

Puget Sound BUSINESS JOURNAL

January 6-12, 2012

Ancient therapies as balms to modern life

Seattle's Yasuo Mori reinvigorates his clients with shiatsu therapy and macrobiotics

An interview with **Yasuo Mori** turned out to be an optimal way to start 2012 for me. This longtime shiatsu therapist and practitioner of macrobiotics is headquartered in Seattle's Sorrento Hotel, in a modest little set of rooms at the end of a hallway on the main floor.

I had heard buzz about what he could do from a variety of local business people who swear that he has alleviated their stress and chronic pain, turned their lives around and fed them some sort of magical soup that made them feel years younger.

And so his contact information had been stuck onto the side of my computer for several months, waiting for me to find the right time.

On Jan. 2, a sleepy day in the Emerald City with most people taking the holiday off, I made an appointment with him and arrived at noon, knocking tentatively at his door and being welcomed inside.

Although Yasuo Mori has lived in this area for 37 years; he speaks with a heavy Japanese accent, in clear, measured tones, easy to understand, but at a metaphysical level, difficult to capture on paper. His energy knows no bounds. His passion for



PATTI PAYNE PHOTO

THE SOUP'S ON: Shiatsu and macrobiotics practitioner Yasuo Mori makes his chi soup from scratch and routinely sells all of it.

his life work is expressed not only in his face and voice, but in unspoken ways — in the way he greets, in the way he interacts, in what he says, in how he listens and studies the words he is hearing.

I felt as though I was in the presence of a great master, listening to ageless wisdom passed down to him through generations. He spoke of the power of touch and time. The priceless gifts of his ancestors.

Advice from his mother: "Don't follow the money. Follow the happiness. Follow what is good."

Born in Nagasaki in 1944, he began, as a child, to learn shiatsu from his mother, **Itsu Mori**, who taught and practiced for 80 years. He graduated from the International University of Kagoshima and went on to study at the Osaka Macrobiotic Center. He learned healing techniques thousands of years old involving massage, ancient Japanese herbal and folk medicines, therapeutic diet and exercise.

He has been a member of the American Massage Therapist Association since 1983, and has taught shiatsu extensively at numerous colleges, massage schools and private work-

shops across the Northwest.

Macrobiotics and shiatsu are the core of his business, which, since the early 1970s in Seattle, has touched tens of thousands of lives.

"If I was airline pilot," he tells me, smiling, "I would have logged more than 70,000 hours — for me it's 70,000 bodies."

Although he will not reveal his client list, those "bodies" include huge names in business, politics,

sports, and entertainment and so many more. People come from around the world. Add my name to the list, because I hopped onto his platform bed for a treatment to see what would happen, lying face up, with soft Japanese string music playing as background.

Without any pre-conversation about where I might be needing some work, his hands went right to the spots. I mean exactly. And while I asked questions, he answered and worked on me, pressing on key chakras. My chi (life energy) was somewhat blocked, he said.

I am a practical person, and skeptical. But it wasn't too long before I felt like I was almost floating. The joy, the confidence of Yasuo Mori, his level of experience, his touch, and his wisdom all combined to work wonders on this skeptic.

Modest beyond words, he does not consider himself a healer, but rather a conduit, a catalyst for your body to heal itself. He is the first to tell you it takes time. It takes touch. It takes joy. And it takes change in what is ingested as well. It just happened to work rather quickly on me. I felt lighter by half of my being when I left. My chi was flowing like a river.

And then there is his soup, called Yasuo's Chi Soup. I had a taste of

this sweet, dark brown broth filled with specific vegetables and herbs, painstakingly layered in the cooking process to reflect the principles of yin and yang. "I never boil; I only steam," he tells me, "to extract the most nutrition."

He started making this recipe for a few people — students where he was teaching — but it shot into demand. For the last year or so, he has given classes in how to make it. The demand has been so great he has taught more than 500 people the process. And he sells it through Healeo, an organic and superfood nutrition bar in Seattle.

A half gallon of this veggie nectar costs \$42. The advice is to eat about 6 ounces once a day to increase alkaline levels in the blood "and bring your body to optimal health," he says, counseling that over about four or five months, you may feel a marked difference in energy and overall health.

"Food is a very important part of healing. The essence of all the universe is in that soup," he says.

The ingredients include Hatcho miso aged three years, lotus root, burdock, carrots, onion, garlic, leeks, chickpeas, potatoes, ginger, daikon, cauliflower, celery, red and green peppers, shiitake mushrooms,

dried wakame and square kombu seaweeds, and konnyaku.

Client **Jim O'Donnell**, owner of White Star LLC, a real estate development and investment company in Seattle, swears by the combination of shiatsu and macrobiotics to which Yasuo Mori has devoted his life. "I have been with him for more than 10 years," says O'Donnell. "He is compassionate, wonderful to work with, and he is keeping my health intact. My business partner also goes to him religiously, as do a couple of dozen people I've referred."

Seattle lawyer **Carol Bailey** is another devotee. "He embodies the gifts Japan has for the world and wraps them in a Western style so we can grasp it all ... (His treatments) allow me to be more connected and sharper in my thinking."

Tough economy or no, Mori has found decades of success in offering compassion, joy and in practicing an ancient art of healing through soup and shiatsu, which clients say is a winning combination.

So what does a guru do when an appointment cancels or someone does not show up? He goes to his computer and calls up old movies on Netflix. "I love that," he tells me, grinning. "Cancellation can also be a blessing."

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