

May '08 Interview

## Jens Bache in Copenhagen

By Michael Peter Carter

*Jens was recently authorized and teaches at Astanga Yoga Skole København ([www.Astanga.DK](http://www.Astanga.DK)).*

### **Tell us about the region of the world you were born and raised in:**

I was born in Copenhagen, Denmark in the most green and beautiful part of the city called Frederiksberg. It is calm and quiet though central - only 15 minutes from the center on a bicycle. Now I live here again with my girlfriend Susanna after having been away for almost 25 years.

### **Tell us something about yourself: for example: what your taste is for music, movies, food, or what hobbies you have, childhood nicknames, who inspires you, what things you fear in life (spiders, heights, people) etc?**

I like music, but maybe I am a little bit old fashioned - it was enchanting when Nick and Colin were playing acoustic guitars last summer in the garden of the Indian Song House in Mysore. I have always been impressed with people who can play music and create an atmosphere of togetherness, fun and joy.

### **Tell us about your first Yoga Class:**

I was in California studying in Berkeley and a danish girl invited me to join her for a yoga class at the gym. I went and was surprised how much I was sweating, coughing and to my surprise how weak I was and everybody else looked so relaxed. After I felt very good and was flying high on new oxygen - and I had to try it again.

### **Tell us about what styles of Yoga you experienced before Ashtanga if any:**

Coming back to Copenhagen, I was looking for dynamic yoga but it was not available and I therefore visited other styles of yoga.

### **Tell us about your first Ashtanga Yoga Class/Teacher:**

Back in Copenhagen I found a small group of people practicing Astanga and I had my first workshop in the spring of 1999 with Lino Miele. This made a huge impact on me to see how the practice could be complete with focus, breath, ease, strength and with such a nice crowd of people around.

### **Tell us about teachers who have had a major impact on you and your practice:**

I started being part of this early group of Astangies in Copenhagen and we were traveling to neighbouring countries like Sweden, Finland and also Italy to learn more and be part of a community of yogies. We were getting into the practice with a group of teachers - Lino Miele, Gwendoline Hunt, Tina Pizzimenti, Juha Javanainen, Petri Raisanen and Susanna Finocchi and I was very impressed and found all the things I have been looking for. Trying to get back into my career I was in and out of jobs but yoga was always there so on Lino's initiative together with 5 other people we founded a school to teach yoga - Astanga Yoga School of Copenhagen.

**Tell us about the first time you met Guruji:**

As we were related to the Astanga Yoga School of Helsinki and they were hosting Guruji in August 2001, I went there and had a strong and beautiful experience meeting Guruji for the first time. It was a very serene atmosphere and Guruji's presence made everybody so openhearted and pure. It was very special and I felt that I had found something that I was looking for for a long time.

**Tell us about the first time you travelled to Mysore:**

My girlfriend and I went to Mysore in June 2003 when the new shala had just opened in Gokulam. Everything was very basic and the apartment we rented was without anything - we had to find sheets, covers, stove, pots, everything which was not available in Gokulam. The month was very quiet as Sharath was travelling and we were less than 30 people with Guruji and Saraswathi. Of course being a beginner things were overwhelming and I was just there to observe but Guruji was nice and took good care of us. One afternoon I met him in the office and showed him an old photo from the time of Krishnamacharya and he immediately pointed out himself on the photo. I like the history of Astanga and lineage of gurus and to listen to Guruji when he talks about this - it comes alive. Last summer (2007) we were with Guruji in his office in the old yogashala in Lakshmipuram and he showed us the book with the first western students and we started to talk about his time with Krishnamacharya. Then he takes a small book out with

notes that he took on a lecture with Krishnamacharya on Gheranda Samhita dated August 1941 - and suddenly we went 65 years back in time and felt touched by history!

He remembers everything and I would so much like to have been able to speak Kannada to really understand all the things he is trying to teach us.

**Have you been teaching since you were Authorized? Have you opened a Shala? Where? What plans do you have for workshops, your shala, teaching around the world?**

We are teaching daily in the yogashala in Copenhagen both Mysore morning and afternoon classes as well as led class. We teach the vinyasa method as Guruji and Sharath has been teaching to us and people here really appreciate and respect all the knowledge that has been build up in this beautiful practice. Guruji also expressed his appreciation when he was here in August 2006 and he said: Copenhagen is good. Good students - I like! So we feel very blessed that he came here and that he is so caring and shares his knowledge with everyone.

### **What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?**

I hope to see that the school has developed into a community of yogies sharing the practice and that we are incorporating the yoga into all aspects of our daily life - no matter what career or family life that we have. I believe that yoga is for everybody - men, women, children, youth, old, weak, strong people. It is a beautiful practice and we just have to do it. Guruji tailored this practice from his vast knowledge and we can just do it. If we are curious we can discover the philosophical parts, the explanations and background but even if we don't just to do the practice we will still get all the benefits.

### **Anything else you want to say?**

Yes, to keep practicing - I like this simple advice. Sometimes I feel tired and think that I am not moving at all but anyway to be on the mat and just do what I can do still brings me somewhere else than if I stayed in my own moods.

*Michael Peter Carter is the co-founder of Livingmysore.com and practices with Paul and Rachelle Gold in Toronto, Canada.*

*Images, courtesy of Jens. They show Guruji with his notes (mentioned above), the original Yoga Mala, and Guruji in Copenhagen.*