

JANUARY 2017

Be Some Body

Student Spotlight

WILLIAM SLEDGE



What better way to begin a New Year than to showcase this wonderful man, William Sledge! William began his journey with Pilates when I was teaching for the New Haven Ballet on Wooster Street in 2004. His wife, Betsy, was a devoted participant of my classes and suggested that core strengthening and stretching would help with his back problems. He learned the technique quickly and was hooked on making Pilates an integral part of his fitness regime. In 2005 when Be Some Body opened its doors at the MECA studio, the Sledges' were my first students. William is always enthusiastic to try every class I introduce to the schedule. He brings forth positive energy, drive and joy because of his positive attitude. He is extraordinary and reaches beyond his comfort zone. He challenges himself in PUMP, Co-motion, and really loves to put on his dancing shoes to learn dance steps in Cardio Dance. We were all in awe when he would cycle to and from the studio bright and early on Saturday mornings to participate in the most challenging class on the schedule—if that's not motivation! I have the pleasure of working with his beautiful daughters and growing families during different holidays through the years as well.

He knew he wanted to move freely without pain and to continue his fitness journey through his retirement years. He made a positive, life altering decision to undergo major back surgery. I admire how he carefully researched and developed a plan of action to be strong prior to surgery, therapy and rehabilitation post-surgery. For those who feel they are "stuck" and are unable to improve their fitness or quality of life due to an ailment, this story should make you believe that you can find a way to make a situation a positive one through believing you can overcome and achieve anything. William is on his 95th 20 class card at *Be Some Body* and I look forward to him hitting his 2,000th class in the near future.

Thank you William for your support through the years!  *Melissa*

"BE SOMEBODY WHO MAKES EVERYBODY FEEL LIKE A SOMEBODY."

WORDS FROM WILLIAM:

My thanks to Melissa for this honor and the chance to communicate some ideas which are near and dear to my heart. First Melissa and *Be Some Body* has been such a major part of the Sledges' lives over the years in keeping us fit and more or less healthy and for that we are very grateful. It has been fun fitness for me. I think Melissa wanted me to say a few words about my recent back problems. To make a long, torturous story short, I started having back problems when I was 14 years old and strained my back lifting too much weight (I was trying to get big and strong so as to be a star football player). I had to be in the hospital in traction for a week. I played football for the next 7 years (3 in high school and 4 in college) without any back problems but in my first year of medical school, I woke up one morning and could hardly walk. I was diagnosed with a congenital back weakness and thus began the long struggle with my bad back. Over the years, I have had many steroid injections in my back to reduce the inflammation caused by my condition and the results of slipped disks and bone problems. About two years ago, it got worse and would not go away despite trying injections and hours of physical therapy; I eventually (about 18 months ago) had to stop exercising altogether as I could not walk more than a city block without excruciating pain and could not stand up more than about 10 minutes. Several doctors whom I consulted refused to operate on me saying that I was too old and my condition too advanced; but I found one, a neurosurgeon, who was up to the challenge. So, in Feb, 2016, I had a 7 hour operation that rebuilt my lower back and stabilized it with plastic and titanium and I have been basically pain free since then. However, the road to recovery has required me to do religiously a variety of exercises, mild at first to be sure, to help rehabilitate the core muscles in my lower back and pelvis. I am happy to say that I have substantially recovered. I am pain free and on the road to regaining the strength of my core.

I feel extremely grateful for the excellence of my doctor, the support of my wife, Betsy, and the help of my rehab specialists, especially Melissa, in this turn around as well as all of you who have expressed support and well wishes. I am still working on it but for now, I have no more painful symptoms, none at all. My contribution to my recovery has been to do what my doctor tells me (more or less that is, but mostly more) and to believe without doubting it, that I would get better. Of course, in order to believe and maintain the belief that you will recover and to maintain the focus on doing the things that you need to do to recover requires a group of friends and colleagues who are positive enabling, and supportive. And that is what *Be Some Body* has been for me. Thank you all for that.

'IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT, THE MIND CAN ACHIEVE IT.'