

Thoughts on Traditional Thai Massage

By Francine Petit, RTT

I didn't find Thai Massage, it found me.....Twenty years ago, (Oh, my God! That long!) when I was nineteen years old, I lived in a remote, rural village in Northern Thailand with a family of three generations.

The grandmother, 77 years of age, performed Thai massage on her daughter, Ampai, and me after we both had worked long hours in the rice fields. I was totally fascinated by what I witnessed and experienced. She was so fluid and graceful as she moved effortlessly. I had never received bodywork before and had never heard of Thai Massage. I didn't know it was a popular and ancient form of healing, practiced and studied in Thailand.

Years later, in 1998, back in British Columbia, I read an article in a local magazine written by Janice Vitavec of Spirit Winds School of Thai Massage, and it really spoke to me. Janice wrote a descriptive article about Thai Massage and was offering a Thai Massage course (Levels I & II Nuad Bo-Rarn) in my area. Something came to life at my deepest core. Janice's article described what I had experienced years ago in Thailand. My friend and I drove 5 hours to attend the course that Janice willingly taught to just the two of us. I had found my destiny.....Janice Vitavec has since been my main teacher and a dear friend close to my heart.

What I like most about the modality is the fact that it is an ancient healing art that goes back to the Buddha's time and incorporates principles of mindfulness (breath awareness) and loving kindness (compassion).

I really like the meditative aspect of it. I call Thai Massage a "dancing meditation". This modality gives me a consistent meditation time where I get to connect with my breath, Chi, higher- self and to be totally present and fluid.

I like the fact that I can feel the presence and wisdom of elders and teachers who walk this path now, or have walked it so long ago and transfer their energy to me.

I think it is totally unique and awesome to have a practice where you get so much out of it as a practitioner: Yoga, strength, breath, movement, meditation.....

My most memorable session was giving a 2 hour Thai massage to a mother with her newborn nursing baby. It was quite magical to give a flowing Massage and have the baby be the one who sets the pace for the session. He was at the mother's side for the whole session, sometimes nursing, crying, smiling, sleeping or staring at me. I got to give him his first Thai Massage too. My youngest client ever – only 3 months old.

My hopes for the future are to study as much as possible and continue to deepen my practice to my full potential. I also will continue with my teaching of nuad boran. would like to start teaching again.

I opened my own Thai Massage practice in May of 2007 in Nelson, B.C after working in the spa industry for years. I am excited to bring awareness around Thai Massage to my community through articles, ads, networking, etc in order to bless this community with this ancient healing art and to build up a clientele.

Going back to Thailand to study with Pichet and to study Traditional Thai Foot Massage is my dream, as well as studying with some of the masters who won't be around for too much longer.

I intend to offer my Thai Massage services at exotic spas, and retreats in warm places to escape some of the cold Canadian winter months.

At some point in the future, I would like to create a Thai Massage Spa in Nelson, BC.