

Clear Light Community News

April 2013

Vol. 12

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

Paramahansa Yogananda's wishes for the development of World Brotherhood Colonies is the reason our Clear Light Community exists today on the pristine acreage of Song of the Morning Ranch. In a letter to Yogacharya Oliver dated October 4, 1949, Master wrote:

"Dear Oliver: I am so happy to have your letter and to learn of your enthusiasm over the colony idea which I have begun to circulate among the members. I shall be happy to learn about your plans if any at this time. These colonies will do much to forward the cause of unity and peace. There the ideals and tenets of Self-Realization should be taught that there might be a unity of purpose in coming to the colonies -- a threefold purpose of harmonious development in body, mind, and soul, with the soul development of the greatest importance. For the ultimate goal of life, which is God-communion, must be stressed, because without that it is difficult for a group of people with varied personalities and habits to live in harmony. ... With all my love again and know that God and the Gurus are with you in your working for them. Life is a dewdrop trembling on the lotus leaf of time. Work for God now as long as the dewdrop lasts. Unceasing Love and blessings to you, dear one, Very Sincerely yours, Paramahansa Yogananda"



(from left) Dr. Lewis, Paramahansa Yogananda, Rajarsi Janakananda, Yogacharya Oliver Black, and Brother Bhaktananda at Kriya Yoga initiation ceremony, SRF international headquarters during 1951 Convocation .

The guiding principles of the Clear Light Community are Master's teachings as expressed through his organization, Self-Realization Fellowship. He liked to call his work the "Church of all Religions," inviting devotees of every religious background to come and learn the sacred teachings of God-Realization. All truth seekers are most welcome here, where in brotherhood and love we can pursue the path to God together.

Master taught the balanced development of body, mind, and soul-- the Community and Retreat offer many opportunities for this. Read in this newsletter about new developments in our Association, Teacher's Committee, and kirtan band. Educational opportunities are available through the Retreat Program Guide. The heart of life at Song of the Morning Ranch, the evening Meditations, SRF Sunday Services, and monthly day-long "Sadhana Saturdays" offer constant opportunities to deepen spiritual practice supported by other devotees.

This year's visit by Brothers Jayananda and Brahmachari Martin of Self-Realization Fellowship on June 1 and 2, and our June 29 "Community Day" are of special interest.

In joy and thanksgiving for all of our lease-holders who make this dream of Master's a reality, we offer to all a heartfelt ...

"WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY."

*Operated by Disciples of
Paramahansa Yogananda*

The Deeper Aspects of Yoga

Song of the Morning Ranch

June 1 and 2, 2013

Brother Jayananda and Brahmachari Martin

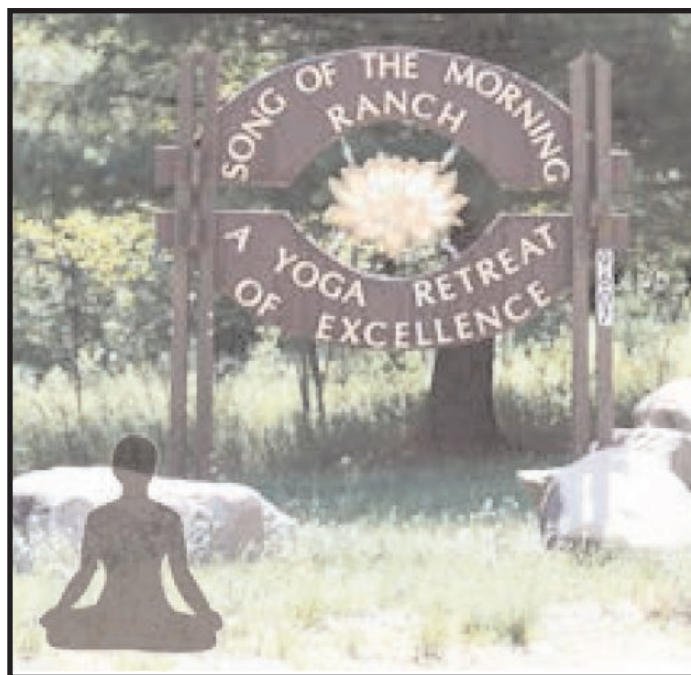
SRF monks from Los Angeles, California

It is our privilege to welcome Brother Jayananda and Brahmachari Martin of **Self-Realization Fellowship** -- the worldwide organization founded by **Paramahansa Yogananda** -- to lead us in a Retreat focused on *The Deeper Aspects of Yoga*. The Retreat includes recharging exercises, meditations, lectures, satsang, a Kriya review class for *Kriyabans* (*Kriyaban* card required), kirtan, and a movie of Master's trip to India. Questions for the satsang

should be submitted in advance to the Retreat. There is no charge for the Retreat, but donations are appreciated to defray expenses. Accommodations and meals are available upon reservation for a nominal fee.



Please register well in advance, whether attending all or part of the program, attendance is limited to 200 participants. Call the Ranch office at 989-983-4107.



Schedule

Saturday, June 1

8:30 - 9:45 a.m. Recharging Exercises and Meditation

10:00 a.m. Brunch

12 - 1 p.m. lecture: *The Deeper Aspects of Yoga*

2 - 4 p.m. Meditation and Satsang

Please submit satsang questions to the Retreat in advance

5 p.m. Dinner

7 p.m. Kirtan and Meditation, followed by a film: *Paramahansa Yogananda's Visit to India*

Sunday, June 2

10 - 10:30 a.m. Kriya Review class for Kriyabans
Kriyaban card required.

11:00 a.m. SRF Sunday Meditation Service

1 p.m. Fellowship Dinner

Song of the Morning Ranch Yoga Retreat

9607 E Sturgeon Valley Rd

Vanderbilt, Michigan 49795 - phone 989-983-4107

www.songofthemorning.org

MANAGER'S REPORT

By Richard Armour, Project Manager



Dear Members,

Our founder Yogacharya Oliver often said that Song of the Morning Ranch would be a "haven of safety" for its many members. Observing in the last year widespread drought, massive fires across the country, the ravages of Hurricane Sandy on so many lives, and our own outage of phone and power for 5 days due to a massive snowstorm has been an incentive to continue to evolve as an intentional community. This last year we have inaugurated a Community Safety program. We practiced an all property evacuation with signs created showing alternate exit routes to be used in emergency situations if the main entrance route is blocked. This also encompasses a communication system for emergencies developed with the Retreat, and a yearly practice.

Food production is increasing at the Retreat and community. Last year we built our first root cellar. We will be expanding the use and knowledge of food storage. Also, we are starting an annual brush pick-up this May in the Clear Light Community. This is one aspect of fire prevention that we have learned from Don Klingler, area Emergency Manager, who was a guest speaker at our January Clear Light Community Management Company meeting. Don gave us information about available grants, passed out safety management booklets for forest residents, answered questions, and gave suggestions concerning our safety plans. We will be providing him with maps and contact information for better communication with authorities in emergency situations.

Recycling in our county has expanded with a recent tax initiative. Members of the Retreat and community take advantage of it. The building of a heated maintenance building to house our equipment in a ready state continues to be our most important goal. We will build as soon as we are financially able.

Annual Clear Light Community Meeting

Saturday, June 29, 2013

11a.m - 3 p.m.

Bring your questions and ideas as we celebrate our community, where "plain living and God thinking" bring us ever closer to the Great Ones. We will be welcoming a representative of the Natural Resources Conservation District to guide us in the use of our Root Cellar, gardens and hoop house projects. The Leaseholder's Association will give us an update. Tours will be available for those interested in leasing or viewing community lots. The afternoon will close with our annual party at the garden home of George and MaryAnn Johnston, where all are invited to relax and experience life in the Clear Light Community.

CLEAR LIGHT COMMUNITY LEASING INFORMATION

Lots may be leased in the Clear Light Community for a total cost of \$21,900. This includes \$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 choice of house.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION about 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.



LEASEHOLDERS ASSOCIATION NEWS

At the Clear Light Community open board meeting in July 2012, the community association committee (aka CLCAC) was reformed because some prior members resigned. The committee is now: Kaye Thomas-Hogan, Steve Sandner, Eileen Guilford, and Greg Rorabaugh. The association (CLCAC) was formed to promote fellowship among the leaseholders and to serve the needs of the community. The Clear Light Board along with the Ranch staff developed an Emergency Preparedness Program (EPP) for fire evacuation, tornadoes, blizzards, power outages etc. Our first project as the reformed CLCAC was to augment the EPP with an emergency information packet for residents. Each household has been provided with an EPP folder on top of their refrigerator. In the folder are the evacuation routes, buddy system notification plan, and the CLCAC personal emergency forms containing contact numbers, health info, health advocate contacts, and pets' needs. Our current committee have all been closely involved with Song of the Morning Ranch since the days of Yogacharya Oliver Black. All have the goal of living on the Ranch property. As leaseholders they have eagerly joined the Association Committee to help promote and develop the bonds of friendship that Paramahansa Yogananda spoke of when referring to world brotherhood colonies. Master said, "*Brotherhood is an ideal better understood by example than precept!*".

Kaye, a board member of Golden Lotus Yoga Teachers Association, is the chairperson of the CLCAC. Eileen has been a longtime member of the Clear Light Management Board. Steve, also a member of the Clear Light Management Board, has built a home in Phase One of the Community. Greg joined the CLCAC to actively connect with the Community while living in California.

Here are a few other activities that the committee has helped with:

- Steve Sandner developed a website: "www.songofthemorningcommunity.com" to access community news, pictures, announcements, and information on leasing lots.
- At the 2012 SRF Convocation last August, Carol and Richard Armour made a presentation to a gathering of SRF devotees interested in living in a community dedicated to Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings. The CLCAC made ClearLight Community business cards to hand out at that meeting. Cards are available by contacting Kaye Thomas-Hogan at: rakal246@hotmail.com or from the Retreat office.
- Community members, John and Anne Pfluecke, built a home in Phase One and will be assisting Carol Armour conducting tours for interested prospective leaseholders.
- We have a Sunshine Community to send out welcome letters to new leaseholders and welcome baskets for new home builders.
- We want to extend a warm welcome to Larry Larsen, our newest leaseholder.
- We are all excited about SRF monks, Brother Jayananda and Brahmachari Martin, visiting the Ranch on June 1st & 2nd.

Make your reservation with the Ranch early as the accommodations will fill up quickly. Call 989-983-4107 to reserve.

GOLDEN LOTUS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

By Roy Thibodeau

The Golden Lotus Yoga Teachers Association, Inc., (GLYTA) originally was founded by Yogacharya J. Oliver Black in 1966 as the Self Realization Fellowship Yoga Teachers Association. In 1976 our name was changed to GLYTA and we now have the distinction of being the oldest continuous Hatha Yoga Association in the North America and as far as we know the only one to require all of its teachers to be Kriya Yoga Initiates. The last few years have been busy ones for GLYTA. April 2011 - March of 2012 we had our first training class for new teachers in over a decade and in the fall of 2011 we produced our new manual complete with professional color pictures. These can be ordered through the book store at the Ranch or from any Golden Lotus Yoga Teacher.

More recent achievements include leaving the umbrella of Golden Lotus, Inc. and forming our own nonprofit corporation, Golden Lotus Yoga Teachers Association, Inc. This became imperative because the State of Michigan now requires organizations that train Yoga teachers to be licensed by the State as vocational schools. The Golden Lotus, Inc. charter forbids this so we undertook this task independently. We are now licensed by the state as a vocational school 'The Golden Lotus School of Yoga' owned and operated by GLYTA, Inc.

We begin our next teacher training session the weekend of April 19th. If you are interested in this or future training sessions you can visit our website www.goldenlotusyoga.org and click on the Golden Lotus School tab or call or email Roy E. Thibodeau @ (866) 214-5329, roythib@goldenlotusyoga.org



A PROUD MOMENT -- from left, Kaye Thomas Hogan, Mary Ann and Roy Thibodeau, and Sandi Jones, all active yoga teachers, pose inside the new GOLDEN LOTUS SCHOOL OF YOGA, located on the corner of main and old 27 in Vanderbilt, Michigan, a short drive to the retreat.

WHISPERS OF OM Kirtan Band at Song of The Morning

By: Steve Sandner



On a farm near Johannesburg, Michigan, in July, 2010, Whispers of OM, a new kirtan band comprised of Ranch members, was setting up drums and harmoniums to play early on a cool, misty Sunday morning as many campers were just rising after a late night of concerts the evening before. This was northern Michigan's Farmfest, and it was one of the first engagements for the band outside the Ranch. We wondered how, or even if, we would be accepted. I suspect that our style of music was different from anything else they had heard during that weekend. The band members all sat cross-legged in one line across a large, elevated, outdoor stage, and the audience was sparse and somewhat distant. I explained to the audience that we played sacred Sanskrit chants in a call-and-response fashion, and they could sing by simply repeating the phrases we sang. A few of our Ranch friends who were there helped it along, and gradually others joined in the singing. Some of the audience just relaxed in their folding chairs and stared at us. One young lady got up and danced enthusiastically on the stage, and then all over the muddy field, after "borrowing" a pair of our shoes. An hour later we finished with the sacred lines of Namo Namastestu from the Bhagavad Gita. We seemed to have had some acceptance, but not a great impact. It was the next summer, 2011, as I was having Sunday dinner at the Ranch, when a small group at the next table conveyed that they came to see and experience the Ranch after hearing us at Farmfest. Somehow, that made it all worthwhile.

Whispers of OM personnel sometimes varies, but the core group is comprised of Steve Sandner and Abby Pero, harmonium and vocals; Ray Thomas-Hogan, mridanga; Karen Epperson, tablas; and Sam Gabby and Chris Sandner on bells & cymbals. Abby is a long-time staff member at the Ranch; Karen, Sam, Chris, and myself all live in the Clear Light Community, and Ray is a lease-holder in the Community. Most of us have had previous experience playing Indian music or participating in kirtan.

The instruments used are those traditionally used in kirtan, sometimes called sankirtan, in India, and we play traditional Sanskrit chants that are comfortable for group singing. The chants, which are derived from the ragas of the rich Indian musical heritage, are nevertheless easy and fun to sing. In keeping with bringing the "finest distinctive features" of Indian culture to Western ears, the subjects of the chants are often Krishna, Divine Mother, Shiva, Guru, and other Sanskrit names for God.

One of our favorite chants is Ganesha Sharanam, a well-known traditional Hindu chant, referring to the popular elephant deity, Ganesh. Since Ganesh brings good luck, this is usually our opening chant! Singing to Ganesh to open a concert is a tradition among Indian musicians.

I was first introduced to chanting, as many of us were, through Yogananda's treasured collection of Cosmic Chants. Yogananda says in Autobiography, "The sankirtans or musical gatherings are an effective form of yoga or spiritual discipline, necessitating intense concentration, absorption in the seed thought and sound." Yogananda also said that "chanting is half the battle." This deeply felt, repetitious singing is a kind of pranayama (yoga technique of breathing and life-force control), since it encourages rhythmic breathing, balance, and equanimity. The chants in Yogananda's collection have inspired many of us to sing with soul-expression which helps guide us to ever-deeper meditation. In Cosmic Chants, Yogananda presents many songs of the yogi-saints of India, and he also contributed his own compositions. These chants have been "spiritualized" by being sung over and over by the Master himself. Yogananda is recognized as an early pioneer of kirtan in the West: in April, 1926, he guided his Carnegie Hall audience in singing Guru Nanak's chant, Hey Hari Sundara (translated to English as Oh God Beautiful), for an hour and twenty-five minutes. Kirtan is a great enhancement to other forms of spiritual discipline, and it is also a lot of fun!

Whispers of OM is most at home at a Ranch setting, but there is a sense that more outside opportunities will present themselves in the future. We have had kirtan sessions in Petoskey at Yoga Roots, and in Traverse City at Yoga For Health, and other yoga studios throughout the state seem to be open to setting up kirtan sessions. It is evident that kirtan is growing in the West with the rising popularity of singers such as Krishna Das, Deva Premal, David Stringer, and Jai Uttal. Though we are just starting out as a band, there may be other exciting possibilities, such as recording and writing original chant melodies. We are especially thankful for the welcoming climate and positive energy we have received, from the beginning, from everyone at the Ranch and in the Community.

Whispers of OM is next scheduled to play during the SRF monks' visit to the Ranch on Saturday, June 1. We will also be playing at Yogafest at the Ranch in August. We hope you will all come join us with your heartfelt singing!

RESIDENT'S CORNER

By Larry Larson



It was early in July and the funeral in Minnesota for my two elderly parents was over. For the first time in years I had nothing restraining me from just taking off in the RV and traveling with abandon for the rest of the summer. My yellow lab “Frosty”, a willing traveling companion, voted in favor of the adventure so off we went.

I have been a Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) student for several years. Somehow I had gotten on the Song of The Morning newsletter mailing list. It sounded like an interesting place so when I got to Michigan I stopped at an RV park in Gaylord, a short distance from the Ranch. I called Carol Armour, the contact person listed in the newsletters, and arranged a visit. Strangely, I noticed that my daily meditations had become more intense but I shrugged it off because that just happens sometimes.

I met Carol at the Ranch and she spent an afternoon showing me around and explaining the operation. I learned that Song of The Morning Ranch contains two entities, a nonprofit where classes are taught and retreats are held. Services are SRF. Secondly there is a budding community that comprises an organization called “*Clear Light Community*”. Members of the Clear Light Community help to operate the entire 800 acre Song of The Morning Ranch. There are lots for 72 homes in the planned community and many lots are still available for new members.

I had long thought that a great way to spend my retirement years would be to join a community of SRF members and live and meditate among them. But where could I find such a place? Now, caught up in Carol’s enthusiasm and commitment to the project, my intuition was clearly saying that this was the place for me. I stayed several days and attended the Sunday reading services and other meditations. I met Carol’s husband Richard who is Project Manager of the organization, and several other Clear Light members who graciously invited me into their homes for visits. Everyone exuded a palatable enthusiasm and conviction that they were pioneers in building what would one day become a wonderful SRF community and retreat.

I looked at various lots available for long term lease and selected a nice one on a forested hillside. I wasn’t ready yet to commit to purchase a lot lease but I knew that even if I didn’t I would still want to support these people and their cause. I applied to become a member of the Clear Light Community and was accepted. Knowing that I had a lot to think over, Frosty and I drove off.

The farther I got away from the Ranch the more my logic and reason started to overpower my intuitive conviction. The intensity of my daily meditations returned to normal. What do I really know about this organization I asked myself, and are they really committed to SRF and not just “SRF like”? At the end of the trip when I returned to Florida I wrote a letter to SRF explaining that I was thinking about building a summer home at the Song of The Morning Ranch and asked for their advice. Some time later I got a call from a senior SRF monastic. He was ready to discuss my letter and told me it would be fine for me to join the Clear Light Community. I have just purchased a lease on the lot I selected at Song of The Morning Ranch. I feel good about the steps taken so far and one day may well build a house and become a resident.



Whispers of Om Chanting Band, from left, Chris and Steve Sandner, Abby Pero, Karen Epperson, and Sam Gabby.
Not pictured: Ray Thomas-Hogan

EXPERIENCES WITH MY MASTER

By Yogacharya Oliver



This story is taken from a recorded fellowship in 1966 by Eileen Jasnowski. The story is about an experience that Yogacharya Oliver Black had at Convocation while Paramahansa Yogananda was still in the body.

Mr. Black had gone out to Los Angeles to attend the Convocation. He never wanted to infringe on Paramahansa and His time and he knew how busy He would be with all the devotees at the Convocation, so he called Daya Mata to let her know that he was in town and waited to hear from Master. It was three days before he heard from Him, so he attended classes & lectures. There was a class & lecture at the Hollywood Temple, then called India Center, and Mr. Black attended, but he still had not seen Master. He said the place was just packed. Reverend Stanley saw him come in and found a place for him in the back. At break, Rev. Stanley introduced Yogacharya to a man, Mr. Wood, and his son. As he was introduced Mr. Black felt a sense of inner quiet and things were revealed to him about Mr. Wood and his son. Mr. Wood just stood there listening, he never said a word, as Yogacharya told him that his son would go to India and other things about Mr. Wood and his son. It turned out that Yogacharya had just told him the exact same things that Master had told him, a few minutes before. When Yogacharya finished Mr. Wood exclaim, *"Well, now I have seen everything and I know Mr. Black hasn't seen Master yet because I just left Him. I know there was no time to talk to Yogananda and Mr. Black told me the exact same thing that Yogananda just told me. It has been proven to me now that these things are real."* Then he ran off to Dr. Lewis to find out what kind of a thing was going on. He also ran to Mr. Lynn to tell him about it and Mr. Lynn said, *"That's all right, we know Oliver for those things. That is real."* He ran all over the place, beside himself. After awhile he came back wanting to meet Mr. Black better, be together a little and meditate together.

Later Yogananda called Yogacharya to visit. Master was so excited when he saw Yogacharya, He squealed. Mr. Black said when Yogananda got real excited his voice would change and he would just squeal. Yogananda said, *"What did you do to Mr. Wood?"* and Mr. Black said *"I didn't do anything but what You told me."* Yogananda thought it was the most wonderful thing and explained that Mr. Wood, who was from Eldorado Arkansas, was a wonderful soul and had the potential to be a tremendous financial help to SRF as well but he was on the fence. It took this incident to get him off the fence. Mr. Wood never questioned anything after that. Master used Mr. Black as a tool to help get Mr. Wood off the fence. It was effective because he could see how these things work on a disciple like he was.

The things that Yogananda and Mr. Black told Mr. Woods about his son came to pass. Later he visited Mr. Black at the Detroit Center, and out of his appreciation had a lectern designed and built for the Detroit Center. At that time it cost \$900 to be designed and built, which was a lot of money in those days. We still have the lectern stored at Song of the Morning in the coat room of the Domes.



Yogacharya Oliver, man of joy, awake and ready!