



Clear Light Community Newsletter



May 2015

Vol. 14

***“Where souls have communed with God, there you will find
greater communion and response from God.” – Paramahansa Yogananda***

Dear Ones ... Members and Friends of Golden Lotus and Song of the Morning Ranch,

Have you ever wondered at the upliftment you feel upon visiting Song of the Morning Ranch? Our founder, Yogacharya Oliver, one of Paramahansa Yogananda’s deeply advanced disciples, and Bob Raymer, another advanced direct disciple, have left their vibrations of God-communion throughout this property. Following the wishes of Master Yogananda, they both worked to establish the Clear Light Community at the Retreat, offering sincere devotees the opportunity to build their home and live their life upon these sacred grounds.

As the name of our Self-Realization Fellowship Sunday services and evening meditation implies, our personal goal of self-realization through Master’s teachings is enhanced by the spiritual fellowship of living in a community of like-minded devotees dedicated to their own spiritual development and to serving others. “*World Brotherhood*,” the concept developed by Master in naming the spiritual colonies he encouraged, must start somewhere if it is ever to overtake the world. When like-minded devotees live together in communities such as the Clear Light Community, are we not the “*boots on the ground*” of such a future?

In a recent communication, Sri Mrinalini Mata, President of Self-Realization Fellowship, said to us, “*We feel the sincerity of your love for Master, and you have our divine friendship and support in all your efforts to follow his guidance, to meditate deeply and focus on the limitless spiritual bounty in his teachings. Our warm wishes and prayers reach out to all of you.*” To all devotees who share our commitment and ideals of world harmony, peace, and God realization, we offer a heartfelt “***WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY!***”



Operated by Disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda

CLEAR LIGHT ANNUAL COMMUNITY DAY



Build Small, Dream Big

Saturday June 27, 2015

11 am – 4 pm

We want to extend a big welcome to everyone to join us this year while we explore information concerning how building a smaller home might help you save money while achieving your dream of moving to our community. Small home building is in the news all the time these days as people look for economical ways to own their own homes. Since we have been getting questions about small homes from people interested in moving here, it is the right time to explore this topic. We will have several builders who can address how to go about planning and building smaller houses. This will be a great opportunity for everyone to get some questions answered. Our home tour this year will be our latest addition to the community, Gary and Anne Wakenhut's house. And what would community day be without a garden party at the Johnston's house? Mary Ann and George are once again opening their lovely garden for some time to socialize.

Please join us in the domes at 11 am Saturday, June 27!

And look on the community website for even more information about the community.

www.songofthemorningcommunity.com



MANAGER'S REPORT

By Richard Armour, Project Manager

This year reflecting on the growth of the Clear Light Community, I realized that there were only two new homes built over the last four years. Yet, I can easily think of twenty individuals or families who have seriously considered building in the community, and I am sure there are many more. To accomplish even a modest beginning of Yogacharya's vision for Song of the Morning Ranch -- developing the different aspects of Yoga as the highest form of culture, two or three times the present 15 inhabitants of the community and 5 retreat staff are needed. Your help, your courage, your devotion to the ideals Master Yogananda exemplified in his life and work in America that is the cornerstone of our inner lives is needed.

The recent movie, "Awake," about the life of Paramahansa Yogananda, shows that no worthwhile endeavor is without supreme effort. By building your home in the Clear Light Community, you will also be encouraging and inspiring others contemplating this lifestyle. To me, the continuity of daily meditations together with other devotees and deepening our inner life is the ever-present blessing of our choice of life here at Song of the Morning Ranch. As Master said, "Environment is stronger than will power". Each household in our community has been a major contributor to the success of our retreat, adding their skills, willing hands, and supreme devotion to the task our founder Yogacharya Oliver left in our hands.

For those who join us in this endeavor, we will help in any way we can as you plan to build. Join us at our Community Day on Saturday, June 27 to look into possibilities for those interested in smaller homes or home plans that can expand when you build. In closing, your help and presence are integral to the growth of our World Brotherhood Colony as envisioned by Master and Yogacharya. See you at our "Yoga Retreat of Excellence!"

*In Master's love,
Richard Armour*



George & MaryAnn's home

CLEAR LIGHT COMMUNITY LEASING INFORMATION

Lots may be leased in the Clear Light Community for a total of \$21,900. This includes a \$1000 membership, \$5000 actual lease cost, and \$15,900 leasehold improvement costs. The lease is for 50 years, renewable at no cost. It may be passed on to heirs or sold to approved members. Yearly association dues are \$75, or \$200 once the house is built, to cover snow removal and upkeep. Architectural plans need to be submitted to our Architectural Committee as soon as feasible and before finalizing your choice of house.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION about the current payment plan, or a tour of the community, please contact: **RICHARD OR CAROL ARMOUR AT: 989-983-9136.**

9534 RAJASI CIRCLE, VANDERBILT, MI 49795

Please leave your name and phone number so they can return your call.

LOTS AVAILABLE:

Two of our leaseholders are willing to sell their leasehold interest in their Lot #34 and Lot #40 on Golden Lotus Trail. For more information, please contact us.



NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY



Our newest neighbors, Anne and Gary Wakenhut, got to move into their new home last summer. It has not taken long for them to become integral members of the community! They made good use of the community root cellar with the yield from their magnificent garden. Their musical contributions continue to enrich everyone's lives who live here or visit the retreat. Our beloved Christmas progressive dinner ended up at their house for caroling this last year where everyone sang their hearts out!



Anne and Gary Wakenhut's home.



Last year for our Community Day we focused on sustainability, which included touring the retreat and community gardens as well as the retreat bee hives and the newly emerging meadow area and river where our lake once was. Our thoughts turned toward what can be done to help enhance this new area.



Oh Master Let Me Walk With Thee



All the Lights do Light Themselves



Then in September during the Yogacharya birthday weekend, quite a few of us joined with guests, staff and members to break down into groups to help identify things we wanted for the new river front area as well as other parts of the retreat. Out of this session, two action groups were formed. One, comprised of Clear Light members, has drawn up a plan for increasing the trails between the boat-house and Lake Shrine as well as enhancing the area. Work will start this summer.

The second group formed to identify areas to get grants for future planting projects. This year's grant is for planting trees, shrubs and flowers that attract honey bees. And our beekeeper, Adam, is adding 10 new hives. Planting will take place in Spring.

In other news, in March of 2014, one of our leaseholders, Marilyn Beker, who teaches screen writing at Loyola Marymount University in LA, received the first Visionary Leader in Education Award from the Short Movie Channel (ShortsHD). Marilyn was recognized for her championing of the short film format by working with emerging film writers and encouraging them to write ethically about social issues.

April's Planting Project

Just about all of our community residents participated last April in a planting project for Song of the Morning. A grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provided money for about 2500 trees and shrubs that had to be planted over a couple of acres along the river near the back entrance to the retreat. This took quite a few days of work through all kinds of conditions with community members working along side retreat staff and even a couple of retreat guests.

I am happy to report that it appears many of the plants have survived our winter. The goal is to restore the area with the right kind of vegetation to encourage a healthy river. Our ultimate goal is to be able to have a similar project in our newly emerging river front area in our old lake bed and it looks like we have gotten a great start!



Happily planting trees and shrubs.



Tom Walker lending a helping hand.

RESIDENT'S CORNER

PEACE, BROTHERHOOD & HARMONY

By: Mitchell Kamiel

At the end of our Self Realization Fellowship Meditations in Toronto, we pray for Peace, Brotherhood, and Harmony throughout the world. In my mind's eye I imagine a world where we all have Peace within and we live in a world of peace without; where we see each other as brothers and sisters always; where we go about our daily lives living in harmony with nature, each other, and the will of Atma. I have been a yogi for many years and have been on the Self Realization path since 1970, in fact it was Christmas of 1969 when I first had the opportunity to visit Song of the Morning Ranch. At the time Yogacharya had not yet founded Golden Lotus and the property was privately owned by him. Yogacharya was at that point in his own life where he was transitioning from the business world into dedicating the rest of his life towards cultivating and building the foundation of a special and important spiritual outpost. I on the other hand was a nerdy, fumbling, stumbling teenager – trying to find myself in the world and grappling with this new concept that maybe there was something more than this finite life. It is one thing to believe in a concept, but light years away from comprehending such important principals. I have always been a yogi since that time, but I admit that my practice and involvement have waxed and waned at times. The Ranch, SRF, and my spiritually minded friends have been the instruments to get me back on track when I needed that. I am a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda and a member of Self Realization Fellowship (SRF) – the organization that Yogananda established in North America to disseminate the knowledge of yoga and the practice of Kriya Yoga in the west. This was Yogacharya's path and this is my path. While SRF has been busy with many of the aspects of Master's work, Yogacharya was serving Yogananda by seeding this property in Northern Michigan and establishing the roots of a world brotherhood colony. At the same time he was teaching us by example how a yogi lives and progresses in this world and gives back to our world and its need for spiritual upliftment. As a parent I have learned that I can tell my kids all kinds of things, but what really sinks in – for better or worse - is our example. Yogacharya gave us a real-life example of how a holy man continues along his spiritual path, maintains his ideals, and yet lives and contributes to this world. After Yogacharya passed on, my involvement with The Ranch waned. There are several reasons for this that are not important now. However, my oldest daughter, Ella, and my two grandchildren were – and still are – living in the Gaylord area. My wife, Caroline, and I were up in the area two or three times every year to see Ella and her family, but I stopped going out to The Ranch. After a few years absence I felt compelled on a September visit to see the property again. I didn't want to deal with 'politics' or other issues; I just wanted to be there and experience the property. For this reason I didn't enter through the main road. I parked my car a few miles past the entrance at a camp site off of Sturgeon Valley Road and walked in through the back woods. I crossed the boundary of the property marked by the double rutted tire tracks and the remains of a wire fence and strolled through the woods heading toward the old outdoor shower and the Upper Domes. A feeling that is beyond words came over me. It was the presence of the Masters – Sri Yuktishwar, Babaji, Yoganandaji, and Yogacharya. The feeling that they were present, that their vibrations were definitely here, that this was an important and protected spiritual place was clear in my soul. I continued walking into the heart of the property, but I still wanted to be on my own.

So I walked down the hill, past the Main House, over the bridge and along the main road. I was feeling that special Peace and at the same time knowing that I needed to be back here. Not far over the bridge I saw a new and substantial road cut into the woods on my left, with a street sign! Yogacharya Way. There is no way I had expected in my absence that The Ranch had been moving forward in a significant way (pun intended). But to see the beginnings of a genuine spiritual community sprouting here at The Ranch was awesome, and exciting, and it felt right. After some continued wandering in the woods I found my way back to the Main House and made my presence known. I was told that Richard Armour was working on a plan to establish this community and that lots were available for lease for those who might be interested in living here as householders. I knew Richard well as we are both from Toronto and we even had been roommates for a while. We set a time to get together the next day when he was to take us around the property and explain the vision for this new community. When I got back to my daughter's house I spoke with Caroline about my visit and asked her to join me the next day to see The Ranch and meet with Richard. Caroline does not consider herself a yogi, but she loves The Ranch, its atmosphere, and its ideals. In many ways I don't know another person better suited to a spiritual community than Caroline. Upon hearing about the budding spiritual community she felt that this was right – and something that the world needs. Richard was so helpful the next day. We got a patient walking tour of the existing community roads and an explanation and some exploration of what was coming in Phase II and Phase III. He also explained the principals of the community, and the structure – which is important to allow for the continuing integrity of the concept. Our daughter Sarah was with us, and about 8 years old at the time. She had some opinions about which lot we should choose, but more important to her was where we could build swings, toboggan trails, or zip-line runs through the trees. Coming from Toronto we were not sure how often we could get up to the property to make sense out of building a house. There are also some cross-border issues to consider when owning U.S. property as a Canadian. In the end, though, we decided that we wanted to support this really important and bold enterprise, so we signed up to lease a lot in Phase II. About twice a year we come up to The Ranch and the Gaylord area to visit with my daughter and her family; and for a spiritual retreat with our special brothers and sisters at Song of the Morning. The property certainly has the blessing and presence of the Masters. With The Ranch atmosphere and the nightly and special extended meditations we always leave spiritually renewed and a little bit transformed. Besides visiting with old and new friends we stop by our special lot and visit it as well. I don't know if the day will come when we live or vacation on it, but we are happy to belong in some way to the Clear Light Community. We are glad to be a small part of such a grand idea: a World Brotherhood Colony. If this community sprouts and grows and thrives, it will help seed other similar communities throughout the world. I have been told that Paramahansa Yogananda spoke of the need to establish these communities. As we all know, doing the Will of the Divine can be a difficult task. Creating the example of a place that demonstrates true "Peace, Brotherhood, and Harmony" might be a goal just beyond our worldly reach. But isn't this a great place to start? A great environment to improve ourselves – and our concept of community? When I pray I visualize a world of Peace; I imagine us all hugging each other with the Love and respect of true brothers and sisters, and I see us all moving about in active Harmonious purpose. Now I have a place where I can practice all of that. Ommmm, Peace, Bliss, Amen

THE CLEAR LIGHT ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE



The Clear Light Association Committee has added three new members. Steve Zawisa, John Pfluecke, and Gary Wakenhut have all volunteered and have been voted on to the Clear Light committee. Greg Rorabaugh, who was the chairperson, Eileen Guilford, and Kaye Thomas-Hogan have left the committee but will continue to play a supportive role. The committee will continue to serve the community as it has in the past. Among other things, we have helped with communication among members of the community, sent out welcome letters, helped, along with the management committee, on safety issues, maintained a website, and we are registered with the State of Michigan as a committee formed for the purpose of serving our community. All leaseholders are members of the Association, and all are invited to help support the committee and to give their input and ideas. In Friendship, Steve Sandner

BOB RAYMER'S INTRODUCTION TO MASTER AND KRIYA YOGA



(Bob Raymer, disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda and Spiritual Director of Song of the Morning Ranch until his passing in 2008, shared with us this story of how he met Master and first experienced Kriya Yoga.)

I met Master in 1951, and I had previously read "*Autobiography of a Yogi*," and the thing that struck me about that book (the whole book struck me, obviously) I felt tremendously uplifted, as most of us who have read it. When I read the book, other than feeling Master's presence and feeling an awakening, the thing that really struck me was the part about the Kriya Yoga. I had tried to practice meditation before. I hadn't had any teachers. I just read books. I had studied the Vedanta philosophies, I was very involved with Ramakrishna and other saints like that. I knew I had to learn how to meditate, so I would try to practice. I would try to sit down for 10 minutes or a half-hour a day, at least. That would go on for a while, but my mind was so restless, I couldn't do it any more. I'd stop, then I'd get mad at myself. I'd write these notes: "*I hereby swear I am going to meditate at least 10 or 15 minutes a day, daily.*" And then all of a sudden I'd flunk out again. But after reading Master's book, I thought, "*This is the key: Kriya Yoga practice is exactly what I need.*"

So I wrote to Him and I said, "*Master, please, by return air mail (I was kind of naive,) send me instructions how I may do this Kriya Yoga.*" So then, I got this whole packet from SRF -- about joining the organization, taking the lessons, and so on. There was no letter from Master, just something from the Headquarters, and I really wasn't interested in joining any organizations, or having anything to do with Churches. This was back in -- it must have been 1949 or 1950, somewhere in there. So then, I sort of dropped the whole thing.

One cold winter in 1951, my wife and I decided we wanted to get out of Minnesota, and to have a vacation in Phoenix. I had an airplane at that time, and we flew out in my airplane and got there on a Saturday. We saw this little add in the paper, SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP, and that kind of caught my eye. My wife said, "*We ought to go to the Church, and see what it is like,*" and we had a big debate because I wanted to stay in the sun. We had very little sun in Minnesota. But she directed me to go.

So anyway, we went to Church that next morning. And as the Service started, I started feeling happier and happier. When Herbert Fried, the Minister, started singing, "*Door of My Heart,*" well, I just felt like my whole heart was beginning to open, and it really was a strange sensation. I just felt something stirring there, I didn't know what it was. So, I got very interested in what was happening to me.



Bob Raymer and Yogacharya Oliver

BOB RAYMER'S INTRODUCTION TO MASTER AND KRIYA YOGA cont....



I was very confused, I never had anything like that happen to me before. I got to talking to Herbert after the Service, and he invited me to come over in the afternoons, and we could start to talk about these things. I said, "Well, I want this Kriya Yoga." He said, "Well, I can't give it to you now, without Master's permission. I'm not qualified to give it. But," he said, "we'll just see what happens."

Anyway, I went over Monday, and I went over Tuesday. And he came out -- his eyes were big as saucers. "You'll never guess what happened," he said. "Master called me up about 3 o'clock this morning, and he said to bring you and Mrs. Raymer to Los Angeles immediately." I don't think Herbert had mentioned my name or anything, but Master just called up and told him what to do. So the next day, we all climbed into my airplane and flew over to Los Angeles. Master wanted both of us, my wife and I, to take a tour. He wanted us to go to the Hollywood Church, He wanted us to go down to visit the Lake Shrine, and also the one in Long Beach. He gave instructions and provided a car, which picked us up at the hotel. After we went to all of these different places, we were to meet back at Mount Washington, for a visit with Master. Well, my wife Betty decided that she hadn't seen her Aunt Gertrude for a long time, and she didn't want to go. I think it was about 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We arrived at Mount Washington in the afternoon, so they put me in the Chapel there. They wanted me to stay there, and then "*Master will call you.*" Well, I went into the Chapel, and I waited, and I waited, and I waited. And I thought, "*Oh, my God. He's clairvoyant, he's omniscient, and He sees what a mess I am, and He's decided not to see me.*" All these weird thoughts were going around in my head. Just about the time I was ready to give up all hope, somebody came in and said, "*Master will see you now.*" So, we marched up those flights of stairs to the third floor of Mount Washington, and I was really getting nervous, because my concept of a Master is that He knew everything, and to me, it was even greater than seeing the President of the United States, or anybody I could even imagine in this world. A full blown, honest to God Master! To see a big man like that was almost more than I could conceive of.

When I got up to the third floor, I was shaking. All of a sudden, the door opened, and there was Master! He had a big smile on His face, and He just grabbed me and pulled me into His arms, and I felt such incredible love from Him. He was so beautiful - so incredible. It wasn't anything He did or said, but it was what He radiated. It was just like He had hit me on the head with a baseball bat, it just about knocked me out.

He sat me down, and started to tell me all kinds of things about my life -- some of them I had forgotten. He touched on a lot of different things. He hit the nail right on the head, and some things really hit me deeply. I haven't spoken about these things, these were things He knew about me that were very private, and, you know, He told me in such a beautiful way that it was just incredible, He kind of shocked me. But He did everything with such love. And then He ordered some tea for us, so somebody brought in some tea with these little biscuits and baklavas -- sweets. And He would put these baklavas in my mouth. So, this is how I met Master.

During this conversation we were having, I said, "*Master, I want to know how to do this Kriya Yoga, will you teach me how to do this?*" And somehow, He just managed to always change the subject. And so I'd ask Him again. And this time, He got a little irritated about this, and I thought, "*Oh, boy, what am I going to do?*" And then He'd change the subject, He'd get off on something else. Finally, I don't know how I had the nerve to do it, but I asked Him one more time, "*Master, when can I get this Kriya Yoga?*" And He said, "*All right. Tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock.*" Master put me down on my knees, and He gave me the blessing. I was right in front of Him. He was sitting on the chair. He grabbed both of my hands together, and He kept repeating "*Heavenly Father, Divine Mother, Jesus, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya,*" and so forth. He kept repeating those names. He must have gone on I don't know how long, it seemed endless. And I was feeling this energy in my body, It was really incredible. The next day I had the Kriya Initiation. I had it in the morning -- there was a Reverend Bernard who used to be there, and I believe we did it in the Hollywood temple. I wasn't really bowled over by it or anything like that, and I had a lot of business I was doing that day, so I didn't practice at all, I just got the Initiation. I decided that that evening I really wanted to be alone so I could do this Kriya practice, and find out about it.

After dinner that evening, we returned to the Hollywood Knickerbocker Hotel where we had a suite of rooms, and Betty went to the bedroom. I got a chair out, and put a blanket over the chair, and then I started to practice the Kriya -- the technique. I started doing a few of these things. Well, all of a sudden, something happened in my spine, and it felt just like a snake was going right up my back, and it was just wiggling, and when it got up to my forehead, my whole forehead opened up. It wasn't like the spiritual eye, but it was like the sun itself, just like a sunburst. It was an actual experience. It was like a hose with too much power, too much water going through it, would start to wiggle, and this was going up my back, and when it got up to my head, well, then my whole head just exploded and I fell off the chair. That was the first thing. I started moaning and groaning, making these weird noises, and I thought, "Oh, my God. This is what I have been seeking. This is what I have been searching for all my life.

I used to have a lot of ups and downs, like most of us -- emotional swings, depression and so forth. And I thought, "*From now on, no more of this, all I have to do is a couple of these Kriyas, and that's the end.*" And so, that was my introduction to Kriya Yoga.
