helping them. Whereas these other people who use all sorts of weird methods apart from the little exercise they did, it was mainly sitting meditating. How do you prove that a person is benefiting from that? Well, they didn't seem to have an answer to it. They didn't see how you could build on good posture to be able to sit long enough to do meditating or whatever. They couldn't show that. Educationalists at that time said that they would accept the Iyengar system in education, but they could not accept the other types of Yoga to be educational for people and so that's how Iyengar was accepted in Manchester. He was certainly accepted in London like that because we had various educationalists that used to come to his classes. It just took off you know,

everywhere, not just Manchester and London, or London and Manchester, whichever you see first. We took off here, I think, a little faster than actually they did in London. He only had three teachers at the time in London: Beatrice Harthan who is now dead (she was 97 when she died a few years ago), Angela Marris who is still alive and is in her late 80's, and Silva Mehta who died a few years ago. They were the only three that he had teaching in London. When we took off in Manchester about the same time, because he came up here in '68, and even though he'd been to London since the 50's, he still only had those three that were teaching. But as soon as we took off, we were training 12 people straight away and then we had others that were coming in. So we were building up quite a group of teachers.

Erica: And those 12 were the ones from your original keep fit class?

Jeanne: There might have been one or two that came in from where Pen was teaching - I'm thinking of Mary Halliwell. I don't know whether you've heard of her?

Liz: No.

Jeanne: She was one of Pen's students somewhere in Cheshire, one of the women's guilds classes or something. And Primrose Ratcliffe, who is in her 80, and still doing, she goes to Pen's classes even now. And so they came from outside to join us on a Friday when we started the training. But certainly the 12 that were there originally were the ones that started to train. We went down to London regularly in a coach. An all-night affair, we slept on people's floors, so that we could learn from Iyengar. He encouraged us very much to get together and practice. We were running assessments and all sorts of other things to do with training before they were doing that in London. So we're very proud of that fact. Mr Iyengar opened his own Institute in Pune in '75, and in '77, he decided that we had to have a certification recognition because he'd been talking to the educationalists and that's what they were wanting, to prove that we had gone through this system.

Erica: Educationalists in Britain?

Jeanne: Yes, that's right. Yes, mainly in London. But by that time, we'd already been issuing our own certificates here in Manchester. I've got one now that was issued by Mr Sparrow, in Withington, to say that Pen had led the first training course and he gave us all these certificates. It was quite a tough exam too. I mean, we all felt – with all the anatomy and physiology – that we were being trained to be brain surgeons or heart specialists or something, they went into such depth, it was amazing. We also had all sorts of professional folk that used to come and gave us talks, and we used to go to the university medical centre to learn from all these professionals. Also we had to attend philosophy talks and goodness knows what to just to take a Yoga assessment, you know. The early assessments were very different to how they are today. We had to take a whole class for two hours, and now, what do they do? Teach one or two postures. I've just come back from the assessments in Durham. The assessments are now split into a part one or a part two. Two different exams. Not as tough as they were then. They were really daunting. You didn't just have two or three assessors, you had assessors come from all over the country. Anybody that was interested in assessing would just come. It was a matter of having lots of people's opinions on what they thought of the assessment itself. The London teachers like Sylvia Prescott, as well as Silva Mehta at that time, plus several others, used to travel up to Manchester to see what we were doing in assessments because they weren't doing assessments in London at that time. Of course we were invited to go down there to do assessing because Mr Iyengar said "you've got to keep in touch" but the north/south divide was a little difficult. Manchester were really leading in doing assessments. Each time I went to India, starting in '75, I had to sit and talk to various people who were representing their countries, particularly the Americans. They wanted to know how we were running teacher training and Mr Iyengar always made sure that I sat and talked with these people about what we did, how we got started, and they then started running something similar. Most countries, including all the continental countries, wanted to know what we were doing. I started having to go abroad, which is something else that I hadn't thought about getting involved in at all. I thought "I've got enough on here, up and down this country without going abroad"! But they were needing help in places like Denmark, and they get the Norwegians and the Swedes to their courses. I've been going to Germany

for a number of years. They're taking on places like Poland, Czechoslovakia to do their assessments in Germany. So it's very, very mixed. But, you know, it's a vast, a vast subject. It takes up a lot of your time just trying to run your own classes if you like, which I want to do, as well as having to keep going elsewhere to help out, and I'm not one who can easily say "no"! I'm learning now how, to say "no"! When someone says "will you help?" and you know it's really necessary then I obviously will but, as I said, I wasn't intending to go abroad so often. Also I travelled to Israel for about 8 years, Tel Aviv, when they first started.

Erica: So, I wonder if you could tell me what you knew about Hinduism and Indian culture when you first started?

Jeanne: I knew nothing.

Erica: And did you know people from South Asia?

Jeanne: No, I didn't know anybody. When I first went out, when it was with Silva Mehta's London group. I knew Mr Iyengar was going to open his Institute, and he was wanting obviously as many of us as possible to go and help him open it, and I'd heard somehow, and I can't quite remember how, that Silva Mehta was getting this group to go. And I was encouraged actually by Pen and people here if I could, to go. Pen's husband Peter did not want her to go. Pen had got three young children at the time, and he didn't want to be left on his own so she decided not to go. Anyhow, I was leaving my husband with two children when she persuaded me. I just felt that well someone's got to do it, and I was being asked to do it so I said I'd do it, and I took with me five others: Jocelyn Cohen, who lives in Hale Barnes and is now over 60; Anita Woodward from north Manchester; Arlette McLaren, my French friend from next door; Margaret Hopwood from Leeds; and Hilda Hunter, a New Zealand woman (I say woman because she was a lot older than any of us and we felt we were only young girls at the time). We were the group from the North that were going with all these people from London, mainly from London, 40 of us I remember that went. We had to take mats, blankets – equipment to leave at the Institute to help it get started. We were going to stay in cottages, and we were advised to take sleeping bags because we may have to sleep on the floor. Arlette brought an air bed, and we slept on the floor with the rats running over us! That's another story! So we sort of pioneered the way to go to India, and we knew nothing about India apart from that Silva Mehta had told us. She had said that we must wear either trousers or long skirts because we mustn't show our legs, and a covering because we mustn't show our arms. Didn't matter about the middle bit but it was arms and legs, We knew nothing of what to expect, or what Mr Iyengar was used to. I mean we've been having him come and stay here in the UK, and we knew that he liked Indian food, as long as it wasn't meat and eggs and all that sort of thing. We knew all that, but apart from that, I'd never even given it a thought, what it was like over there.

John: I had to case the joint for you though before you went.

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Jeanne: Oh yes, John went out there first, because he was working all around the world and he had work in India. The year before I went, I said to him "don't forget to go and see Mr Iyengar, he teaches in Bombay". Every weekend he used to go into Bombay from Pune. That's where he wrote his book, on the train journey between Pune and Bombay, he wrote *Light on Yoga*. I asked John "do try and go and see him there" so John did. He went to a class that Mr Iyengar was doing, and then Mr Iyengar kindly took John into the car, because he always had a car back from Bombay to Pune. He went on the train there but he came back by car so he travelled back to Pune and then Mr Iyengar showed him all around Pune on the back of his scooter and we took a video of that didn't we? John brought pictures back of him sitting on the back of Mr Iyengar's motor scooter, going up the main road, Mahatma Gandhi Road and all around where hundreds of bicycles and rickshaws were all mixed up, very busy and nearly bumping into some because John makes comments on the video like "whoops, just missed that one"! All sorts of funny things he said! So, yes, you vetted it didn't you the year before? 1974 and said what it was like so I had an idea what it was going to be like but I didn't know anything about the culture, I really didn't. I hadn't studied that at all, what they do or say, but we soon found out!

Liz: So what was it like? Did it come as a shock? Lots of people talk about India as a shock.

Jeanne: Well no. A lot of people say this, but I didn't really find it a shock. Probably it was because John had already told me a few things about what to expect, the beggars and so on. I mean the beggars then were massive in comparison what they're like today. Right from the airport when you open the aeroplane door you can smell India for a start, and even now it's similar, probably not quite as strong, the smell, and then you go through that bit from the airport to get through Bombay, which is awful. At that time as you came out of the airport, you see all the beggars and they're climbing up the windows trying to get to the people arriving because they want money or they want something. Money mainly. We had to sit and wait for a couple of hours because we arrived in the early hours in the morning and I think it was about 8 o'clock when we got the coach and we drove to a restaurant where Silva, in charge of this coach load of people, she said we could get a meal. Well, it was a tiny little restaurant and it certainly wouldn't fit 40 people. We didn't have very much, only some little bananas and a few little things that we managed to get to take back on the coach. In the gutters, there were beggars and also there were men that were having shaves, shaving themselves and washing themselves, literally in the gutter. That sort of thing of course you looked at, but it wasn't such a shock somehow to me. To some it was, some were very upset by it but I think it's because I ...

Erica (to John): Had you been travelling all over the world, is that a factor?

John: Well yes.

Jeanne: Yes in his job. So you see, I heard all these things. Brazil he had been to and seen similar things there, you know, they've got all the poor people.

John: There's a big difference there though. The poor people in Brazil, you've got to watch them, keep away from them. In India, the poor people, you go into their quarters and they're all smiling, happy faces.

Jeanne: Oh that's right. That is the difference. That's why it wasn't such a shock. Because they're so friendly and, although very poor, they've got these huge smiles on their faces. They never look unhappy. Whereas, we're saying, yes that was the difference. Brazil, they're not happy with their poor but in India, they are. Even now, I mean, you have them come up to you, they're not supposed to because there's a law now isn't there about begging apparently in Pune? They'll still come up to you though wanting money but with a big smile on their faces and they never look as though there's anything really wrong with them except a few that have got one foot missing or worse. We learnt that a lot of those sort of beggars have been trained that way unfortunately. Parents push their kids to do the begging but on the other hand, they're not whining as though they're that poor, if you see what I mean. In spirit they're not but certainly physically, they don't look as if they're well cared for or anything. No, it wasn't such a shock somehow, and I think that is probably why because they were happy in their state. They weren't unhappy even though we don't see that sort of begging in this country. Well, not quite the same but we do see them. In those days, a lot of the families were accepting that they had to live in the middle of a road. They had all these – islands we would call them but made of boulders mainly not nicely made at all, and a whole family would be cooking their meal there, and you would have them around you all the time wherever you walked. Now, you don't get that, you know, and it's got less and less over the times I've visited.

John: You still get the odd baby stuck under your arm.

Jeanne: Oh yes, they used to try to get rid of their children. Yes, at the airport I had that. Going back one time, we were walking into this airport and suddenly this baby's head was under my arm and the woman tried to persuade me to take this baby with me and you had to be very quick to make sure that they didn't leave you with the child. Yes, there are some surprising things and upsetting things for a lot of people. We've got some people going out for the first time next month and they were asking similar questions. We said "well, I don't know how you would find it today". I know in the early days it was a surprise for a lot of our people and it upset a lot of people, but I don't think now

that there's anything to be really upset by. Not really upset by as they used to. I mean I can understand why people are upset years ago but not now if they go.

John: Yes, all the poor people have ration cards and provided with food and drink as well.

Jeanne: We've got to know the people in Pune quite well and the police force. The Chief Police used to come into the hotel where we stayed. They're quite friendly with the manager there and he used to tell us all sorts of things. That these people are cared for, they do get a certain amount of money, and this has been going on for years, not just recently. It's not as though they haven't got anything, it's just that I suppose the way that they live in some of those so-called shelters, they're still very much behind the times of how life should progress. They're living in a very backward state in a sense, so whether they understand the value of money or whatever I just don't know. Or whether they're spending it on the wrong things like smoking, drinking and drugs. It's all there, so whether that's why they're so poor and backward in their way of thinking. They're just living as they used to live, so even though they're cared for or the law there provides for them, it's not really teaching them values. A lot of people come back and say "oh it's all changed, they're very westernised" and so on. Well, some are but not all of them. In Pune, it's not a small community, it's a huge community of people, so those that are westernised I think are the more affluent, not the ones that are living in those shacks. It always amazes me. They live in these filthy conditions really, and yet the saris are spread out and they're sparkling and they all look beautifully clean when they wear them. They don't look dirty so when people say "it's changing", well it is, where they're well off, but I don't think it is where they're not well off. They're trying to clean up the streets, take the people off the bridges that are in Pune, they're not living on the bridges as much as they were.

John: But they know how many people there are in India almost exactly. They've all got a ration book. If they move from Bombay to somewhere on the outskirts, they have to change the ration book, change the number, so the police say they know how many people are there.

Liz: Oh, I didn't know that.

John: Sounds incredible the way it happened.

Jeanne: It does. Every time I go I think "how can they keep account of all these people" because it's so vastly different from here. The very first time I went, the thing that hit me is, when I came back, how dead this country is. It's so alive over there, the colour and contrast. There's something going on all the time. We arrived back at London Airport – we went via London in those days – and it was so spotlessly clean, there was hardly a sound, it was so dead, and when I got back to the classes here in Manchester, they were also dead. I can remember saying to some of our now senior teachers that when I came back to teach I just couldn't understand why they were so quiet. Everyone was doing things so quietly, hush, hush, and, in India, everybody's shouting and there's noises and, you know, it's alive somehow.

Erica: Even during the classes?

Jeanne: Yes, of course. People aren't silent. There's all sorts of noises going on and of course they've got all the windows open usually even in the monsoons, they've got the windows open, and there's noise in the street, that's how it should be. Not silent as though you've got to be in a very quiet place before you can meditate. You should be able to do it in a very noisy atmosphere, and that was one of the things that struck me when I came back from India and of course each time I couldn't wait to get back there for a bit of life!

Erica: Oh right. And so how often did you go after that first trip?

Jeanne: Well, on record, I think it's supposed to have been every other year, because there was always a year in between, but often it was at the end of one year and the beginning of the next so it was practically nearly every year.

Erica: And how long would you stay?

Jeanne: Mostly for one month, although I stayed for three months on one trip, that my friend Lilian Biggs and I went out on. Mr Iyengar had been on at us to go to do more observation than actually classes. He said “you’ll be in one class but try and be there longer so you can observe” because he was having his first group come from Canada and his first group coming from South Africa, and he wanted us to be there to lend a helping hand in a sense. Unfortunately just before I went out, I had to have a stomach operation, and I was only home five weeks before I went to India, so in the first week or two I was there, I was still recuperating from the operation. Having said, unfortunately, it was unfortunate I had to have that operation, but I still worked because one of the jobs he gave me was to help in the class, one of these groups that were out for the first time. It was when he’d first got his set of weights, and I had to lift these weights, just having had a stomach operation, to stick onto some of these people. But that helped. It was amazing how that helped me to get better! Whether he knew that or not I don’t know but I always remember thinking “oh, this is fine, I’ll lift this weight up onto this person and stay with the person”. Usually, it was in plough pose – *Halasana* – because he wanted them to really hit the brick with the buttock area upwards, so the back moves. If you held the weight so you could feel it, well it’s amazing how it was heavy to lift it from the floor but those weights were not heavy once they’re placed on you. And the person there would feel it and start to really work and you had to hold the weight there you see to make sure it didn’t fall off and then when they came out, you had to lift it off, and it was that lifting that I was worried about at first, but it worked. It helped me to get better. We were there three months. We were so busy, Lilian and I. He wanted us to write up all the notes of these courses, as well as help in the classes, and as well as attend some of the classes for ourselves. So we were busy in between each class whether we were helping or whether we were writing up notes, scribbling them out, and then I went and typed them on an old rickety typewriter. The manager of the hotel had an office where I could do it, and then we had to present these back to Mr Iyengar to see that they were OK! There weren’t many corrections but we had quite a busy time for three months. I don’t think we stopped and it was over Christmas time. It was a November, December, January that we were there.

[Phone rings, taken by John.]

Jeanne: Yes, it was quite an interesting three months to be there.

Erica: So you were really helping Iyengar codify and or sort of document his own practice when you were there?

Jeanne: Yes. Lilian and I had that job on two or three occasions. When we were out for a month of writing up notes. We went on a back-bending session. The first one Mr Iyengar had ever done. He always did intensives where it was a variety of things that you did. He was persuaded by the Americans to do this back-bending course. For three weeks that was for, not the month. It was the first one he’d ever done and he said he’d never do another one after he’d done it because it was so difficult, but the Americans had persuaded him to do it and so every day we had three hours of just doing back-bends. Can you imagine? I was allowed to be in it because of my age. I can tell you how old I was, I was 60ish. Lilian wasn’t allowed to be in it, yet she was better at back-bends than me, but because I wasn’t so good, he wanted myself and one of the American women, same age as me, who also wasn’t that good, he wanted to show how he could still get us to do back-bends. He didn’t want people that were older. Lilian’s 80 this year, she’s 9 years older than me. Anyhow he’d got enough who could do back-bends he said! He wanted people who couldn’t do. So there was this American girl who’s name I can’t think of, not that it matters. We were at the back of the class. He told us to be not right in front of him, to be towards the back. When he’s teaching, he tends to forget who’s who. He goes at you like mad. So we were at the back and every time everybody had done the back-bend, we had to be used to show how he could get us to do it to a certain extent. It was very interesting in that sense. Lilian had to do the write-up for it, and we had to get together after the class. I would describe what I felt we did and she would then do the poses. She could do them easily anyhow, and I was looking at her written work to see if it corresponded with what I felt in the poses. It’s very different when you’re doing the posture and receiving the instructions to someone who’s sitting there just writing them. There’s no feeling. So we sort of did it that way and then wrote up

the notes and we made a book out of it, which we presented to Mr Iyengar. It was just for the people that were on the course, you know – we weren't allowed to use it for anybody else. There were, what, 40, I think on this course? There was quite a lot of us from all around the world. It was a very interesting course but oh it was a difficult one for Mr Iyengar. He was fantastic. He must have demonstrated every posture and shown different things at least half a dozen times. Every single pose, he did like that, whether it was a very easy one or a more difficult one, he was in and out of those postures. Some of them were incredibly difficult, even for those that could do back-bends. But he'd break it down to get you to do. I was doing things I thought I'd never ever be able to do, but we did do it, and he was quite pleased. Certainly that back-bending course was something to be remembered. Mr Iyengar has never done another one. And he did that one and he said "no", it took too much out of him, I'm not surprised. He's 86 now we've got to remember! He's fantastic. He still does all these things and that is one of the things I think that's kept me endeared to him because he does practice what he teaches. He doesn't just teach when he's not practiced it. He knows everything about it. His insight is phenomenal, it's not something that he's just got through with, he really has to dig deep to do the sort of teaching he does. No, he's fantastic.

Erica: So would you say that you were one of the main people that worked with Mr Iyengar in, I suppose, spreading his ideas?

Jeanne: In this country, yes, definitely.

Erica: And this country was the lead among countries in the west?

Jeanne: There were little pockets of people all over the continent but they really weren't forming anything, weren't really doing anything. They certainly weren't doing teacher training or that sort of thing. And then they started to grow. There would be a few from Switzerland, a few from Italy, a few from wherever, they'd get together and form a little group to come. In Pune then, we used to be a very mixed group, which was very much nicer actually than it is today. We were from all the countries, all mixed together. Now, when you go, you will get a few people that are from this country and a few people that are probably from Germany. They no longer take groups in that sense. When we went with Silva that first time, there were 40 of us you see. So there was very few others that could join that large number. Even though now, they'll take up to 90. When I go next in January 2006, I keep being told it's going to be very crowded, it'll probably be much more than the 40 that we used to have. It will be more like 70 I should imagine, or 80. They'll take 90 if it's a big occasion, and I don't think it is such a big occasion next January, but people like that month. It's a nice month to be in India. It's not too hot it's not too cold, it's just nice, and it's not monsoony weather. I've been most months now I think. The only month I've never been there is May. Of course now Geeta, who's running all the courses there, she's taking off a couple of months. May, they close anyhow, and they're thinking of closing for September, those two months, because she needs time off. She's there teaching non-stop all the time. But it's certainly different now when you go. You'll get the odd one from here, there and everywhere making their own way there. They're not a group as such, whereas I was taking groups of 30, 40, like Silva was doing, after that first time, just from Manchester. Bob and Cathy Welham came on one of them. You know, they come from the different areas. We used to get together and form a group and Mr Iyengar used to make you the leader of the group. You came in for a lot of "up on the stage and do"! He liked to use you because of the way that that particular country or group would understand the pose. Rather than demonstrate on an Indian body, it had to be on a western body. Of course it was always up on the stage so yes, I've had a lot of tuition, personal tuition, which is great obviously but, at the time, you think "oh gosh not again"! Not again.

Erica: Can I ask you, if you ever, did you study Yoga philosophy and history or?

Jeanne: I've read a few books I must say, but Mr Iyengar put the knowledge into me I think that philosophy is something you can't really teach. He used to say "it has to be part of who you are, what you are, you can't really teach it". It's not like any ordinary subject. When I started training teachers myself after helping Pen, and when Pen and I sort of divided because there was a need for teachers in Old Trafford area as well as in Manchester, two different education authorities. I decided to run a

training course in Old Trafford, and I was very fortunate because the Head of Centre there, a Mr Hollingshead, was the Head of Adult Studies. He called it Adult Learning, he never called it Adult Training or Teacher Training, it was always Adult Learning, and it took me a while to understand what he meant by that. He used to come along to the class, knowing nothing about Yoga, although I was there a number of years and he began to learn a bit about Yoga. But he'd come and talk to the group, where he got them to learn how to teach adults. He said "I'm not training you to teach, I'm training you" he said "so that eventually you'll understand how adults learn". He turned it back on the trainee teachers, because he said what he found with teachers, especially Iyengar teachers, he said "you tend to dictate when you stand in front of a group, you're not really teaching where the adult's going to learn if you're just going to stand there and just bark out a few instructions", which was true because that's what we were doing. So he got them to have all sorts of ways of understanding, sort of role playing. People like Patricia Booth – you probably know of her – has never forgotten his training, even today she will talk about it. He used to get the trainee teachers to do things where if they couldn't see the class, how would they describe what they were doing. For instance, sit back to back and just say how you would teach the pose of *Trikonasana*. What would you say? What would you do? And it's amazing how the instructions would change when you can't see, and he said "if you had a blind person in your class"? He gave lots of good ideas. He sounded always like Mr Iyengar to me because Mr Iyengar will say a similar thing. Mr Hollingshead said "what you're going to become eventually is a teacher not a preacher". He said "if you watch a preacher, they're really preaching at you, they're not teaching you something" and he said "you have to put yourself in the situation of that person you are teaching so that they understand the pose and let them be allowed to come back at you, whereas when you're standing there in front of the class and you're preaching, dictating, preaching the gospel, you're not getting through to the students at all of how they're going to learn to do something". He was wonderful in that sense because it's just like the way Mr Iyengar does things and how he puts his philosophy, if you like, into his teaching. It's there in his teaching, it's something that you do with understanding. You understand how the person or the people feel in front of you. We all say, don't we, that you learn from your students. If you're observant enough you're going to learn it all. Even today, I feel that, in a class, I'm always looking and thinking "oh yes, how did that person do that?" or "that was good, I'll try that out". You know, Yoga philosophy, it's a way of life isn't it?

Erica: So you didn't have any particular connection with all the sort of, well with the kind of, well the Yogic scriptures if you like or?

Jeanne: No, no, no. I mean I've read about them and I will honour them but not where I've suddenly got to do it. I don't see why that should change anybody.

Erica: And were you drawn to read those through the Yoga then?

Jeanne: Yes. Well, all these books are presented to you and I've got students that say "oh you must read this and you must read that", and I've got a copy of the Gita and I've got a copy of all sorts of those sort of books. I've read them, and some of these big philosophers. I've got all sorts of books like that, and we have them up in the Institute and I have read them, but I feel well, that's alright for them but I don't see why I should suddenly change to be like them. I feel everybody should, you know, get something good from whatever they want to, whether they read it or emulate somebody, like I suppose in many ways, I like to emulate Mr Iyengar. Not to the degree of what his faith is. I see a lot of good that comes from his work that, yes, I certainly want to emulate but not to the degree of changing my whole way of looking at things. I'm me! Accept me as I am or I don't mind if you don't. It's not something I've wanted to enforce on anybody and I don't think anyone should feel that they're having something enforced upon them. I'd hate to think my students were having to make themselves believe in things I believe in, I think that's wrong. I think it's half the challenge that we're all different, and that there's a lot of people who don't do Yoga, as well as those that do. I mean you hear people say "everyone should do Yoga". Well why should they? It'd be a funny world if we all did the same thing. Wouldn't be half as interesting would it? Not really.

Erica: And you've obviously devoted a huge part of your life to developing and teaching Yoga and wondered what, that obviously affected the whole of your family life.

Jeanne (to John): he can answer that for himself

Erica (to John): Can I ask what line of work you were in that took you to travel and helped you to not feel so shocked by going to India?

John: Electrical engineering. Power stations, nuclear stations, railway systems. Quality assurance

Jeanne: What was the main one in India? You went to Calcutta as well as Bombay. What was it? Electrical.

John: Oh that was a plant, a hydro scheme.

Erica: And did you ever get involved in doing Yoga too?

John: I can do an occasional party piece I think.

Jeanne: Party piece! He can do lots of things actually. One funny little story – he broke his leg in Scotland, it's wasn't a real skiing slope, it was the artificial one. He'd gone off on business. We had started to put central heating in here where you put the flues up the chimney, and he left it and he said "I'll finish it when I get back". I met him off the plane, I'd got the children with me, and we saw John being wheeled in a wheelchair with his leg up. He had broken his leg. However, he managed with a broken leg to climb up ladders. I was practicing and John was helping me in the practice and I said "you know, you should do this" and he said "I can do it". It was *Halasana*, and with the weight of his leg in his cast, he could get over but he couldn't get back! It was so funny. He's probably forgotten that but I remember telling the class about John and his broken leg and this story of how he got over and he just could not get back. I could hardly lift him because the cast was so heavy but we got him back in the end. I think he was a bit surprised he had to stay in it. He'd attempt these things but never for more than a second. He was in and out. Mr Iyengar gets on very well with John. because Mr Iyengar does have quite a social contact with the men, you know, more than with the women. Whenever he came here, he always got on very well with John. He used to hit John on the back of his shoulder. "Well sir" he used to say to John, "when are you going to come to class?" and John used to hit him back in the same way "when you take up sailing"! That's John's life you see. Tit for tat. Well he knew Mr Iyengar would never take up sailing. So he's never taken ...

John: ... we got him paddling in Israel.

Jeanne: Oh yes we did. We were hosts to him in Israel. Mr Iyengar had a bad knee at the time. He'd been in a car accident in Pune, and he couldn't walk properly, not for long, but the Israelis wanted him to go down to the sea. He wanted to go down too but it was a long strip of sand he had to get across. We got down there eventually, oh, and you couldn't get him out of the water because it was a beautifully warm evening and we'd had this ...

John: ... we'd had dinner ...

Jeanne: We'd had dinner on the beach. He was always ready to join in anything, no matter what, but he could hardly walk and on the sand, you know, that's always difficult to walk on.

John: He had to walk because it was a sloping beach, and because it's Mediterranean, the tide doesn't go up and down very much.

Jeanne: Yes. So no, John's not really taken up Yoga, but he does many other things as well. That's what I mean, it's not for everybody, you know, I never believed in making people do it anyhow. I mean, it's their choice, if they don't really want to do it, there's plenty of other things in life one can do. We all say there's life after Yoga! Many of the teachers say that even now!

- Liz: And what about other members of your family, your more extended family, whether it was siblings or parents in the early days, in particular, what did they think about you suddenly – I mean I know it wasn't sudden – but getting so involved in Yoga and going to India.
- Jeanne: Well my mum, when she was alive, she's been dead a number of years now, when I first started, we'd visit my parents, and I'd show my mum what I used to do, she could do it as well. It was amazing. Her knee joints were in perfect condition and she'd sit in a lotus. She could bend and hands flat on the floor in *Uttanasna*. She could just do them, and she'd never ever thought of doing that. A very small person, my mother, I'm big like my father, he's also dead. But my mother was a tiny person, 5' 2" and compact, and she had very nice legs, and her joints were really good, and she could just do any of these postures. She would say "well, I can do that!" "I can do that!" And she just, thought, well, if that's what I want to do, do it. I don't think I had anybody who looked down on me doing it. I think they all accepted what I did, except perhaps an odd comment from my brothers, thinking that I was going to do something weird and wonderful, "oh she stands on her head!" A friend of ours, we always called her Aunty Doris, from Leeds, she used to hate to see me stand on my head. She used to say "oh come down", she used to say "your eyes'll fall out", all sorts of funny things. She didn't like it. She'd turn away as though it was something awful that was going to happen. But apart from her, I don't think anybody else said anything, they just accepted. I get relatives now who say to me "are you still doing it?" "Are you still doing Yoga?" "Are you still teaching?" "When are you retiring?" I say that I've been trying to retire for the past 10 years but I don't think I will! I mean retire from teaching, but you just don't do you? It's something you will always do, as Mr Iyengar said the last time I spoke to him, which was last December. It was Geeta's 60th birthday, and he was coming up 86. They had a sort of get-together birthdays. And he was saying then that when he dies, the only thing he wishes he can do is to go out in *Tadasana*. He's going to die whilst he's still standing up in *Tadasana* he said! He's always said that though. I've heard him say it many, many times and he's said it more recently at one of the talks he was giving. So it wouldn't be a bad way to go would it? Rather than lying down to it! Going down standing up.
- Erica: And you said, you said about Mr Iyengar getting on, being particularly fond of men, and yet it was mainly women who ... who made the connection with him.
- Jeanne: Yes, I know. Well, when I say that, OK, yes he does get on well with women as well in that sense, but socially I've always found if it's a roomful of women, he's very quiet, or he will just talk about Yoga to them. When he talks to a man it's about other things, not just on Yoga. So that's why I always feel he's more comfortable in a male social group than with women. He just doesn't know how to have that sort of conversation, apart from bring up Yoga questions and problems. You don't hear him doing that so much with the men. I mean, if they've got a problem, they've got a problem, but he'll talk about other things. He loves cricket of course, he's a big follower. In Pune he runs classes for sportsmen. He's got the yachting club in Bombay and he sees those people in his classes. He's got the cricket teams. In fact, the main cricket team go to Pune to do Yoga. He's written a book for sportsmen, which is coming out when we're there in January. Runners too: he's got some runners in his classes. And the latest is footballers. He's a follower. I don't know whether you know, but we've got one of our teachers, Louise McMullan, she is teaching the United team, the top team. She's had David Beckham in the class when he was here.
- John: And Ryan Giggs.
- Jeanne: Yes, Ryan Giggs. Ryan Giggs wrote an article in one of the men's magazines about Iyengar Yoga, and it's got a picture of him doing some postures and he reckons that's what's given him a much better chance in football. I took a copy of it out to Mr Iyengar and he's thrilled to bits. He's always admired United as a follower. In Birmingham, one of our teachers there, Jane Orton, and two other teachers, are teaching the cricketers, and they are also hoping to get the football team. Richard Ward in Bath has got a rugby team. Yoga is spreading amongst the sports people.
- Erica: So prior to those kinds of developments, was it, has it been mainly women who've trained and developed Iyengar Yoga?

Jeanne: No. In India, it was all men because the women were not encouraged to do exercise, but Mr Iyengar's , first group were the cadets – he was teaching the army cadets. And then he gradually took a public class on, I think he was only about 16 or 17, and it was all women. The first class for all women. The way he was teaching it for the women was a little different. Not that I noticed it when we went out, it all seemed to be just the same for men and women, but that first group he had, I think, was a lot more just for women, and then of course his daughter was in the class as well, and gradually she was teaching at girls' schools. So they were getting the women interested in Pune. But when he came over here, of course, yes, there were more women, than men.

Erica: Because that's the case in most, all Yoga classes I've been to, its almost entirely women.

Jeanne: And yet my classes now, as we've got more male teachers, I have quite a percentage of men. My Tuesday night, which is a mixture of students and teachers, the students that come, I've got more men than women now. We've always had a few men here in the north, I think, more probably than down in the south. I remember from my first class in London, after Mr Iyengar had been up here for a demonstration in '68, it was in Paddington in a big gymnasium and it was lines and lines of people. There must have been about 100 I should think that took the classes in those days and they were mainly women. Mr Iyengar was bringing us from the north and wherever, all together in this centre, and he was doing "teacher training" (in quotes though because it was not really the sort of training we were used to doing). He would just pick on somebody, walking up and down the lines and say "go and teach the next pose", and then you were pulled to pieces all about what you were doing or you weren't doing. I remember he pushed me out to do *Virabhadrasana III* and not my favourite one and so I did it like an "express train". I wanted to get it over with and he shouted in this great big hall "hey, you're like the express train", exactly as I described it, and I knew I was. And of course I had to do it again because I was went too fast, but that was his way of knowing what you would do in front of all these people. Well, you couldn't see them, you're on the same level as they are. All these rows so it's only the front rows that could really see you, but you had to shout out the instructions to get everybody to do it. So it wasn't really training but it gave him an idea of how eventually we had to do it. He gave us a lot of help on how to train teachers, but his way of training was, oh it was tough. He held two teacher-training courses in Pune, and he said after the first one he wouldn't do that again but he did. He used to say "now don't do it exactly as I do", or "don't use the same words exactly as I would use them". He said "be yourself". Then of course, if you were yourself, "why didn't you do so and so?" Meaning that we should at least try and do something or say something similar to him but not in exactly the same words. And of course we were avoiding that because people got told off for using the words, probably exactly like he said them which was only right that he should tell us off, but then, whatever we said, wasn't right anyhow! So you couldn't win, it was a no-win situation! So we didn't really appreciate that that was good training, except that it probably made you a little bit more alert to how you had to teach, or how you were being trained to teach in your own country, I just don't know, but I know a lot of people didn't enjoy it and I think that's why he said he wouldn't do it again. But he did do it again and that was even tougher because he got you to demonstrate it and do it a little more in depth, and that was quite frightening for a lot of people including myself. To have to get up on the stage and talk about the pose as if you knew everything about it, when you knew jolly well you didn't, but you'd got to show that side of it. They were tough courses, the training courses, worse than the back-bending sessions. Back-bending was fun, but that certainly wasn't, it could be tough. But a number of us went through it. It was quite a group I took out that particular time too, quite a lot from the north, especially up in Newcastle and Scotland. Anyhow, we had quite some experiences Yoga-wise, so we must like the subject to be put through all this torture!

Liz: And how was it that you became an advanced teacher?

Jeanne: Oh yes, that's a story, although not too long I hope for you, but let me think. It was in 1981, the end of 1980, Mr Iyengar wanted to know how many had got the advanced certificate in the UK. He was asking this all around the world. I was the Chairman of the I.Y.A. at the time. When we counted it up, we'd only got, at that time, Angela Farmer, Diana Clifton and Paquita Claridge, so there were only three. Mr Iyengar wanted to know how many we thought – when I say "we", it was the Committee of the Association – thought should be upgraded. Kofi Bosisia's name was mentioned because he'd been around a long time. Maxine Tobias – she's written a book, "Relax". She lives in America now

and so does Kofi. Then Mr Iyengar wrote back to me and the Committee, and he asked “why not yourself?” Obviously I wasn’t going to put myself forward anyhow! I’d already got the Senior Teaching Certificate, because he started giving out certificates in ’77 and he gave me the Senior one for some reason, and he gave Pen the Junior one, which I felt was a little bit mean when she’d been around as long as I, but I think I got it because I’d been going to India and she hadn’t.

Erica: She didn’t go to India at all?

Jeanne: She did later after her husband died but she wouldn’t go whilst he was alive as previously mentioned. When he died, she was very, very upset, obviously. We all were because it was so tragic the way he died. I persuaded her to go down to London with me. She didn’t want to go because she really wasn’t over Peter. I said “come on, let’s go and talk to Mr Iyengar”. She had written and told him about Peter. She didn’t want to but I made her come down to London with me, and we talked. I was hoping was that Mr Iyengar would persuade her to come to India with me because I was due to go out, which he did. So Pen came then and she’s been twice since. I think she’s only been about three times, something like that. And she was going to come with us next January 2006, but her brother’s very ill. Later I was running senior courses. I’d said to Mr Iyengar that we were going to need a lot more senior teachers if we were going to have moderators, because a moderator had to be a Senior. Mr Iyengar was giving out certificates for Seniors at that time, by photographs. John came in on that, doing all these photographs, people here like Tricia Booth, Hilda Hooker, Lilian Biggs, the Jacksons (Peter and Anne Jackson), they all wanted to be Seniors and the only way he would do it at that time was by photographs. And that didn’t really work! I discussed it with him on a train journey to Cardiff, about some of the photographs and he said “well look, you can see how they’re helping”. I said “yes, but it’s a dead photograph, how can you really tell that the person wasn’t really helping by a photograph?” I didn’t believe in that and I wanted him to have videos where it was moving so you could really see, but he didn’t want that. So in the end, he talked about setting up assessments. Pen was on the first assessment to get her Senior. Others as well, like Margaret Austen, Elaine Pidgeon, Penny Chaplain and the two Jacksons, because their photographs weren’t accepted by him so they had to be on it. I can’t remember who else. There were 8 of them or 9 of them, and that was the first Senior assessment that had been done in the country. Since then I have done several Senior assessments. Now I’ve got a group of 19 waiting at the moment. It just goes on, but we need them because the organisation’s got so big. We have 250 doing introductory level certificates, let alone, all the others. As the organisation’s got bigger, we must have about 900 members or more. So we just have to provide the Senior teachers to be able to do these assessments. I’ve never done an assessment myself except with Mr Iyengar over there, being pushed up on the stage more times than I can remember and being told off just as much as anybody else if things weren’t going as he wanted them to go. So I have had the Advanced certificate since ’81. It’s only the Junior part I might add of the Advanced, it’s not the Senior Advanced because no one gets that, he said, unless they have been seen and passed by himself, Preshant and Geeta. And I don’t think they’re ever going to give that Senior one to anyone. The postures in that syllabus are so difficult. The Senior one’s tough enough. I’ve got a Senior Level 3 group at the weekend, this coming weekend, in Bristol who are doing it. When I say it’s in Bristol, they don’t all come from Bristol, they come from around, but we’re holding it there and it’s really tough, Level 3 Senior. Some of the poses in it are quite tough. I certainly can’t do them now, but, because of my knowledge, they want me to help them, and so I said I would. I don’t feel that I’m worthy of the Advanced Certificate, I still feel I’m very much at the beginning. There’s so much to keep going back on. So many steps backwards, very few steps forwards it seems! Yes, it’s a vicious circle.

Liz (to Erica): Where do you think we should go? We’ve covered quite a lot about ...

Jeanne: I’ve done a lot of talking but whether it’s really been of any help or ...

Erica: ... no it has, it’s been really, really interesting. Well, because the set of questions about the development of the Institute. Yes or maybe want to ask you about, that is, you moved out of further education. Further education changed didn’t it?

Jeanne: No, we haven’t really moved out. No we haven’t ...

Liz: You still do ...

Jeanne: ... yes, a lot of our teachers still do work for education.

Liz: Oh right, right.

Jeanne: I moved out because we had the building presented after 20 odd years of looking, and I knew that the only way I could help was to ask my students that were in education if they wanted my teaching, would they come up to the building. And a lot of them did, because otherwise we weren't going to have classes. It would take a long time to establish classes. It does even now take time to get the local people in Duckinfield to come to classes. They're getting a lot more now perhaps than they used to, but when we first went there, it was an unknown area. But the building was there, just right. We had to encourage all our teachers to keep saying "take a second class, come up to the Institute", but a lot of those teachers are still working in education as well as supporting the Institute. It's only people like me that came out of further education. I was gradually dropping certain educational classes. At that time education was making it very difficult for some of the teachers that were coming to my classes. It was mainly a teachers' class that I was running, although I did have students as well, and even if it was students, if they came from outside of Manchester, they were in Cheshire Education or Stockport, they had to pay a lot more to come in. I was getting a bit cross about this, and I said "well, in that case" I said "I might just as well run it privately, so that they can come" and that's what happened. Withington Further Education Centre were going to drop the Annexe at St Chad's where I taught, because they didn't need it for anything else, only the Yoga that was there. So I said "right, well I'll take it on privately". So I did but I still went to Mosely Road School which was the other centre there and the one at Chorlton, at the bottom of Mauldeth Row. What did they call that? Chorlton Further Education? Marion still teaches there I think. So I had those two places still going on and it was at both those centres I indicated that I was going to support the new building of the M.D.I.I.Y., which, by the way, we've now purchased, just recently, so we're quite pleased about that as we've been leasing it until now. So I told my students "if you want to come, that's where I'll be teaching" and they all came, including the Wednesday morning class that Marion took over. I was most surprised that they could all manage it. On that Wednesday we used to have (I don't whether she was still there when you were there) Dorothy Cauldwell, who was once Secretary of the M.D.I.I.Y. She came and I used to pick a few people up to take with me in the car on a Wednesday morning, and they were still there when I left them with Marion for a number of years. Several that were the older generation are now dead, I'm afraid but yes, it really took off then. So yes, it's not true to say that we finished with education because a lot of our member teachers at the moment are teaching in further education still. I mean, they're not liking some of the things that's happening in education I must admit.

Erica: Well there's been a lot of reorganisation and changes.

Jeanne: ... oh, all that paperwork they have to do, they're all grumbling about it. They said "you can spend some of your teaching time just sitting there filling up papers or forms" or whatever. It takes too much time out of their teaching, and that reminds me of when I worked for Withington Further Education particularly, they were always fond of this break time to socialise with your students and go and have a cup of tea and do this and do that and then by the time you've got them back, they didn't want to do any work. So it was Pen and I who eventually broke that all up, we said "no, we're not having a break, we're going straight through". "You can't do two hours and have no breaks" so the Head of Centre said. I said "well, our students want it" so we organised the students to get up a petition about this "no cups of tea, no breaks". They'd much rather finish with their relaxation and go home, not have this chat chat chat and then try and get back to class. So that's something we did then. I think it just swept through all the further education centres that they didn't have this break, which I found very amusing! Well it was a waste of time really.

Liz: Yes. I remember hearing the break bell go and when I first started, I remember that and all these people from all the classes going past.

Jeanne: We wouldn't allow you to ...

Liz: Well we wouldn't have wanted to either.

Jeanne: Ah, you imagine, you're going to do a shoulder stand and you're full of all this weight of drinking and eating and feeling ill afterwards so I think that's what we told the authorities in the end – that it wasn't good for your health! So, yes, it was funny.

Liz: And so what kind of changes have you noticed about the people who come to the classes over the years? You talked about maybe more men coming in, more sports people being interested but any other changes?

Jeanne: No.

Liz: More younger people or older people?

Jeanne: Well they seem young to me now! I've noticed that, it's like the policemen get younger isn't it?

Liz: Yes.

Jeanne: Changes, changes. Well everything's changing in a sense, and yet nothing changes in one way. Changes in the sense of the organisation, how they're organising now. There's lots more rules and regulations which isn't a bad thing. If anything, I think it's improved. The only thing I'm a little concerned about is the numbers that are growing to form the organisation.

Liz: So the organisation, local organisations?

Jeanne: No, really the main one. And it must be because of the local ones as well that you've got more and more members and so on but the big one is getting too big I fear because they're having so many committees, sub-committees and so on to run it and organise it, and they're not keeping together if you see what I mean. They've got committees for this and for that, and then they're supposed to meet and give a report, and yet each committee doesn't seem to know what the other one's doing! So in my opinion it's getting too big. It's not as it used to be where a small group of people run it. They knew exactly what they were doing and everything functioned very well. Now it comes where they have a meeting and then they're trying something out and they don't know whether to suggest at the next meeting that it's not working or whatever because another group maybe against it. It's too big, you know, and that's my biggest fear.

Erica: That's the international organisation?

Jeanne: Yes, that's the International one and God alone knows what's going to happen to it, in the next few years, if it gets any bigger. It's a bit frightening in a way that it will get out of hand and then the thing I'm worried about is that Iyengar's standards will drop. Just looking at the assessments recently, I fear that the standard isn't quite as we used to have it. Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, whether we were too strong, now it's getting a bit weaker, I just don't know, but it doesn't seem to me to be as it should at this stage. I was only talking to a colleague this morning about it that if we're not careful, we're going to have bigger problems because it's getting too big. You'd think if there were more people, that you could share it out better but it goes off into pockets then and it doesn't come together somehow. I think it's like most committees, you need a small group that know what they're doing, get on with it and it functions very well. But once you start getting smaller committees that are having to help the bigger committees or the main group, they don't function so well, and it sort of goes astray. The main work of the committee is not really being done. It's a lot on paper, it's a bit like education, it's all on paper and not really functioning in the real world, it's not happening. They spend too much time with paperwork and committee work, and the real thing that's going on gets neglected which is a shame. So I just hope it doesn't go that way but at the moment there is a fear that it is doing exactly that. The M.D.I.I.Y. numbers have grown but not out of hand. We need that number of members now to support this building. We're giving all sorts of

functions that will help, because we've got a lot of building work to do, repair work. It's a very old building, it's over 100 years old, it used to be an old clinic, and before that I think the conservative people had it as a ballroom and a function room, and now we've got it nicely established with all our stuff and it's running very well. Now that we've got the whole building –the bottom part has been let off to martial arts people. They're going to be moving out soon, so we've bought the whole building. Once they've gone we want to make another big room for classes because we've got enough students to make more classes so we do need the space. We are doing all sorts of things. Like Marion is organising an entertainment evening on the 1st October, where we're going to do a Yoga sketch called "A Beginners Class in the Bygone Days?" As the narrator of this I'm asking the audience a question that, as they observe, are they able to tell us at the end whether the classes of today are like the classes of yesterday and vice versa! We've set-up some of our teachers to do some weird and wonderful things in these sketches; there's five sketches that are going to be done. Very interesting. Based on the different types of students you have in your class. So it should be fun. It's just a fun night, raising money.

Erica: So just moving into the sort of final few questions. I'm interested in, I mean obviously you played a major role in the development of Iyengar Yoga in Britain and particularly in Manchester, but generally Yoga seems to be very, becoming very popular and you've talked about the sort of development of sports people being interested. I mean, are there any other reasons in your view about why Yoga's so popular currently?

Jeanne: Well probably because famous names have come up that do Yoga. Can't think of one at the moment but I'm sure there are several that you know of that do Yoga.

Erica: Pop stars.

Jeanne: Pop stars, that's what I mean, yes. What's the one from, oh she was in with the four girls, what do they call themselves?

Liz: The Spice Girls.

Jeanne: Yes, The Spice Girls. One of them, I've forgotten what her name is, the one that's been doing it. Geri Halliwell that's it. Is she a Spice Girl?

Liz: Yes.

Jeanne: Geri Halliwell. You hear that when they come to enrol, this is at the M.D.I.I.Y., "well Geri Halliwell does it, you know, are we going to do the same sort of Yoga". So one of our male teachers, he does beginners' classes, he said "well" he said "I hope we're not going to do exactly the same as Geri Halliwell" he said "because" he said "I don't think what she does is really as good as what we do" or something like that. It's not just the young girls that come to say this, it's fellas as well ...

Liz: Oh right.

Jeanne: ... who do this. So then they start to do what we do, and the comment is "oh that was hard work" and the teacher will then say "well that's real Yoga. You can either do that or go and find a class that do like Geri Halliwell will do, I'm not teaching that sort of thing". Then they start to see some of the pictures, and we've got posture sheets and they compare it with some of the things that they see. The students are told "that's how not to do it, that's how to do it". You learn to do it properly, not to do it where it's all crooked and out of line etc. We've found that those people stay, and they tell others and they start to talk then about the Yoga they're doing and I think that's what brings the people in. It's the people themselves, the students themselves that do it. It's not that we advertise – we do very little advertising. Margaret Ellison, she's our publicity person, she puts an advert in Yellow Pages; local newspapers sometimes we have a set advert; we're being asked at the moment to put an article in Yoga and Health magazine, they've asked us before and I think we've done it and they're asking again. But we don't advertise to that extent. It's done really mouth-to-mouth by students who come and they enjoy it and they get their friends to come each week to the beginners

classes, it's somebody who's brought somebody. We never know who's coming to some of those classes and probably the class is quite full but we manage to get them in somehow, because it's their friends who say it's good. I think that's the best advert you could possibly have really isn't it? And so that's probably why it's being said it's popular. When I started off at Withington we had queues of people coming, so it was very popular then too. Quite honestly, I haven't seen much change. I have not seen where it's suddenly fallen down or it's suddenly gone up, it's been, I think, similar. I mean even when we started with the Institute, I took my classes but other teachers encouraged their students to come and it's grown from that. About 8 or 9 teachers, probably 10 teachers teach at the M.D.I.I.Y., as well as going and teaching their local further education classes. Marion's got quite a lot of classes apart from the one at the Institute. And of course, she's now helping with teacher training. She goes to Ireland quite a bit to teach and Sheffield. I've never really seen Yoga classes right down, they have always been on the up. We are getting quite a lot of ages, 19, 20 year-olds, which is rather nice, because usually at that age, they've got so many other things on that Yoga is the last thing on their mind isn't it? But we are getting quite a number of that younger age that are coming to classes.

Erica: I think I was one of the youngest people at ... I went to a Wednesday class so.

Jeanne: Who was that, sorry?

Erica: I think I was one of the youngest people. And I was in my mid-20's so.

Jeanne: There's always been quite a good mix of ages really but I have noticed, probably it is because I am older, that I notice they're younger looking on the one hand but ...

Erica: And, I mean, you've talked about the committee, the sort of problems with the organisation getting so large. Is that, how do you see Iyengar Yoga kind of continuing into the future? Is it going to get bigger and bigger and more and more complex in its organisation?

Jeanne: Its organisation I think, the people who are running these committees can get their problems but I don't think it will upset the Institutes themselves. I think they will just flourish. I mean, I'm sure our M.D.I.I.Y. will flourish now that we've got the building ourselves and we can do a bit more with it. We will get some double-glazing to stop the traffic noise on King Street. I'm sure we will just grow and I think this goes for all the Institutes. I know all of them. I'm thinking of the south: there's one in Bristol, and then Lilian Biggs' daughter, Sheila, has got a big one in High Wycombe. Jane Orton is in Birmingham. They're all flourishing very well, the Institutes and Centres as some of them are called, like in Bath. In Cirencester, Judy Sweeting, they've got their own private Centre in their house, it's a big room built on and that's growing all the time. Whenever I have to go and teach anywhere like that, they have to hire a big hall outside because there's not enough room in some of these Institutes. There is a lot of interest in Iyengar Yoga, definitely in this country and certainly in other countries. They're all very keen to push on with Iyengar's system so when he's, sad to say, dead and gone, I'm pretty sure that they'll keep going, because he's given so much to everyone. Enough for several lifetimes I think for everybody to keep going. Don't think there's any doubt about that.

Liz: We've kept you talking for quite a while ... it's been fascinating.

Erica: Yes, absolutely, really filled us in with so much information, thank you.

Jeanne: No, it's my pleasure.

Liz: Is there anything that we've missed out that you feel we should definitely know?

Jeanne: I don't know. Do you think I have (to John)? You've been here most of the time.

John: No I don't think so.

Jeanne: No I don't think so. If there's anything else you can think of afterwards, just ask me! Ok. Because once I get wound up, there's no stopping me! It's a fascinating subject to me, you know, as well as to

you. And also it helps me to remember, or at least try to remember, it's very hard. As I said at the beginning, the telling gets better, it gets embroidered every time you tell it! Doesn't it?