



The View from Right Field

by Rick Ohler

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Yoga Pitamaha Papa

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“You know, I’d love to, but I’m a very busy man.”

“Well, I could, but I’ve got a lot of work I *could* do today.”

“I mean, maybe, but I’ve got to write an *Advertiser* story, I was going to mow the lawn, catch up on my Facebook and Instagram correspondence. Retired lives matter...”

“I could help, but I was finally going to sign up for that yoga class.”

These were a few of things that occurred to me when my daughter called in a mild panic to ask if Kateri and I could spend the day with my three-year-old grandson, Gunnar. It seems her childcare person needed a day off, and she was in a bind. She could ask for a work-from-home day, but with a three-year-old, lotsa luck.

And I did really have a few ideas of what I was going to do that day, but then I slapped myself upside the head and thought, *Get over yourself, old man*. “I’d love to,” I said. “We’ll have a blast.”

Little did I realize that with a day watching a three-year-old I was actually beginning a special kind of yoga training—Yoga Pitamahah Papa—roughly translated from ancient Sanskrit as “yoga for grandfathers.” Sanskrit, of course, is one of the oldest languages we know about, and as I am the oldest person my grandson knows about, it seemed appropriate.

For the few of us left (I’m included in that group) who don’t know much about yoga, it was invented half a globe east of here a long time ago, but was made popular by the Beatles in the ‘60s and has since swept the United States by storm. Right here in Greater East Aurora there are a dozen fine yoga studios, none of which existed before the Beatles were on Ed Sullivan. The way I understand it, yoga is a form of

physical and mental exercise that helps you stretch, strengthen and relax. You achieve this by getting your body into various poses and holding them until you stretch, strengthen and relax or have to be helped out of the pose. These poses have cool names like Downward Facing Dog, Extended Puppy Pose, Half Frog Pose, Sphinx Pose, Wild Thing Pose. They have very explicit instructions like, “Come onto the floor on your hands and knees. Set your knees directly below your hips and your hands slightly forward of your shoulders. Spread your palms, index fingers parallel or slightly turned out, and turn your toes under.” Simple.

But why take a class when you can hang out with a three-year-old? Over the course of my day I found myself in a variety of interesting poses that I have incorporated into my own branch of yoga, Yoga Pitamaha Papa, Yoga for Grandfathers.

The first pose was the **Child Car Seat Struggle Pose**. The instructions are simple: *Bend at the waist at the car’s back door. With child seat in both hands, lean into car, banging head on door frame. Hold that position, inducing back cramps. Extend the left hand to search for the seat belt, pull and hold. Remember to breath. Don’t swear aloud; a child is nearby. Curl the right hand in an unnatural position around the far side of the seat to accept the seat belt from the left. Hold that pose for several minutes, wiggling all ten fingers in a vain attempt to join positive and negative ends of the seat belt buckle apparatus. Breathe in deeply, exhale, relax; convince yourself that the odds of having an accident are slim; then consider leaving the damn thing unbuckled, just this once.*

Next is the **Endless Toy Train Assembly Pose**. This one will give you great flexibility while you assemble the Fisher-Price Thomas the Train set on the floor. *Fall to the floor on your knees, remembering to breathe and to refrain from crying out in pain and scaring the little one. Extend your right leg at an awkward angle backward while extending the left leg straight forward. Hold the pose while listening for the sound of something ripping—pants, hamstring, groin. Dump all the pieces of the toy train set on the floor with several of the pieces bouncing just beyond your easy reach. Stretch back, shoulder and arm to grasp for the errant pieces. Hold and breathe. Assemble the train set, taking just enough time that the three-year-old loses interest and goes after the cat. Breathe and rise. Feel free to use a nearby chair or bookcase in this increasingly difficult rising procedure.*

Here’s a favorite: The **34-inch Child at the 36-inch Drinking Fountain Pose** is one I practiced at the Hamlin Park playground after an aerobic session on all the colorful climbing apparati the playground offers. *Grasp the 35-lb. child under both arms and lift. Grunting, as an alternative to relaxed breathing is optional and perhaps inevitable. Push him forward toward the water spigot while working the right knee under the child’s bottom. Hold that pose. Breathe, rapidly perhaps. Remove the right hand from the child’s torso, hoping for the best, and push in the button on the side of the fountain, releasing the water. Hold interminably as the child drains Lake Erie. This may lead to the “Papa, I Need to Go Potty Pose.”*

There are others, of course, that I discovered during my day of Yoga Pitamahah Papa. There's the painful at first, then merely enervating (RIP Snake) **Downward Facing Shoe Tying Pose**, the **My God, Don't Put That in Your Mouth Snatch and Hold Pose**, and, if you're lucky, the **Bend at the Knee to Receive Hug Pose**.

Then there's my favorite Yoga Pitamaha Papa pose: After performing the **Grappling Child Back in Car Seat in Mother's Car at End of DayPose**, you stand in the driveway. *With feet at shoulder width, raise both arms just above shoulders, bring hands together palm to palm, open them as you would a book, blow a kiss, then move both hands in a waving motion. Hold that pose, breathe, smile.* This is the **Let's Do this Again Real Soon Pose**. Really, I'm not that busy.