

Healing Myself with Pilates! By Judy Davis

I have never liked to exercise. The thought of going to a gym totally turns me off. I've always kind of figured that walking was all the exercise I ever really needed. But then I went to a Christmas party.

Maybe I should backtrack a bit. **Let's just say that I'd had back pain since I was 13.** I'd spent a goodly amount of time in various hospitals trying to find a solution to this problem. Finally, in 1998 I had a spinal fusion. Things were better for a while, but after about 6 months, I developed even more pain, nerve pain going down my legs. (It turned out that ever-growing scar tissue was pressing on the nerves.) I found a wonderful pain treatment doctor who tried a whole variety of medications to help solve my problem. I took my very expensive pills faithfully, started using a cane, and shopped in a wheelchair. And, of course, as I became less active, my weight skyrocketed. I gained about 70 pounds.

Three years ago I had a spinal cord stimulator implanted in my body to block the pain signals to my brain. It worked quite well, but by then I'd lost so much strength in my body that even getting out of a chair was very difficult. And that's the condition I was in when I went to that Christmas party.

Carl and Elise Corry were at that party. I knew them from church and they had seen there the great difficulty I had standing, walking, and getting out of chairs. Carl took me aside at that party and told me about Pilates. More impor-



An amazing leg lift!

tantly, he said that he thought that he and Elise could help me.

Of course, red flags shot up. Whoa! This sounded like exercise. But then I remembered that much good had come from physical therapy and that was a sort of exercise! So I thanked him for his concern and said I'd think about it.

About a month later I called Carl, and we set up a time for me to come to the studio. Yikes! Had I really gotten myself into this? And, of course, I'd heard the "no pain, no gain" thing for so long that I wondered if I'd lost my mind.

But, I kept the appointment. And as Carl was evaluating me, I told him that my goal was to be able to get up off the floor without assistance. (I had a real fear of falling in the middle of a parking lot, having nothing to use to pull myself up, and thus becoming road kill!)

And so we started - gently - very gently. I came to the conclusion that the Magic Circle was solid and unbendable; nothing I did with it made it change shape at all. Stick my leg up in the air and take hold of my ankle? Yeah, right. No way could I ever do that - or so I

thought. But I'd promised myself that I'd give it all a fair try.

Carl developed a very specific program for my special needs. And hey, nothing hurt while I was doing it! And I left feeling better than when I walked in the door. This Pilates thing was not like anything I'd ever seen or heard about.

I began to feel better. I began to lose weight because I could be a bit more active. (I also changed my diet, but I wasn't "dieting.") I dropped a size or two. And the Magic Circle began to bend a little! And, most importantly, I met my goal. At a church service I was able to get down on the floor, wash someone's feet, and get back up again with no assistance! I was thrilled.

I set new goals and kept working. When last year I had more surgery relating to my spinal cord stimulator, I couldn't do Pilates for several weeks. I was really concerned that I'd lose a lot of strength but, thankfully, I didn't.

I've now been working with Carl and Elise for two and a half years. I recently purchased the home system so that I can do more work between my weekly sessions. The video Carl made for me to use is tailored specifically to me and to my physical limitations.

I've lost over 60 pounds, I've dropped many sizes, I shop with a shopping cart rather than a motorized wheelchair, and I can even do the outlet malls! And, I no longer fear falling down in the middle of a parking lot because I **know** that I can get up! Thank You God, and thank you Carl and Elise - and thank you Joseph Pilates!