



Bob Butera Jr. demonstrates a cow's pose, a yoga movement which helps the practitioner find physical and spiritual balance.

# Personal Odyssey

## Peace seeker now a yoga therapist

By Judy Baca  
Times Herald Staff

**N**ORRISTOWN -- "Odyssey" is the word Bob Butera Jr. uses to describe the spiritual journey which has now brought him full circle back to his hometown.

The 33-year-old Norristown native has studied in the far corners of the globe to become a yoga therapist and educator. This fall, he will be sharing his knowledge of stress-reducing techniques and lifestyle changes in a series of eight-week courses, including two at St. Francis Church, Airy and Buttonwood streets, Norristown.

"The Art of Meditation" classes at St. Francis will begin Sept. 8. The first will meet from 6 to 7:30 and the second from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Noting that yoga basics, including six forms of meditation, will be included, Butera says participants will have the option to follow up with a five-week course on the psychology of yoga, "which then becomes the psychology of stress management."

It was his original goal of becoming an international diplomat "to try to promote peace in the world" that initiated his odyssey. Butera attended Norristown public schools until 11th grade, when he transferred to Andover Phillips Academy for his final two years of high school.

"I attended the University of Pennsylvania," he explains, "but then jumped over to Friends World College on Long Island. I went overseas to learn Japanese and Chinese and it was in Taiwan and Japan, with the Eastern influence, that I decided I wanted to learn about meditation and quieting my mind."

Living for a time in a Japanese commune, Butera says he found that many people in the Japanese countryside live very peaceful lives and do not agree with the Westernization

of their country, with the stress and tension it has created in Japan's cities. He adds that the other thing which had a

great influence on him was a visit to Hiroshima, with his dad and another man of his dad's age.

"Being there, where we had dropped the atom bomb," he details, "I started thinking about why people get into wars and I decided it was all about greed and power. I realized I have those same things inside of me and I wanted to do something about that. I also realized we can't gain peace with one another until we find peace within ourselves. That's what I now share with others."

Butera studied at The Yoga Institute in Bombay, India, where he was certified as a yoga therapist. He received a Masters of Divinity degree from the Quaker seminary and a Ph.D. from the department of Philosophy and Religion at The California Institute of Integral Studies. Last year he was yoga instructor at the Westtown School near West Chester.

Although yoga exercise and meditation practices have gained popularity, Butera recalls that, in years past, the discipline has sometimes been mislabeled as a "kind of cult" or "far out religious practice." Butera sees yoga as an overall lifestyle which affects the participant's daily activities. For that reason, he asks individual clients and class members to examine aspects such as diet and emotional support in their lives, along with their meditation and exercise practices.

"The way in which we live and react and deal with situations is probably more important than doing these (yoga) practices because the effect of the practices will go away," he says, declaring there is no point of coming to yoga if the

See BUTERA on Page D2



Butera picks a common weed called lamb quarter, purported to have more nutritional value than spinach.

**"I realized we can't gain peace with one another until we find peace within ourselves. That's what I now share with others."**

— Bob Butera Jr.  
Yoga therapist