

Clear Light Community Newsletter

APRIL 2017

Vol. 15

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

The Clear Light Community, founded in the year 2000 at Song of the Morning Ranch, offers spiritual seekers an opportunity to live their lives inspired by the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda among fellow devotees, surrounded by the pristine stillness of undisturbed nature. Our founder, Yogacharya Oliver, a life-long Minister of Self-Realization Fellowship, shared some thoughts about the importance of places such as these in a letter written in 1961 to Brother Mokshananda of Self-Realization Fellowship. His words are especially meaningful to us as we watch and participate in the events of the world today:

"Dear Brother ...

I was sorry I was not able to be with you this last summer for the yearly festivities held by our Fellowship. However, my love is always with those of you who have a part in spreading the teachings of our great Guru. It is amazing how his work is spreading and becoming effective in the world, and in many subtle ways extending to far distant lands.

There is no doubt that we all have a part and place in this great activity - everyone to play his own part and play it well, as it is very evident that the whole world needs a new philosophy, and as we continue to look for truth, we find that the science of Yoga underlies all the basic philosophies and religions of the world.

The Holy Bible relates hundreds of instances where God spoke to man. Unless we develop in meditation sufficiently enough to see beyond the darkness of closed eyes, we will never know what the nature of God is.

Those who are able to do it are known since days of old to be the prophets and seers. They are the ones who receive the messages out of the Infinite Consciousness. Today we have neither prophets nor seers, because people have not learned to meditate and those that practice have not meditated long enough to have this realization.

When Master's message is truly realized through meditating devotees, we will again produce the proper prophets and seers like those of old.

My love to you as a co-worker towards the final cause of Self-Realization - Yogacharya Oliver"

Located as it is on the property of Song of the Morning Yoga Retreat Center, the Clear Light Community offers residents access to evening meditations, Sunday SRF Services, 3-hour and 6-hour meditations, kirtans, Hatha Yoga classes, and many activities exploring the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of Yoga science. , Master said Environment is stronger than will power.. He also said the day will come as Master said, when the World Brotherhood Colony idea will spread around the world like wildfire. To those who wish to visit, or to join with us in this spiritual adventure, we offer a heartfelt

WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY!



Operated by Disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda

CLEAR LIGHT ANNUAL COMMUNITY DAY

*Practical Information for Getting Your House Up
at Clear Light Community*

Saturday June 24, 2017

11 am - 3:30 pm

Every summer we hold a day long event focusing on our Clear Light Community, and whether you are currently a leaseholder in the Clear Light Community or simply interested in what would be involved in getting a house built in the community, this year's Community Day is for you.

We already have 8 beautiful homes up here with one in the works for the very near future. We get many inquiries as to what goes into getting a house up as well as what a house would cost per square foot. We want to be able to help everyone get some answers whether they are contemplating a stick built house or a modular house.

This year at our morning session we will feature a presentation by a representative of a well- respected Michigan modular home company that will address the process of putting up one of their homes step by step from start to finish, which we hope will help everyone understand more about what goes into getting a house built. After the presentation there will be a discussion period for all of us to participate.

When we are done we will go into the community to see what is going on, including a visit to the Community Garden and a garden party where we can all discuss what we've learned as well as get a chance to socialize and get to know one another better.

CLEAR LIGHT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Clear Light Community Association Committee will be scheduling a meeting for sometime this summer (2017), and all leaseholders are welcome to attend. Among other things, we will be discussing the election of new officers. We are in the process of determining a date, and we will be notifying everyone soon.

The Community website has been an ongoing project, and the latest addition is a blog. Those who contribute to the blog will be able to post comments, questions, photos, and videos on various topics relating to the Community such as Community projects, discussions on spiritual topics, Yogacharya stories, and day-to-day experiences. The focus and the specific topics will be evolving as we go along. We hope that this new blog will be helpful to the physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth of our Community. If you are unable to attend Community Day this year, the home building presentation will be available on the website.

The Clear Light Community Association Committee represents all leaseholders, and leaseholders' input is always invited.

**Website: www.songofthemorningcommunity.com
Blog: www.songofthemorningcommunity.com/blog**



MANAGER'S REPORT

By Richard Armour, Project Manager

Our Clear Light Community has been experiencing "slow but steady" growth. As Yogacharya said, "Spiritual things grow slowly."

We welcomed new leaseholders: Josh Clark, a third-generation member of Song of the Morning Ranch, and Drs. Will and Wendy Page-Echols, who were married by Yogacharya right here at the Retreat.

First residents George and Mary Ann Johnston have moved to Onekema, Michigan, to be closer to family, but are still most welcome members of the community who visit when they can. Former staff member and current Golden Lotus Board member Dorothy Stingley and her husband Wayne have turned George and Mary Ann's former home into their new northern Michigan retreat.

Tom Walker, known to everyone who visited the Retreat for his constant presence since the early 1970's, died suddenly in late November, 2016. Tom was a faithful member of the Clear Light Board, a leaseholder in the community, and devotee whose quiet magnetic presence impressed everyone he knew.

The idea of a new Care Program was introduced to members on Community Day, 2016, and it has begun to function by providing services to community members Gary and Anne Wakenhut during the difficult time of Gary's illness. Our Community Website is adding new features, including videos. Check it out, www.songofthemorningcommunity.com.

Community Day this year, Saturday, June 24, will focus on helping our leaseholders and those contemplating joining the Community with house design and cost estimates, followed by a chance to relax, socialize, and experience community life for yourself at the home of one of the community residents.

The condition of the world today makes it clear that the "Haven of Safety" Yogacharya spoke of so long ago is becoming a necessity. Surrounded by other devotees pursuing high ideals, surrounded by undisturbed nature, enveloped in Master's teachings for a higher and better way to live, The Clear Light Community is here to serve you.

See you on Community Day!



Tom Walker– Service Reader, Musician, Board Member, Firefighter, Devotee, loved by all.

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.

We also have leaseholders who are willing to sell the leasehold interest on the lot that they have leased. Applicants must follow procedures to join the community. One leaseholder must sell their leasehold interest, and is willing to accept the best offer. Please contact the number below for further information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
or a tour of the community, please contact:
RICHARD OR CAROL ARMOUR

989-983-9136

9534 RAJASI CIRCLE, VANDERBILT, MI 49795

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

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a very special time of the year in our community as well as at the Retreat. We start the month out with our annual 6 hour Christmas meditation in the Lodge. Community members take part in activities at the Retreat throughout the month as well. This past December was enriched by participation in weekly meetings of our Autobiography of a Yogi bookclub organized by Justine Markey.

Christmas Day is the start of what we call The Twelve Days of Christmas, organized by Karen Epperson and Ian Wylie, which ends with the celebration of Paramahansa Yogananda's birth on January 5.

Christmas Day celebrations begin, of course, with an SRF service in the lodge. We then move into the community for an afternoon of going from house to house for various courses ending up at the Armour's for a traditional turkey dinner and caroling. We usually have a wonderful mix of community residents, retreat staff and guests as well as people from surrounding areas.

The rest of the days until January 5 offer a variety of activities including longer evening meditations, showing special films of a spiritual nature, singing Christmas carols after Sunday service and so on. The evening of January 5 we have a special evening service honoring Master's birth followed by traditional birthday cake.



Clear Light Resident Homes



BIRTHDAY REUNION

2017

Carol Armour and
Dorothy Stingley
on behalf of the Golden Lotus Board

Yogacharya Oliver Black Birthday Celebration
and Song of the Morning Ranch Reunion

August 31 - September 4, 2017

The relationship that exists between friends is the grandest of human loves. Friendly love is pure, because it is without compulsion....Such pure friendship has existed between saints and between others who truly love God. If you once know divine love, you will never part with it, for there is nothing else like it in the whole universe.

– Paramahansa Yogananda

Come celebrate our friendship and our Founder's birthday! Let's renew old relationships and make new friends!

Come celebrate the love we share for God, guru and one another. Come celebrate the past, present and future of our retreat. Come walk the forest trails, swim nearby, practice hatha yoga and meditate together. Let's simply be together in the high vibrations of our beautiful spiritual retreat. Take a break from the busy world. Nourishing all truth-thirsty souls with an immersion into nature, yoga lifestyle, fellowship, learning and meditation. Sharing the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda and our years of instruction from Yogacharya Oliver Black through music, storytelling, performance art and multi-media presentations.

We imagine a reunion of staff and visitors from across the five decades of our development. Please come and bring your friends, family, children, grandchildren and neighbors. We are planning activities for all.

To register or receive more information; reserve your accommodations (space is limited), or if you have other questions, requests or ideas, please visit: songofthemorning.org and click "upcoming programs" or call 989-983-4107.

A FIRE TRUCK COMES TO THE COMMUNITY!

Our Community and retreat, surrounded by state forest, is located too far away to save a structure in case of fire. When in the fall of 2015 a fire truck was put up for bid at the Gaylord Fire Department, Community Board Member Tom Walker, a volunteer firefighter at the Department, notified us. Golden Lotus was the only bidder on the truck, and in the spring of 2016, our fire truck was brought on to the property. Tom did preliminary training with community members and staff with the truck, which is intended for immediate response to contain a fire while the Vanderbilt Department is arriving.

Its first winter, the truck was stored in Vanderbilt at the home of John Sweeney, until we can construct a heated building for it here at the Ranch. When Tom died suddenly in early winter of 2016, we were left without someone with sufficient knowledge of the truck and the ability to continue training. Tom was well loved for his many years of service to the Gaylord Fire Department. He was originally trained as a firefighter in the 1970's while serving as a staff member at Song of the Morning Ranch.

Tom's Memorial in town was attended by a roomful of uniformed firefighters and emergency responders from Gaylord and many surrounding departments.

In a touching tribute to Tom, they broadcast through their emergency system and also over the radio one last call for Tom. Afterward, one of the firemen offered to help us in the Spring with the fire engine.

Look for it when you next visit!



RESIDENT'S CORNER

YOGACHARYA'S GUIDANCE

By: Anne Wakenhut

In July of 2013, we had a dream of finding a community where we could nurture our spiritual growth and have the opportunity to continue our desire to serve. We were blessed to be led (or called) to Song of the Morning, where we were lovingly welcomed in July of 2014. This beautiful 800 acres of forest land, staff and residents immediately embraced us with its acceptance and companionship.

Most recently, terminal cancer has come into our lives. Gary was diagnosed with stage four Mesothelioma in July, an incurable cancer. Being aware that we were going to have many needs living with this diagnosis, the caring nature of our community created the "Care Team". The team leader coordinates volunteers from our community and retreat staff to efficiently and effectively assist us. They offer respite, do errands, bring in wood, provide transportation, and offer many other forms of assistance for us. We definitely have felt loved and supported during this difficult journey.

I (Anne) am Gary's caregiver. This role has expected more of me than I thought I could possibly give. I wanted to provide the best care for Gary, keeping him in our home. I thought I could do the 24/7 care alone. After a number of months at this task, I had become totally exhausted. The Care Team had been answering many of our needs, but the basic 24/7 care had completely drained my reserves. I was emotionally and physically overwhelmed. Sharing this with the staff one morning, two of them offered to care for Gary that night. They encouraged me to meditate, rest, and restore my reserves in the healing environment of the lodge.

I wish to share with you my amazing experience that night, surrounded by the spirituality and energy of that space in the lodge. Perhaps it is important for you to know that I did not have the privilege of knowing Yogacharya. I have been given the opportunity to hear many stories about him, his humor, his wisdom, his expectations of his students, and his warmth. I wished I had been here in the 70's to experience him. I think that his students respected (possibly feared) and deeply loved him.

I arrived at the lodge that evening as a full moon rose. It was reflected in the crystal snow. I entered the building and immediately felt the spiritual energy that I have always found there. After a hot soak in the tub, I put on my PJ's, wrapped myself in a blanket, and decided to meditate in the main room.

I turned the light on Yogacharya's portrait and sat looking at it for some time. I had heard that people sometimes experienced the eyes or mouths moving in portraits of Yogis. This did not happen for me and after meditating for a while, I went out to the car to get something from it.

The moon was beautiful and very bright, as though in daylight. Suddenly I felt that I wasn't alone. At first I was frightened. When I looked towards the Boathouse, in front of the light post on the path I saw Yogacharya. He was dressed for winter, looking just like the photo on the piece written by Irmgard. He had the same warm smile. I was startled to see him there. He didn't say anything and he vanished very quickly. I could feel his presence for two days afterwards.

When I shared this experience with a friend, she said that he was there to let me know he would guide me through this difficult time. She said that I needed to converse with him as he would help me with the decisions I needed to make. I felt very close to Yogacharya and very blessed to have had him appear to me.

Later that week, I was feeling very sad about the potential of Gary dying. This heavy sadness reminded me of when we were young and married and deeply wanted to have a child. I had not gotten pregnant in the six years we had been married. Every month I suffered great sadness. As I thought about this sadness, I heard Yogacharya say, "You didn't understand". No, I didn't understand the plan at the time. I was not aware that we were going to adopt two wonderful children.

Hearing these words made me aware that I also do not understand there is a plan that I am totally unaware of at this moment with the potential of Gary's death. That realization has lifted all my sad confusion about this difficult journey.

Each time I find myself needing Yogacharya's guidance, I feel a little smile crossing my lips. Even in this very sad time, I can feel his sense of joy. What a blessing I have been given to have him with me!

*We are sorry to inform you that Gary Wakenhut
passed away on February 22, 2017.*

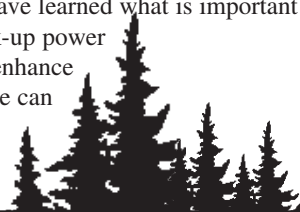
CARE IN PLACE

By: Richard Armour

Last year, several members of the Clear Light Community started discussing how we could assist our members to remain in their homes if one faced a major medical event such as a recovery from surgery or a terminal illness. Reality interrupted our discussion and planning when Gary Wakenhut was diagnosed with Mesothelioma related terminal cancer. Gary and his wife Anne had to cope with endless medical appointments in the beginning, numerous concerns with adapting their home to Gary's care, while still enabling them to have as rich a life as possible enjoying family, neighbors, friends, their life-long passion for music, and involvement in the spiritual life of the community.

Linda Gabby, in consultation with Anne and Gary, initiated an online portal called "The Care Team" that volunteers could choose to help in numerous activities needed. Justine Markey also helped. Friends and Retreat staff signed on to help in numerous ways. They helped with driving to appointments, shopping, house cleaning, fall garden harvesting, technical assistance with their computer and their generator. They spent time with Gary, keeping him company, reading or praying with him. As Gary became weaker and needed constant attention, people stayed with Gary so that Anne could get some sleep.

This real-life experience is invaluable for us. We are learning what individuals and families need in adverse or declining health. Also importantly we are finding what is available from Medicare, Medicaid, private health insurance and agencies, Hospice programs, county non-profits, and government funded respite care that can assist the challenging role of caregiver. We have learned what is important in house design, the importance of back-up power in storms. Most importantly, we can enhance our lives when we choose to do what we can to help each other.



A New Way of Life

Yogacharya J. Oliver Black

Now this great ocean of energy or this great ocean of intelligence is this thing that we call God. And in various religions the idea of God is called by different names; every religion has its own name for the idea of God. Regardless of what we call it, the amazing thing is that when we study yoga we begin to feel the closeness of everything that we seek. We find that It is present within us, inside of us, near us, outside, to the right, to the left, above and beneath and we're right in It. Just like fish swim in the water, they don't know the water is there, they just go here and there and they think that they're doing really something special. They don't know how they can swim, how water supports them, or anything.

Neither do we know this ocean of energy. We don't see it, we're not conscious of it, because we're in It, we're part of It, and we're It. We're not conscious of the presence of what we seek.

Yoga teaches you how to prepare yourself or to cultivate and develop through spiritual culture, how you can become conscious of this great depthless ocean that has no limits anywhere.

The yogis talk about prana. That's the highest type and form of energy. That is the life that is within each and every one of us. It's the life within the water, as it were...life within the tree...life everywhere. When you learn to practice yoga for your realization, you find that you don't need to go anywhere. You don't need to go to a monastery, you don't need to go to India, you don't need to go to a foreign land or anywhere. You do it right where you are.

If we all are seeking the fulfillment of our highest desire, that is, the realization of the Self, we can read our scriptures, we can read our philosophies and study truth, but sooner or later you're going to have to have a way shown to you so that you can really gain the fruits of your labor. That time is now and yoga affords that we are shown a way.

Yoga knows everything about your body, your psychic self, your mental self and your soul, and everything that we possess, and everything that we are. Yoga can explain every aspect of your creation. And then it provides techniques of how you can have your realization. If you will follow them, the last result is sure to happen.

In our psyche we have what is known as the spiritual eye, or the eye of the mind, or the eye of transcendental wisdom; and that is at the point between the eyebrows. In the physiological aspect it's our pineal gland. That is the organ of psychical sight. But in most people it's not open, it hasn't been developed yet, it hasn't been developed, cultured or nurtured so that it will open.

When that eye is opened, the darkness that you see when you close your eyes will vanish and you will be in an ocean of dazzling light. That light is just behind the darkness. It's within you, without you and everywhere present. And that is known as the Christ Consciousness. Chaitanya it's called in Hinduism. It's called Christ Consciousness in the Western world, in the Christian religion. So all religions have a different name for this light that is behind the darkness.

Our Bible tells us about it. It's in the 6th chapter of Matthew: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light," saying the same thing. But what does it mean to have the eye single? Your two eyes aren't single, but you do focus your two eyes at the point between the eyebrows at the spiritual eye. Then, when the physical aspect is relaxed and released, so that you just revert the attention to the spiritual eye, the two eyes become useless, you might say. Render the two eyes inactive, and then the single eye opens into that dazzling ocean of light.

Yoga brings these things to focus so you can understand them, so you can practice in order to activate this divine potential that we have and use it. It's ours, and it's everyone's, and no one is shut out from it. Everyone can do it.

But you will never do it unless you know what to do, and you'll never do it without practice. Because down through time, and through incarnation after incarnation, we've created so many bad habits that we're not able to do it without practice, we're not able to do it without being re-taught. It's got to be shown to us again, and then, through practice, we can realize that this teaching is true and valid and that practice will make it productive.

Sit with your body quiet and still so that you can begin to take a look at the inside of yourself. Concentrate at the point between the eyebrows. If you will watch your own breathing, and through the pranayamas, you can help to accentuate that inner state and help to bring it about more quickly by the way you breathe, putting the mind and the breath together. They're inseparably linked anyway, and when you know that, you can control your inner status by rhythmic breathing.

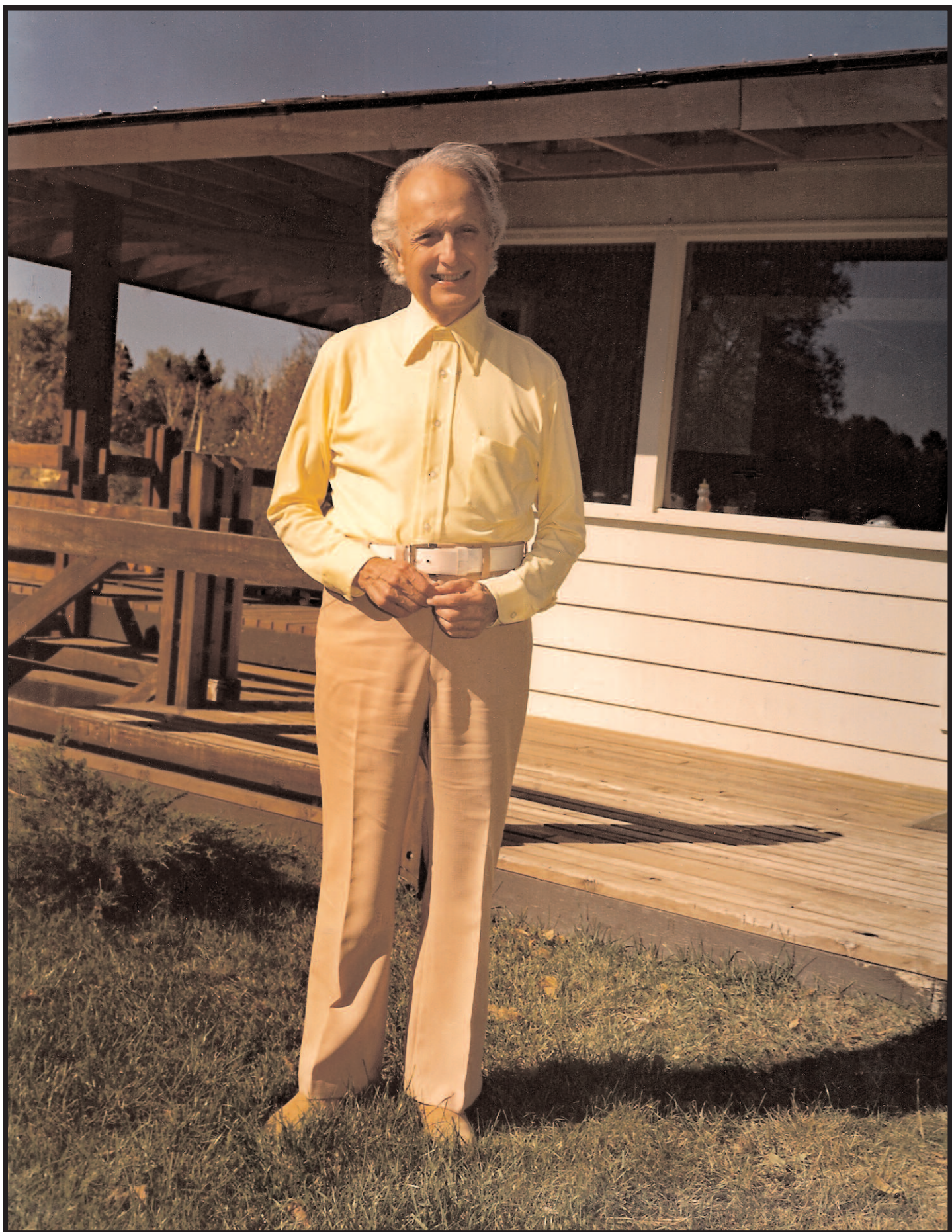
Just watch your breath now, and slow your breathing down. Just breathe out and in real slow, and make it rhythmic-like. Slowly in, then hold it, no breath at all for just a moment, then exhale. Then before the inhale, just have no breath, then inhale, and keep your attention focused at the point between the eyebrows. Keep your attention focused at the point between the eyebrows. Then watch your breath. Keep your attention fixed so that your eyes are not blinking as you hold their focused attention at the point between the eyebrows. This technique will at least give you an inkling or an idea and maybe some inner conviction, putting you on the path described by the Bible and all the religions of the world.

Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is inside you." And all the other great masters said it was inside of you. So why run around here, there, and everywhere when you have everything inside of you? And He says, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand, and now is the accepted time." Anytime you can condition yourself for this great evolutionary experience to happen, it will. Right today, even now it will, if you can do it.

Yoga will teach you how to do it. The techniques are available in order to help you do it. But it has to be self done. You have to do it by yourself, nobody can do it for you. Preacher, priest or pundit, they'll never help you. They'll go along and encourage you, if they know themselves. But you want to be sure that you're not following the blind that lead the blind.

It's a science. It's not just a religious notion or something like that or an emotional thing, it isn't at all. It's basically and purely scientific. In this coming age, you'll have the scientific way to do it and that's what we teach here at Self-Realization Fellowship. We make the science of yoga understandable so you can use it, and benefit by it and live by it. It'll give you a whole new way of life. It'll change your personality, your whole nature, you'll look different, you'll behave different and you'll be liked so much better than you ever were before, amongst your fellow men and women if you take advantage of what it offers.





Yogacharya Oliver, (1893 –1989) standing in front of the Main House at Song of the Morning Ranch.