

EXERCISE AS MEDICINE:



FOR SOME WOMEN, TURNING 50 IS AN UNWELCOME MILESTONE. A half-century of living is clearly visible in the mirror. Many don't like what they see—both outside and in.

Unlike these peers, fitness expert Maureen Goss (pictured), who faces the big 5-0 this year, doesn't dread the half-century mark. Instead, the former high fashion model finds herself full of youthful enthusiasm, creative energy and a zest for life that is reflected in her good looks. She's even been mistaken for her 22-year-old son's sister. How does she do it? Maureen says that aging well has less to do with good genes and everything to do with regular exercise and a positive outlook.

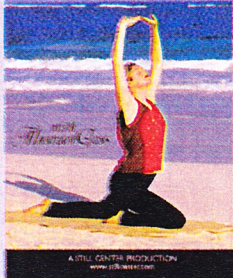
An Introduction to Crane Style Yoga

by Zoë Stetson

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7 CHALLENGES to
CHANGE YOUR LIFE

an introduction to
CRANE STYLE YOGA



"Attitude is everything," said the slender, still stunning, blue-eyed blonde who lives in Guilford, Conn., with her husband and son. "If you think that turning 50 is the beginning of the end, it will be. I teach that exercising the mind and body are the secrets to an eternally youthful outlook on life. If you see this turning point as a chance to live life with new-found energy that comes from the wisdom no one half your age has, all kinds of doors and opportunities open for joy."

Maureen's assertions come from her 17 years of teaching and developing techniques she has learned from some of the world's foremost teachers of dance, yoga and *qigong* (pronounced *chee-gong*), an ancient Chinese exercise. She has taken these principles and combined them with her study of acupuncture to create a unique combination of exercise and mental focus that she shares with students throughout the world.

Maureen's professional journey from model to working mom to exercise instructor and entrepreneur "was circuitous, to say the least.

"I graduated from college in 1977 with a degree in biology and the goal of becoming a doctor," she said. "However,

soon after graduating, through a series of unusual events, I signed a contract with Ford Models and moved to New York City. It was a huge window of opportunity for me as I got to travel, meet interesting people and pose for the likes of *Vogue* and *The New York Times*."

It was as a model that Maureen started taking dance classes with the simple goals "to stay in shape and have the energy to stand in spike heels all day

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on fashion shoots." But it wasn't until she left the spotlight in 1982 to be a wife, mother and working photographer that she started to practice *qigong* at a studio close to her West Village home.

"The type of *qigong* that I learned is a complex and clever series of 'routines' derived from secret Chinese traditions that were sometimes only passed on to favorite sons or disciples," she said. "It incorporates many of the medical theo-

ries that are the basis of acupuncture."

Maureen's experience with *qigong* reaped immediate, positive benefits, which were also shared by many of her exercise mates. "I had never seen anything quite like it," she said. "One woman quit smoking after years of trying. Another quit drinking. There was this amazing change in people's attitudes."

Qigong soon became Maureen's new passion and professional career. Eager to understand how the exercise routines could transform both the body and mind, she traveled to China to learn from master teacher Zhao Jin Xiang. In 1990, she became one of the first Westerners certified to teach Xiang's form of the exercise called Soaring Crane *Qigong*.

But her quest to understand *qigong*'s physical complexities didn't stop there. The once aspiring physician enrolled in the Tri-State School of Acupuncture in New York to learn more about the medical theories behind *qigong*. "Understanding the theories of *yin* and *yang*, the five elements, and the body's energy pathways were crucial if I wanted to take the exercise a step further and use it as medicine," she said.

The results of her studies became the

EVOLVE!

A Magazine of Evolutionary Products, People, and Ideas

Volume 4 - Number 3 \$3.00

foundation of Maureen's unique interpretation of qigong, which she named Crane Style Yoga. She now teaches this exercise regimen to students both in person and through a series of videos.

Seated on a cozy couch in the living room of her 17th-century farmhouse that overlooks a salt-marsh sanctuary, Maureen explained that "Crane Style Yoga is the American way—think quicker and easier—to practice traditions that have developed over thousands of years. It combines everything I've learned from Chinese masters and Chinese medicine into an easily translatable way to experience the benefits that monks and martial artists have enjoyed for centuries.

"Instead of using needles to regulate the flow of vital life energy (*qi*) through-

out the body's natural pathway (meridians), I incorporate gentle movement with breathing awareness and mental focus," she said. "How many people know that by regulating the flow of vital life energy, or *qi* (pronounced "chee"), you can begin to alter eating habits, heal addictive behaviors and even prevent and treat disease? You not only feel different but think differently, too. For example, foods that were once tempting become easy to say 'no' to. I've also seen people become much more aware of their spiritual natures. They are more in touch with identifying the passions and people that fill their lives in a positive way.

"I've seen jobs change, too, including my own," she laughed. "Nothing surprises me."

Ironically, Maureen's sister, Linda Garrity, was her first student and is a testament to the mysterious healing effects experienced by some *qigong* practitioners. "At age 38, I got the devastating news that I had breast cancer that had spread to my lymph nodes," said Linda, a Berlin, Conn., middle-school teacher and mother of three. "I listened to my doctors and had a mastectomy, followed by chemotherapy. Maureen taught me a way of exercising I had never seen or heard of before. It was through *qigong* that my shock and terror were transformed into confidence and peace."

Today, Linda, who was named "Teacher of the Year" 11 years after her diagnosis and treatment, credits *qigong* with what she calls a "miraculous" recovery. "I know for a fact that my quick recovery had everything to do with practicing *qigong*," she said.

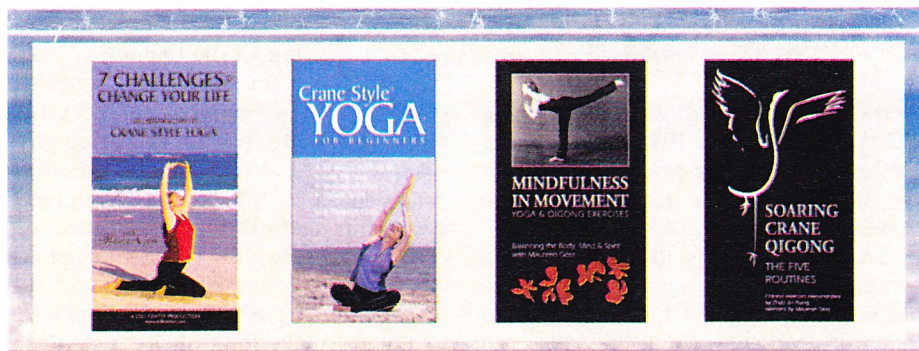
"I want to reach out to people who are not aware of the possibility that exercise has the potential to change not only the body, but the mind and spirit," said Maureen, who started a small business called Still Center Communications (www.stillcenter.com) in 2000 to reach a wider audience. In addition, her fourth video, *7 Challenges to Change Your Life: An Introduction to Crane Style Yoga*, has just been released.

"The video is for people of any fitness level," she said. "It really blends everything that I've learned into seven exercises. While easy to do, the exercises demand the same discipline as the monks, priests and physicians of ancient China who practiced and prescribed them."

Maureen encourages people to do Crane Style Yoga in small groups so they can support and learn from each other. "The laughter, shared experience and helping one another all add to the learning," she said. "The video was actually made with this in mind, to serve as a springboard for people to meet and practice together." Once the exercises are mastered, Maureen promises that practitioners "will reap the benefits of these age-old techniques. These are valuable tools that can help anyone."

Lorraine Koncki of Meriden, Conn. is a devoted practitioner. "I love doing Crane Style Yoga," she said. "I find it easy to follow yet my whole body feels stretched, toned and energized. I try to do it at least five times a week."

"Crane Style Yoga can just be the thing that people need at a certain point in their lives," Maureen said. "Sometimes all people need is hope. You really don't have to be 21 again to enjoy vitality and youthful optimism." ☉



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