

Clear Light Community

May 2019

Vol. 16

“Forsaking the company of sense-restless beings and materialistic environs, the sage prefers sequestered places, spiritual company and the inner companionship of the Supreme Friend.”

– Paramahansa Yogananda
Gita Commentary



*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

“Gather together, those of you who share high ideals.”

-Paramahansa Yogananda

Saturday, June 22, 2019

11 am to 2:30 pm

Maintenance Building

We in the Clear Light Community have experienced so much in the last year that we are inviting everyone who is interested in our World Brotherhood Colony to join us June 22 to see for yourselves. We welcome those of you who are new to the Community as well as old friends who want to see what's been happening.

This year we will be able to show everyone our new maintenance building, already housing the plow truck and soon to house our very own fire truck. We will start there sharing information about the community. Then our plan is to spend some time on the Song of the Morning Retreat working on beautifying God's Garden, the lovely flower garden area on the left as you drive towards the wheel house. Later on we will go into the residential area to see Mike and Sue's new home and conclude with fellowship and snacks in one of the homes in the community.

Another highlight that weekend is a celebration of the International Day of Yoga which will take place on Friday June 21. Please see the Song of the Morning website for more information. If you wish to stay on the retreat and/or partake of any meals, please make arrangements with the Song of the Morning Retreat center by going to their website **www.songofthemorning.org**.

Whether you come for the day, or stay for the weekend, we look forward to seeing you all!



New Meeting Room in the Maintenance Building

MANAGER'S REPORT

By Richard Armour

This spring we put the finishing touches on a new heated Maintenance Building that will house the fire truck and the multipurpose truck that grades, sands, and plows the roads for the Retreat and the Community. It also has an office/community room that will enable us to serve community members, potential lessees, and those about to build. Lessees can use the building to meet with building contractors. Maps pertinent to building in the three residential areas will be at hand. Groups such as our Care Team can make it their center of operation.

This big step forward for the community coincides with the passing of Irmgard Kurtz, long-time board member of both Golden Lotus and Clear Light, and one of the Community's original four leaseholders. I want to share her wisdom and devotion to the project in her own words, as published in a former newsletter. Here is an extract of what she wrote, so important for us to remember as we now continue on without her:

"Yogacharya used to tell us how the Masters of old would take their disciples into the forest and teach them wisdom and understanding. And he would say 'Some will come and look and leave—but those who stay, the Masters can help and teach, until they finally walk back into God together!'"



Irmgard Kurtz

He has left us this beautiful and blessed land, the Song of the Morning Ranch, with only two stipulations in his Last Will and Testament: '... it is my deepest wish and desire that the Song of the Morning Ranch continue in existence for the purpose of furthering the Teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda and the Self-Realization Fellowship of Los Angeles, California, together with the establishment of the World Brotherhood Colony as I have directed.'

He has emblazoned Master's Teachings in our hearts; and the lands of the retreat that are set aside for the purpose of building the Brotherhood Colony are calling us home. ... Come home! Help to continue this beloved Retreat, help to build Yogacharya's dream of a World Brotherhood Colony – Come home! How often did Yogacharya say that the Ranch will be a haven of safety, besides a place of relaxation and spiritual refreshment. With the current world situation we all might need this safety net sooner than we thought, or anticipated. ... By helping to build the community we will be able to walk this holy land on a daily basis, meditating together, and helping to anchor the Light. We are his children, the legacy of his life's work and dream that he set out to fulfill at his Master's behest. Will you not come and be part of this great cosmic work of Light and goodness in the world – located in the midst of our Retreat – the Song of the Morning Ranch?

Then, I heard Yogacharya's voice saying, 'What is needed is a Higher vision of the Golden Temple – Tell them to come 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 \$80, or \$225 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. Please leave your name and phone number so they can return your call.**

The Clear Light Community website has a new look!

The front page of our website has a video in which many of the residents are interviewed and talk about the community. Ongoing and upcoming events are on the “events” page. The video page includes YouTube links with audio of Yogacharya. All the newsletters since 2002 are available for viewing or download, and there is a blog with articles relevant to the community by Bob Raymer, George Johnston, and others. The footer of the website has a link to the latest Yogacharya audio CD. The CD can also be accessed by going directly to CDBaby.com and searching “Yogacharya.” The CD’s are also available in the bookstore.

The web address is somcommunity.com or songofthemorningcommunity.com.

The community Facebook page is at facebook.com/ranchcommunity/

Thanks to Bryan Thompson for his guidance in the building of our new website!

IRMGARD KURTZ

by Steve Sandner

After a long, beautiful, and devoted life, Irmgard Kurtz, a dear friend and previous resident at Song of the Morning, left her body on the evening of Wednesday, December 19, 2018. Irmgard was Yogacharya Oliver Black's longtime personal secretary, treasurer of Golden Lotus, Board member and lifetime devotee and friend. Her devotion, friendship, wisdom, and healing touch profoundly moved so many people. I first met Irmgard Kurtz in 1969 when the Milwaukee and Chicago SRF groups travelled together in a caravan to Detroit Sunday services at the Art Institute. Irmgard was the leader and founder of the Milwaukee SRF group. This was my first time meeting these devotees, and I was in a rebellious and unstable state of mind, not in the mood to talk with anyone. But Irmgard had a calm and friendly demeanor and I found it easy to talk with her. After the Sunday service, I had an amazing “emotional healing” with Yogacharya. Within seconds after my experience, I got into the car with Irmgard and a few others for the return trip. I was holding back tears and trying to explain what had happened. Irmgard smiled with understanding as she heard my story. I felt a connection with her as she compassionately shared in the emotional relief I was experiencing. During the hours in the car, I listened to her soft voice as she talked about her experiences in meditation and her experiences with Yogacharya. I later learned that she didn't often talk that deeply about these things. Irmgard said that she also had a healing experience with Yogacharya the first time she met him. In a 1991 talk at the Ranch, Irmgard gave an account of her first meeting with Yogacharya. She had been suffering from excruciating headaches, after being injured in Germany during wartime bombing raids. Doctors had scheduled “exploratory surgery.” She corresponded with SRF Mother Center and was advised to go to Detroit to see Yogacharya. The night before leaving for Detroit, she slept in the meditation room of a Chicago devotee. *“I awoke by something that felt as though I had been struck by lightning in the middle of my heart-center...on the altar the white-robed picture of Yogacharya radiated light. And the picture and the radiating light kept expanding until it filled the whole room, and still the light*

expanded until there was no more meditation room left, no building, but throughout the sky all I could see was Yogacharya's face in this radiating light.” This experience in Chicago increased Irmgard's anticipation in meeting Mr. Black. When she finally got to the Sunday service at the Detroit Institute of Arts, she said she felt “...such love and compassion flowing from him to me, that it totally overwhelmed me, and I knew my search had ended.” After the service, devotees gathered around Mr. Black, and he spoke directly to her. He said he had been expecting her to come! Then, after Yogacharya performed a seemingly simple spinal adjustment, Irmgard was immediately cured of her headaches. When doctors re-tested her upon her return to Milwaukee, the tests were all “normal.” Later, Irmgard served at the Ranch as Yogacharya's personal assistant. Irmgard told me that he would sometimes ask for her point of view. “*Did I give him good advice?*” he would ask her, concerning an interaction with a student. She would tell him, “*Yes, the advice was good, but there was something in the tone of your voice that was unnecessarily harsh.*” She also corrected his grammar, particularly the use of the word “*don't*” instead of “*doesn't*.” After that, Yogacharya always spoke correctly. He once shyly told me, “*I call her my 'guru.'*” The last time I spoke directly with Irmgard, I found myself walking, by chance, alone with her from the main house to a gathering in the domes. We only talked a little, but I was able to ask her a question to verify something Master had said to Yogacharya, “*During the middle of the century, 1950, give or take a few years, millions of souls would be born who would be in the last stages of their evolution, often living their last incarnation.*” Yogacharya said that Master told him this. “*Do I have it right?*” “*Yes, that's what he said,*” she told me. As anyone who knew her would express, she was a great soul and special to everyone. The result of her foundational work at Song of the Morning, and, especially the example of her life and her devotion to the path of Self-Realization will always be with us.



THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS by Karen Epperson

When the hustle and bustle of the social Christmas season has passed, we in the Song of the Morning Community commemorate the twelve days between the birth of the two world avatars Jesus Christ and Paramahansa Yogananda by making a deeper effort to drink of the sacred essence which permeates these Holy Days. The 12 Days of Christmas, as we call this time, is for everyone and anyone who strives to become more Christ-like through the practice of meditation, self-less service, spiritual study, right attitude and behavior, and by following in the footsteps of the Masters who sacrificed their lives so that we may come to know our God. Most recently during our daily 12 Days study group, we absorbed lessons from the “Beatitudes” expressed by Jesus on the Sermon of the Mount and the commentary of Paramahansaji as found in The Yoga of Jesus, published by Self-Realization Fellowship. We hope to share this “most wonderful time of the year” with you during the 12 Days of Christmas 2019.

CARE TEAM REPORT by Anne Wakenhut

“In the welfare of others I shall find my own well-being.”

– Paramahansa Yogananda

In 2014, my late husband, Gary and I moved to the Clear Light Community. One of our projects was the development of the “CareTeam”, an organized plan for assisting someone in a health crisis. This plan contained three phases: the Care Team, the Care Plus Team, and the development of a Care Team Facility. In 2016, Gary was diagnosed with mesothelioma cancer stage four. We were lovingly blessed with a group of people who formed a Care Team, offering respite, transportation, prescription pickup, and fulfilling many other tasks. Most importantly, they offered emotional support and comfort to both Gary and me. After Gary’s passing the Care Team continued to offer assistance to a number of other community members.

After establishing phase one (the Care Team), our goal became focused on completing phase two (the Care Plus Team). In October, 2018, ten volunteers received a 6 hour training, led by Annie Quante, to obtain a comfort level in some of the basics of home health care. A fifteen page reference manual was printed and distributed to all the plus team volunteers. Our current plan is to offer another Care Plus Team training in the future. It is reassuring and comforting to know we can now activate a Care Team and a Care Plus Team to serve those in need in our community. Any community member can access these teams for support and tangible assistance. This is a visible offering for those we hold daily in our hearts.



RESIDENT'S CORNER

OUR NEW HOUSE

by Mike Wanger

Well, the dream is finally realized - our new house in the Clear Light Community!

My wife Sue and I are excited to be closer to our friends at Song of the Morning. I've been coming up from Milwaukee since 1982, leased a lot in 2001, and introduced Sue to the Ranch soon after we met. As I had, she quickly fell in love with the wonderful souls here, as well as with the beauty and tranquility that pervades this gem of Nature.

Richard and Carol Armour, the managers here, have been very helpful and encouraging throughout. Early on, Richard introduced us to a local builder who has made the design and build process a relative breeze. We chose a factory-built home from Dickinson Homes in Iron Mountain, and were so glad we did. Assembling a home in an indoor environment means better quality control and mitigates any negative effects that Mother Nature is known to unleash. We were so excited the day our home arrived on three huge trailers, then watched in amazement as each was cabled, then pivoted gently into place by crane. Our builder, Ron Kenyon, and his seasoned crew have recently added the garage and interior finishing work. All that remains for us now is to move our belongings up from Milwaukee. (An earlier attempt was aborted due to extreme weather!)

Those of you who have been to Song of the Morning Ranch know what we mean when we say "it's the people". So many dear friends are here, and we are continually meeting new ones the more we visit. There is a palpable, peaceful vibration that pervades this holy place, and the natural beauty of this glorious eight hundred acres is simply not to be missed.

Although Milwaukee commitments prevent us from making this our permanent home, we expect to visit often and look forward to contributing to this thriving community in whatever ways we can.

We are ever grateful to Yogacharya Oliver Black for establishing this blessed place as a testament to Yogananda's dream of World Brotherhood Community. Our thanks to the Armours and the Gabbys, who work daily on the Community and the Retreat, respectively. We encourage those interested to explore the Community and to consider making their home here, where like-minded souls live and work together while practicing the ideals of yoga and self-realization.

With Love,
Mike Wanger and Sue Bella



Mike Wanger and Sue Bella



A MEETING WITH YOGANANDA by Steve Weissenthal

Steve Weissenthal is a long time SRF devotee who is currently challenged with Multiple Sclerosis. Steve, as a young artist interested in yoga, was searching for a teacher and bemoaning being born in the US rather than India: later on, he found out that Yogacharya Oliver Black's Parkside home in Detroit was within walking distance of his own home. Here is his story:

I am Steve Weissenthal. I met Mr. Black in 1966 and feel like he's been with me ever since, even though he left his body years ago. Back in 1966, I was living around Wayne State University, going to the Society of Arts and Crafts, and taking a few courses here and there. One Saturday evening, I and a few other individuals were just hanging around, wondering what to do, so we decided to walk up Woodward Avenue. We came across a sort of outskirts of downtown Detroit to a side street and noticed that a store was open - a bookstore. It was 10 o'clock at night, and we were saying, *"What the heck is a woman doing running a bookstore all by herself in downtown Detroit at 10 o'clock at night?"* When we walked into the store it was pretty dark. There was one major light, and the light was targeted on an orange covered book that immediately caught my eye, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. I picked it up and looked through it. My brothers and I had been interested in yoga probably since I was twelve years old. I had always wanted to know what a yogi actually experiences, what he went through, how he met a guru. How did one go about finding these things and knowing about them? I bought the book, and that night when I got into my apartment I started to read it.



Yogacharya J. Oliver Black
at the Detroit Institute of Arts

The next morning was Sunday. Every Sunday since I was twelve years old I used to take a bus to the Detroit Institute of Arts, along with my sketch book so I could draw pictures. I made friends with a lot of guards there, and some of them referred to the *"crazy yogis"* in the basement. I thought that was comical, since I had no intention at that time of having any experience with them. So on that Sunday morning, I went to the Detroit Institute of Arts as usual. It was about 12 noon. When I got there, I saw a friend of mine sitting across the cafeteria, as far away from everyone as he could get. This was strange, because he usually sat with the rest of us, a lot of art-minded people-- musicians, painters, and sculptors. Then I noticed that he had an orange-covered book, and I recognized it as the same book that I had just purchased 12 hours ago. I thought, why would I see the same book two days in a row? As I started to walk up to my friend, he grabbed the book and was putting it under the table. Back in those days, books on yoga weren't exactly popular, so rather than bringing it up in a discussion about a book that most people would think was nutty, it was better to hide the book. *"Stop,"* I yelled. He dropped the book. *"What are you doing with that book? I just bought it last night."* I sat down and we talked for a while. He told me that the Master who had written that book, Paramahansa Yogananda, had a chief disciple, J. Oliver Black, who happened to be teaching yoga at the Detroit Institute of Arts every Sunday morning. My mouth just hit the ground. There's a million places in the world to teach, why would this yogi, this Mr. Black, be teaching yoga here? He said, *"This is where he lives, and this is where Yogananda told him to practice."*

So the very next Sunday I came to my first SRF Service. I didn't realize Yogananda wrote those services. He had written them 30 years ago, and all of a sudden Mr. Black in the readings was answering all the ques-

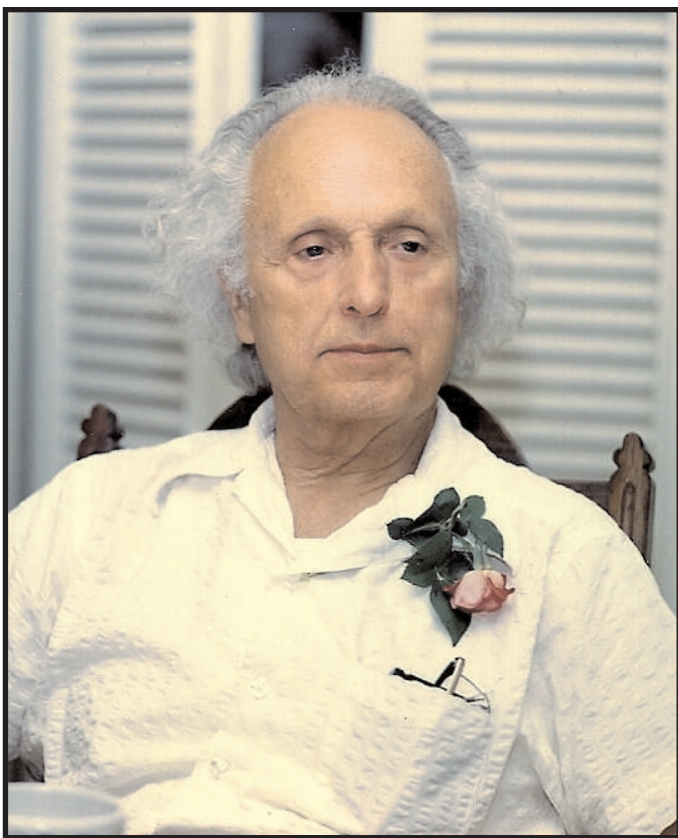
tions that I was going to ask him. I continued going to the Services every Sunday, non-stop. Every single Sunday I would always have a question to ask. He would always answer the question before I had a chance to ask it, either in the Service or later in the lunchroom where we would all meet and listen to him afterward. One day I decided to say, *"Why are you reading my mind so much? Why don't you let me actually ask you a question?"* I was hiding behind a couple of people who were talking to Mr. Black, sitting kind of low. I didn't want him to know that I wanted his attention. All of a sudden, in the middle of his conversation with these two men, he put his hands up in the air and said, *"I don't have to read people's minds. When one is one with God, the right thing flows through you, and it usually means something for someone nearby."* Then he continued on with his conversation with the other people.

Going back to the first year that I was with Mr. Black, I recollect hearing that Kriya Yoga, which was transmitted in an Initiation, was a tool used to obtain higher levels of consciousness. When the time came for the Kriya Initiation, I asked Mr. Black if he would initiate me. He said to me, *"Have you had any of the Lessons?"* I said, *"I didn't take any of the Lessons yet."* He said, *"Well, if you would have had one, I would have given it to you."* I realized, *"My God, I better get the Lessons so I can do this next year."* I went and ordered the SRF Lessons.

Certain questions are hard to ask Mr. Black. One day we were sitting together and there seemed to be a lull in the conversation. I looked at Mr. Black and said, *"Mr. Black, does Yogananda ever show up during the Kriya Initiations and watch us*

get initiated?" And all of a sudden the whole room - there must have been about ten conversations with different individuals - you could hear a pin drop. They all wanted to hear what Mr. Black was going to say. He turned and looked at me and said, "Yogananda wouldn't miss it for the world." He said, "What Yogananda does in life today is wanting to know the people. So he shows up at every Kriya Initiation so He can learn about His new disciples from the other side. He gets to see who you truly are." Everybody was just amazed at what Mr. Black said. This was said about two weeks before Kriya Initiation. I had been taking the Lessons for quite awhile now and Mr. Black had already said that he would give me Kriya this time. I wanted the experience of Kriya Initiation to be one of the strongest experiences in my life. I got what I wished for.

During the Kriya Initiation, I was watching everyone as we went through a whole series of things Mr. Black does. There are a couple of different times that you get up and you go through a long line. I wanted to do this perfectly. So I watched everybody. --what they were doing, how they were in step, how they walked. I wanted the experience to be absolutely perfect. All of a sudden I was in line right in front of Mr. Black and while he was handing me my proshad and I was turning to walk away, the experience I had became completely different from everyone else's. He wouldn't let me go. Thrills went through my body. "What did I do wrong?" And so I started to walk away again, and as I pulled away, he wouldn't let me go again. I knew at that moment I was going to have to look up at his face to see what was the situation, what was going on, why he wouldn't let me walk away. When I turned and looked at him, I didn't see Mr. Black. I looked at the face and I said to myself, "Wait a minute, that's not Mr. Black's face. That's not him. Where did he go? What going on here?" I looked up at him, and stared at his face, and -- "Oh my God! It's Yogananda!" Because I asked him if he ever shows up at Kriya, Master actually came for me. I looked at Master, and he looked at me with that beautiful smile of his, and then he let me go. He wanted to make sure that I looked at him before he let me go. I looked at him right in the face. He was firm with his grip until I was actually able to see who it was. That was my experience with the Guru.



Yogacharya never forgot Master's vision for the retreat.
It is our joy to realize it.



The big orange maintenance truck keeps the roads open, sanded and plowed.

The new maintenance building keeps the truck running.



Here comes another home to join the community!



Sandhill cranes amble down the community roads.