

Michael Volin (Swami Karmananda)

Michael Volin (Volodchenko) and his twin brother Nicolas were born on 30th July (12 August universal cal) 1914 at 1 Min Po near the Russian settlement of Harbin Manchuria. The two boys grew up and were educated in Harbin and lived with their mother and paternal grandparents. They hardly knew their father (a diplomat away on assignment most of the time to such places as Outer Mongolia). Whenever there was a special occasion or holidays through, their father would come home for a short stay. Their grandfather a Russian general to the Czar was in charge of building a link to the railway across Russia. He was a strict disciplinarian. Michael always spoke fondly of him and his grandmother.

Aged 18, Michael left home and after a brief stint in the Chinese army he went on to Shanghai where he found work as a journalist. At this time Michael became an athlete of Olympic standard and excelled at broad jump and the 100 yard dash. He married at 19, but sadly this lasted only 2 years, when his young wife died from peritonitis. Devastated, Michael set off on a soul searching journey across China, walking part of the 300 miles to the Tibetan border. During this time he came in contact with Buddhist monks. While he was shown an ancient stone hut by one of the monks who said that Issau-Jesus stayed here during the missing years...

Later Michael met with Chinese sages who were masters of yoga and Chi-gong (Chinese Breath Control). He spent almost a year in a monastery studying these 2 disciplines and meditation. One night while sleeping, he was woken by one of the monks who gently told him he wasn't ready to live the life of an atheistic...but to go out into the world and pass on the knowledge and wisdom he learned from them. On the morning of his departure, Michael strolled around the surrounding garden with one of the sages who said to him "remember this beautiful garden and come back to it in your mind whenever you feel stressed or sad." In his yoga classes Michael always began with relaxation pose 'Savasana' with the opening words of going into a beautiful garden real or imagined. On returning to Shanghai he opened his first yoga school with Indra Devi who later left for Brazil.

After the Japanese occupation, WW2 and with Mao Tse Tsung on the march, all Europeans were ordered to get out of China. Michael, his brother Nicolas and mother found themselves with thousands of others as displaced persons in a refugee camp in the Philippines before being resettled into Australia. It was in the mid 1950's when Michael opened the first yoga school in Sydney. His classes became so popular 10 books on yoga followed. 'Yoga for Women' became a best seller with 14 impressions and translated into several languages. During the 1960's he did 3 - 4 tours to India and in 1966 was initiated into the swami hood and given the title 'Karmananda' one who is blessed

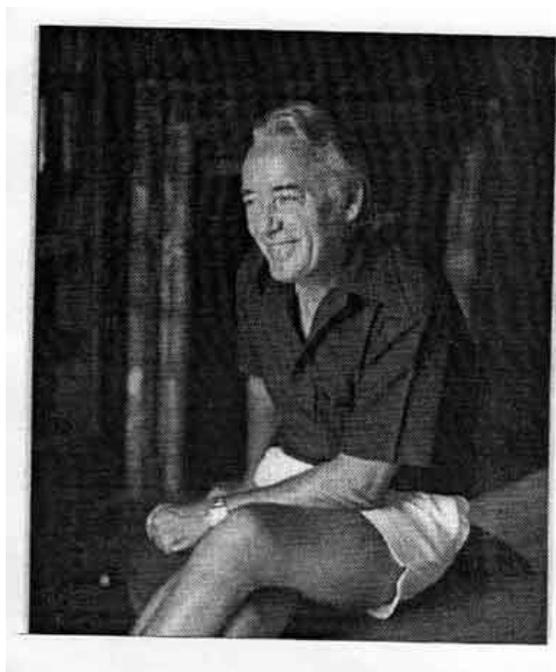
through his work.

Michael was also an active member of the Sydney Russian Club at Strathfield where the literary group would gather to discuss writings and poetry.

In 1970 Michael was invited to New York as a tutor to a wealthy Russian family he knew from China. He was asked to stay 2 years but after taking on more classes ended staying another 10 year before returning to Australia. While in the USA there were 2 trips to Lugano Switzerland (1972 & 1973) to a summer school there where he took part as a yoga instructor for a 6 week seminar on esoteric subjects, comparative religion and Greek mythology.

Returning to Australia in 1981 Michael and his wife Daphne settled in Adelaide where his associate yoga teacher Bette Calman helped him to establish yoga classes there.

At the Russian Community Centre in Adelaide, Michael involved himself with the literary group there and other festivities throughout the year. In 1986 he won the prize for poetry from Melbourne University at a gala Russian literary event held in Melbourne. Later he published his book on poetry. During the 1980's there were three trips to England and Scotland, where Michael and Daphne were invited to participate in the summer yoga festival, organised by the Yoga for Health Foundation.



In late 1988 Michael had to retire from teaching after suffering a severe bout of bronchitis when his health and heart were badly affected. Even after surgery on his aortic valve, he never fully recovered.

Michael was a citizen of the world. He was popular with most people from all walks of life; well known people as well as those who admired his ability to explain the often complex teachings of yoga and meditation in plain English. He was a natural speaker, never having to read from notes and recited poetry from memory. He charmed people with his wit and talent for telling a good story around the dinner table.

Michael passed away peacefully on the 17th May 1997. He was given an orthodox funeral at St Nicholas Church Adelaide and is buried at Enfield Memorial Lawn Cemetery, Enfield, South Australia.

He leaves a son Michael from a previous marriage. Daphne his fourth wife, together for 30 years was the love of his life and soul mate.



Photos and text provided by Daphne Volin.