

Clear Light Community

May 2023

Vol. 18

*"If you all work together with love, harmony, kindness, and humility,
the work will sweep the world." ~ Paramahansa Yogananda*



*Dear Ones, Members, and friends of
Golden Lotus and Song of the Morning Ranch,*

Paramahansa Yogananda said that environment is stronger than willpower. Yogacharya Oliver knew that, so he created Song of the Morning Ranch, a Yoga Retreat of Excellence where spiritual seekers could leave the world's tumult behind and come to be uplifted, communing with nature and developing a closer relationship to God and Guru.

A little over fifty years later, SOM is thriving and has grown to include a vibrant community of yogis who help one another strive to achieve the highest goal of Self Realization. Paramahansa Yogananda, in Lesson 54 says that we should surround ourselves with spiritual bodyguards. In Song of the Morning's Clear Light community, we all get to be protective heroes, not only of our own inner and outer environments but those of our neighbors as well.

In the peace and joy of knowing that we are all united in hope, positivity, and spiritual effort, we can find solace and fellowship. Life in a spiritual community offers a unique atmosphere focused on developing mutual love and an understanding of life's higher purpose. It offers guidance by example and action. Through communal meditations and service activities, it provides an arena where spiritual warriors can conquer internal battles and overcome negative forces.

Our spiritual community is a sacred environment where the troubled, weary, weak, and heavy-laden can rest, recover and thrive after incarnations of seeking a comfortable and accepting home, where they are able to gain strength from the cheerfulness, encouragement, and support of true friends.

This kind of refuge is very rare. It has traditionally been the province of monks and nuns. But as householders, Paramahansa Yogananda encourages us to take the path of inner renunciation and welcomes us to operate in the world without being worldly as we enjoy its AUM-created beauty. That way, while practicing detachment in a loving way, we can bring an outreach of hope and resilience to those who need it. Being part of a spiritual community like ours is a blessing and delight—an honor and a privilege not afforded to many. And yet it's welcoming and ever-open to those who want to partake of its sweetness and joy and are committed to plain living and God thinking. Paramahansa Yogananda and Yogacharya Oliver, through their generosity, kindness, and understanding, gave us a great gift. Because of them, we have a place to call our own spiritual home where we can grow and blossom into the kinds of people we always knew we could be. We can strive to reach the ultimate goal while enjoying a haven of safety blessed by the Masters and by God where we can find and feel the Bliss and Everlasting Peace we are seeking.



Self-Realization Fellowship Regional Retreat and Nuns' Visit

In Late September 2022, Song of the Morning's retreat and Clear Light Community were honored to welcome Sisters Preeti and Ranjana as guests of our community and to host our first-ever SRF Regional Retreat. We welcomed over one hundred lessons students and Kriyaban disciples to the retreat from across the state of Michigan, the Great Lakes region, and beyond, including Arizona, Florida, California, Mississippi, and Canada.

From all reports, the retreat was a wonderful success. Devotees expressed deep appreciation for the retreat and their time with Sisters Preeti and Ranjana. The weekend opened with a devotional commemoration service honoring Lahiri Mahasaya's birthday. The technique reviews, and talks were inspiring and beneficial. The film featuring Daya Mata's 1996 talk at Convocation, "Fulfilling the Soul's Deepest Needs," met with a round of applause and was a highlight for many. Devotees expressed heartfelt appreciation to Song of the Morning for hosting the retreat.

Many enjoyed the nature trails and opportunities to meditate at the shrines throughout our property. The weather was cool but beautiful as fall colors increasingly emerged throughout the weekend. The tent had clear walls that folded out of the way during the day providing everyone with views of nature and abundant fresh air. Delicious catered meals supplemented with beverages, additional light meals, and snacks served by our capable retreat staff ensured that everyone was nourished on all levels.

The retreat provided a welcome opportunity for us to work closely together as a community, practicing Master's teachings on cooperation, harmonious living, and selfless service. An estimated 38 Ranch community and staff members worked in teams to prepare the trails, shrines, gardens, and grounds prior to the retreat and during to offer a warmly welcoming, aesthetically inspiring, and well-supported retreat experience for our guests. Contributions by Ranch members enabled the retreat to be offered at a reduced cost, which was also deeply appreciated.

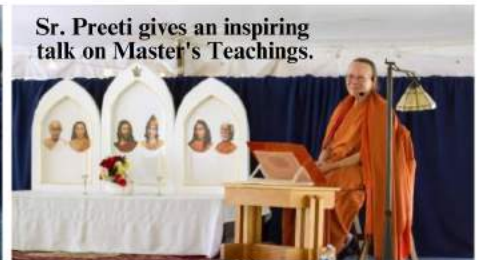
Sisters Preeti and Ranjana enjoyed an extended stay on both ends of the retreat, which enabled them to meet staff and community members, tour our community and retreat, and enjoy brunch with the Golden Lotus Board. We felt it important that they were able to experience our community and were assured that they left with a positive impression of Song of the Morning, our "Yoga Retreat (and Community) of Excellence."

We extend heartfelt love and gratitude to Sisters Preeti and Ranjana, to Br. Marco at Tour Department and everyone at Self-Realization Fellowship for offering us the opportunity to host this year's Regional Retreat and serve Master's work. It is our understanding that a recommendation was made to Mother Center that we continue hosting SRF Regional Retreats every two years. A tentative date for mid-August 2024 has been penciled into the calendar. Once we receive confirmation, our members will be the first to receive the news.

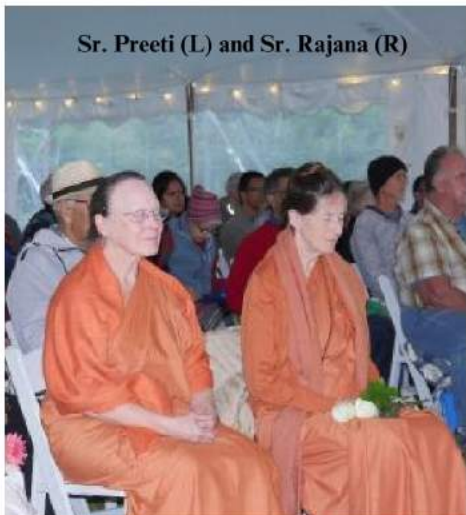
In Master's love and service, Linda Gabby



Sr. Rajana leading Energization Exercises



Sr. Preeti gives an inspiring talk on Master's Teachings.



Sr. Preeti (L) and Sr. Rajana (R)



Sr. Preeti and Sr. Rajana, Regional Retreat at Song of the Morning Ranch, Oct.2, 2022

MANAGERS REPORT

by Richard Armour

*"Once we were strangers, but when we love God, we become brothers and sisters.
That divine relationship is the strongest of bonds." ~ Paramahansa Yogananda.*

The last couple of years has brought brave and idealistic men and women to the Clear Light Community, a "World Brotherhood" community as encouraged by Paramahansa Yogananda. The building was somewhat frenzied during 2021 and 2022, with supply chain shortages in building materials and labor shortages in transportation, manufacturing, and building.

Although costs have since stabilized, they have risen in the past few years, and new construction prices are unlikely to lessen much due to high demand. If your new home has to be financed and you already have a home free of debt, a home equity loan is a fairly simple way to finance your new home. If you sell your existing home, you can pay off the home equity loan after building your new house if you wish and be free of debt. If you choose a construction loan, it is usually a two-step process. After the home is complete, a new conventional mortgage is given.

Living in the Clear Light Community presents many opportunities to join in the development of our "Yoga Retreat of Excellence" with your skills and abilities. Among our newer residents, community members have been helping cook meals for guests at the Retreat, working with staff, getting involved with building projects, working on Archive material, focusing on health and wellness, and generally joining in with earlier residents already deeply involved in maintaining the Retreat. To work for God is a special joy all of its own.

Come and enjoy the roads upgraded with gravel throughout the Community, and check out the new Garden in Phase III, or take a walk to the new Shrine dedicated last summer by Naren in the future Cottage Industry Area. As we grow, the need for a Community Center becomes more obvious. During our recent open meeting in March, we shared different ideas and designs for the Center and will continue to focus on the final design in the next year or two.

It is amazing how much activity is going on in this "vortex of spiritual energy" started by Yogacharya. Membership continues to grow, and you are invited to grow with us, Come to Community Day on Saturday, July 1, and join in!

CLEAR LIGHT LEASING INFORMATION

For Information about leasing a lot in the Clear Light Community or a tour of the community, please get in touch with Richard or Carol Armour at 989-983-9136.



Clear Light Community

SOMCommunity.com ~ Facebook: facebook.com/Ranch Community
Live online chanting, plus a Yogacharya Meditation every Thursday at 1 p.m. Eastern time.

Community Day

Help Our Community, Bloom

Community Day

July 1, 2023, from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Please join us for a tour of Clear Light Community featuring our new Phase 3 garden with planting in our areas, followed by fellowship time in one of our Community homes.



Community members putting up the fence for the Phase Three community garden.



Naren dedicating the new shrine near Phase Three



Carol and Richard Armour with a map of the Cottage Industry area.



Community members putting up the fence for the Phase Three community garden



Community members putting up the fence for the Phase Three community garden.



Angela Lentine's presentation on 3D Computer Printed Concrete Homes

CLEAR LIGHT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

July 1, 2023, from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Clear Light Community Association Committee met recently on March 4, 2023, after being relatively inactive for several years. The Clear Light Community Association comprises all leaseholders, which the CLCA Committee represents. The committee has existed for over ten years and has become more active with recent meetings in November and March. The Association Committee is separate from the Clear Light Community Management Company (CLCMC).

The committee members are Steve Sandner (president), Wendy Page-Echols, Angela Lentine (secretary), Steve Zawisa, Joe Stermer, Tom Wright, John Pfluecke, and Michael Krumpelt.

At the March 4 meeting, we set a Community Zoom meeting for ALL LEASEHOLDERS on June 24, 2023. The time for the meeting was tentatively set for 10:30 AM. We will send out email announcements and reminders. Information will be posted on the website at **SOMCommunity.com**.

After mentioning it at our last meeting, Wendy talked about her starting a “Happy Camper” program where the Community sponsors a variety of activities on a monthly basis. The first event took place on February 13 at the Main House, with a variety of games, and staff was invited to join. Wendy reported that it was a resounding success!

The committee also talked about safety concerns within the Community and the Retreat. At least three of our committee members are trained in CPR, and one or two committee members could be certified to teach CPR soon. We talked about ensuring everyone is aware of the first aid kit in the mainhouse. Also, we noted that a wellness committee has already been established among Community members outside of our committee. We also discussed the importance of the red folder, which every home has on top of their refrigerator, containing emergency contact information and other information related to the Community.

The committee discussed other Community issues and interests, including the Phase III garden, which is mainly being handled thus far by the CLCMC board. Gift baskets and other logistics for our board membership and structure were discussed. For more information on the Association Committee and its activities, contact Steve Sandner: steve@somcommunity.com



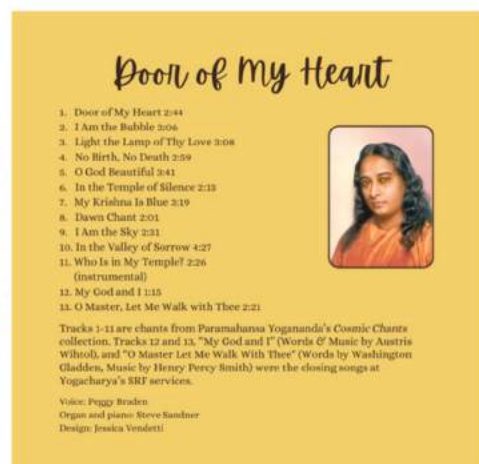
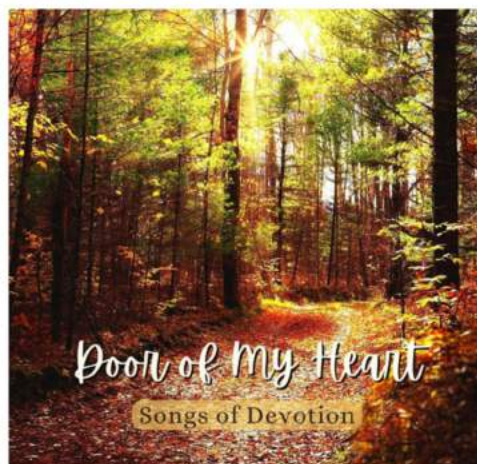


Clear Light Community Christmas 2022



CHANT CD RELEASED by Steve Sandner

The recently released
“Door of My Heart” CD
is the latest offering
among various
CDs produced by
the Community.



This beautiful music CD contains songs that were previously sung and performed at The Detroit Institute of Arts when Yogacharya served there as SRF minister and Kriya Yoga initiator. Of course, this includes many chants and songs from Paramahansa Yogananda’s Cosmic Chants collection, as well as the songs “My God and I” and “O Master Let Me Walk With Thee,” which were often part of Yogacharya’s SRF services.

Peggy Braden is featured on the CD as a solo vocalist, and Steve Sandner provides accompaniment on piano and organ.

Steve and Peggy met in Ann Arbor and first informally performed together at Song of the Morning. Yogacharya was there working on a recording project with Marilyn Beker, and Peggy and Steve were asked to provide the project with some music and songs from Cosmic Chants. The first recordings were made in 1971 at a large recording studio at the University of Michigan, with Marilyn as producer and Steve playing pipe organ. Marilyn, Peggy, and Steve had several rehearsals at Yogacharya’s home on Parkside Ave in Detroit. For Peggy and Steve, this was to be their first time in a professional recording studio. With high anticipation, and some nervousness, Marilyn, Peggy, and Steve met at the University in Marilyn’s car to get final instructions for the recording. Peggy and Steve remember that Marilyn led a brief meditation and read from Whispers From Eternity!

During gatherings at the Ranch throughout the years, Peggy and Steve were often asked by Yogacharya to perform chants and other songs together.

Peggy and Steve then did more recordings for Yogacharya with Jed MacKay as producer. The recordings with Jed were part of Yogacharya’s Whispers From Eternity series released on cassette in the early 1980s. These music recording sessions with Marilyn and Jed turned out wonderfully, and we hope to release these recordings in the future.

Owing to Marilyn’s and Jed’s professionalism, Peggy and Steve used the same approach to produce their own recordings in the mid-1990s in Chicago. These Chicago sessions provided most of the tracks on the “Door of My Heart” CD. Special thanks to Matt Wolfe, who had digitized these audio files and helped spur the project when he contacted us.

As these song recordings were being compiled to be produced on a CD release, Self-Realization Fellowship was kept apprised of our progress, and we deeply appreciate their encouragement!

The final track of the CD, “O Master Let Me Walk With Thee,” was recorded in the domes at Song of the Morning, using Yogacharya’s Chickering piano. This beautiful Christian hymn is still sung at the end of Sunday services at Song of the Morning.

This CD and others are available through the Gift Shop on the Ranch website songofthemorning.org



RESIDENTS CORNER

Joe and Windi Stermer

Greetings All,

What prompted me to apply, become accepted, and build at the Clear Light Community?

Upon completing a union trade job in north Wisconsin, Windi suggested for us to drive by way of the upper peninsula and go to the place we were married before returning home to Arizona. We had not been back to Song of the Morning since our wedding day, October 30th, 1983.

I found Yogacharya's ideas about community resonating with oracles of my youth who wrote about a collective vision; love, peace, R.Buckminster Fuller-Spaceship Earth, Gary Snyder-Zen Buddhism, and the Whole Earth Catalog-Utopian Living in Harmony with Nature.

During the early days of study, devotees opening their homes for yoga classes and meditation demonstrated the great blessings of fellowship. Yogacharya's vision of a retreat in northern Michigan, Song of the Morning, where all could gather, recalled a Vedic directive, "Go to the wise, and learn from them." People sharing ideas, Master's teachings, strength, and enthusiasm of devotees new, old, and yet to come are like star seeds beginning to sprout and bloom at the Clear Light Community.

Each of us experiences our particular journey along the path. Do we enter the world alone? We go from alone to the all-one in the process, finding commonweal along the pathways of life. With our original prayer, we call out...MA! Seeking her who is always with us.

Windi and I have shared the path throughout four decades. May I ask her to carry on this story? I knew the gratitude Joe felt all along for what Yogacharya gave him. I convinced him to return to Song of the Morning. Carol and Richard informed us on all things needed to join the community, and we did all things required to become accepted.

Before meeting Joe, I had never heard of Roy Davis, Paramahansa Yogananda, Yogacharya, or the Gurus except Lord Jesus. Living out west for 36 years with Joe, I learned about these wise men.

Kathy Tracy gave us updates on the news and developments, and behold; here we live today. Joe and I feel grateful for the warm welcome received and then some. Also, the wildlife greeting us daily takes my breath away. Who would have thought...Joe and Windi



RESIDENTS CORNER

Brian Gentner

Hello, my name is Brian Gentner, and I am a new member/resident of the Clear Light Community! I first heard about the Ranch from Trevor Pilibosian, a fellow SRF devotee in San Francisco, probably nine or ten years ago. Even though I was born and raised in Michigan, I had never heard of SOTM! My first overnight stay at the Ranch was in October of 2015, and no doubt the seeds were planted.

It was really because of the Covid crisis that I started thinking about moving back to MI from San Francisco. After spending the last few summers working remotely from MI, I felt a strong calling to move back and be closer to my parents. After spending some time trying to figure out where I might move to in MI, I realized that what was most important to me in this next phase of life was to really focus on my spiritual path and also be closer to my parents so I could support them as they grow older. The Ranch being an hour or so away from where my parents live, suddenly became the obvious choice. After making a number of visits to the Ranch and talking with Carol and Richard Armour, I knew this was going to be my Spiritual Home!

I started construction on my house in late August of 2022, and it is more or less finished. It was definitely a challenging process! However, being able to spend more time at the Ranch and developing deeper friendships with the Community here has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I have the world's best neighbors, and it's hard for me to find the words to describe what they mean to me.

The Ranch is truly a special place, and meditating in the Lodge is an otherworldly experience with similar vibrations to the SRF Mother Center in Los Angeles. No doubt both have been blessed and made sacred by the presence of the Masters!

To come full circle, Trevor Pilibosian and his wonderful wife, Brigitte, visited the Ranch last summer and are now the newest residents to join the Community. It's so exciting to be part of this rapidly growing Community in this special place called Song of the Morning.



RESIDENTS CORNER

Carol and Bruce Malnor

The birds are migrating back to Song of the Morning. A couple of Sandhill Cranes, whom we affectionately call Big Bird and Lady Bird, returned last week and have made themselves at home once again. After many years of living in California, Bruce and I are now back at Song of the Morning, too—although in our hearts, we never left. When we first read about Yogananda's vision for spiritual communities, which he called World Brotherhood Colonies, we knew we wanted to live in such a place.

What could be better than gathering together with like-minded souls for “plain living and high thinking.” Our first experience living in a spiritual community came in 1981 when Yogacharya asked us to move to the Ranch. The two years we spent meditating with him and working alongside other devotees were transformative! Yogacharya's guidance and Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings became the bedrock of our lives. Because living in a spiritual community is important to us, we didn't hesitate when we received an “inner call” to return to Song of the Morning and live in the Clear Light Community.

We leased a parcel, and all the doors opened for us to sell our business and move here. Master's words in his poem Friendship express our feelings about the benefit and joy of living in a community of devotees: “Nurtured art thou in the soil of measureless love, in the seeking of soul-progress together, by two who would smooth the way each for the other.” Woven into community life at Song of the Morning is the opportunity to be of service to something greater than ourselves. Master said, “In being of spiritual, mental, and material service to others, you will find your own needs fulfilled. As you forget self in service to others, you will find that, without seeking it, your own cup of happiness will be full.” Service here can be everything from setting up chairs and chopping vegetables to creating an altar and leading a meditation.

Recently I was part of a group of community members who helped facilitate a Guided Personal Retreat. We each took a small part in giving the guests a full experience with an entire weekend of activities. While talking to one of the guests, she remarked, “I just put my finger on what is so special about this place. You're all volunteers. I've gone to many retreats, but this is the first one I've been to that has been put on by people who aren't getting paid to do it. You're doing it out of dedication to what you believe in.”

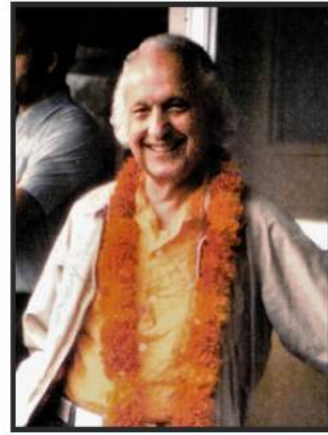
I feel blessed to be living in a community that is furthering Yogacharya's work. These words from the SRF Lessons speak to my heart, “The soul is happy only when it finds opportunity for continuous expansion. Fulfillment of the law of service to others is a step toward fulfilling another law that leads to expansion of our consciousness in God: friendship.”



PRACTICES AND STEPS LEADING TO SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

By Yogacharya Oliver

(Commentary during SRF Meditation Service at
the Detroit Institute of Arts, March 31, 1968)



Now, as we get ready for our devotional meditation, let us all sit upright in our seats, spines straight, shoulder blades together, backs of the hands lying at the junction between the thighs and the abdomen, chin level, placing the feet flat on the floor, touching each other. And then lean slightly forward for balance. Yoga requires the right posture, which will enable one to go deeper in meditation than he could do otherwise. So, following the yoga meditation techniques, then concentrate the attention at the mid spot between the eyebrows. Let the mind think of yourself, focusing your eyes there. Now lift your eyes, but not cross-eyed, so you see a shadow of your own eyebrows, then think with the mind of the mid spot between the eyebrows, so your eyes will have the right posture. You see this posture portrayed by Hoffman the great artist in Jesus in Gethsemane. You'll see that picture in the Art Institute. That famous painting. In that eye posture of the great Master, you see a teardrop in both of his eyes. In those great men of Self-Realization, they have some particular characteristic that shows the depth of their wisdom and understanding and their place in human evolution, which we all have to pass through sooner or later before we are allowed to enter the higher grades of realization.

It is just like we being in the third grade; we have the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. And after we've been in the fourth grade, no one wants to go back to the first or second grade, neither do we want to stay in the third grade, that we are in right now in evolution. But we have to work our way up the ladder of Self-Realization by self-effort and learning how to live our lives in order to enable us to pass beyond this third-dimensional consciousness into the fourth dimension; In the third dimension, we have length, breadth, and thickness, but in the fourth dimension, that is when we see everything from all sides at the same time. That is when the soul is said to have a thousand eyes. We see everywhere in every direction all at the same time.

So as long as we are dependent on looking through a couple of little slits in our head, we call our "eyes," our spirit is being imprisoned in the prison of the physical body, in the tomb of the physical body. By meditation, we can free ourselves from your body prison and become omnipresent, with the great omnipresence of God. And when you pass beyond the darkness of your own mind, just behind the darkness of your own mind is that dimension of light. And then you will realize what is going on in evolution when you learn how to meditate deeply enough so that you are enabled through your own self-discipline to control your body so that you will be allowed to escape from it. You will find yourself in the freedom of all that there is, and then you can look back and see your little physical body sitting right where you are. I can tell you that is the truth because it happened to me many times; my Master taught me in meditation how to do it. You will know because you know. And that is what we are supposed to do in this physical existence, is to know because we do know. And then, you will be able to look around the world about you and see what kind of condition it is in spiritually, which in this age is very bad, very poor. But it will all come out of the depth of darkness, and souls will evolve into that great consciousness of light, and everything will change if we make a spiritual effort now.

Day by day, as you learn to meditate, a new awareness will come, and a new living relationship with God will be established. The mist of silence and mystery that hangs over everything will slowly vanish before the dawning light of your mental and devotional search for God.



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WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY!

Operated by Disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda

