



THE KROTONIAN

KROTONA INSTITUTE OF THEOSOPHY, OJAI CA

FALL 2021

Krotona is an international center inspired by a vision of the oneness of all life and dedicated to the spiritual awakening of the human family.

Krotona's History and Senior Buildings Idarmis Rodríguez

Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai became the headquarters of the Esoteric School of Theosophy (ES) for the United States and Canada in 1924. It is a residential spiritual community situated in a beautiful valley. We reach out to the world through the School of Theosophy, Library and Research Center, and Bookshop. The Krotona School offers an in-depth approach to the study of the eclectic Ageless Wisdom, including theosophical subjects exploring both the spiritual as well as intellectual dimensions. It is also a training center for members to prepare them to participate more fully in the work of the Theosophical Society (TS). Members are always welcome to come here for personal retreat or study. But there is more to the history of the Krotona community.

AP Warrington, former President of the Theosophical Society in America, international Vice-President of the TS, and interim international President, moved the TSA headquarters from Chicago to the beautiful Hollywood Hills, founding the original Krotona spiritual center in 1912. The inspiration for creating such a community came from the old Crotona, where the ancient Greek mystic/mathematician/scientist Pythagoras had his school. But as the film industry grew and Hollywood became increasingly populated, the TSA headquarters was moved back to Wheaton, near Chicago, in 1920. The Krotona Theosophical Center then moved to Ojai's more peaceful location under the guidance of Mr Warrington.

The first Krotona structures in Ojai, built in 1924, were the Library, administrative offices (now the ES Office), a community garage, and four residences, all designed in the Spanish Mission style by architect Robert Stacy Judd. Krotona Hall and more residences shortly followed. After these veterans, more structures sprung up and down the Krotona Hill over the years, mostly residences, but also the Kern Guesthouse in 1958, Krotona School in 1963, and the Student/Faculty Units across from the School in 1983, which are our youngest structures.



Francisco Calderón and Mario Esquivel solving plumbing issues.

One can imagine the amount of work needed to maintain these 34 structures. This year's projects brought a host of major repairs. The bathroom in house 28 was sinking into the crawl space and required removal of soil from under the house, rotten floor joists, and wood, and reworking the bathroom, requiring relocation of the residents for more than one month. The North Reservoir roof needed to be completely replaced and significant modifications had to be made to the ES Building roof. Safety upgrades of the electrical circuits in house 14 and the ES Building were completed and the stairs outside house 24 were reworked. One of the original sewer lines in house 18 was cracked and required several days of intense labor to be repaired. Looking forward, new roofs are required for houses 14 and 58. This work is in addition to the everyday "routine" upkeep of multiple aging structures.

Yes, Krotona is historic and beautiful, but it takes much work to maintain it that way.

California's Drought

Cynthia Overweg

Record-breaking temperatures and excessively dry conditions throughout the southwest have been causing serious wildfires in Oregon and California over the last few months. The excessive heat has also intensified California's ongoing drought. Because of an exceptionally dry winter and shrinking water reservoirs, Governor Gavin Newsom has urged California residents to reduce water consumption by 15 percent. Newsom also declared a drought emergency in 50 of California's 58 counties. While Ventura County is not currently included in the emergency declaration, Ojai and the rest of the County are in a severe drought, a designation given jointly by the US Department of Agriculture, the US Drought Monitor and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Another winter without adequate rainfall could trigger another emergency drought declaration for Ojai and the surrounding area.

Prolonged drought conditions, not only in California but in other parts of the world, demonstrate four essential lessons about water: it is a precious resource that can no longer be taken for granted; water conservation is vitally important; we depend on the natural world for our sustenance and survival; and the relationship between extreme weather conditions and climate change, as climatologists have been saying for years, must be addressed on a global scale because it affects the entire planet.

The impact of the drought at Krotona can be seen in the browned landscape, some fallen trees, and a community effort to voluntarily conserve water. Thus far,



Krotona has been able to avert mandatory water conservation restrictions and its native oak trees and plants have, for the most part, withstood the drought fairly well. During May and June of this year, early morning fog often rolled into Ojai from the coast, cooling hillsides, meadows and trees, and sometimes leaving moisture on the ground for plants to absorb. Krotona's proximity to coastal Ventura is a blessing, but arid summers that continue into fall and winter are a challenge for the residential community and wildlife. One way that we are meeting the challenge is by carefully maintaining Krotona's well water infrastructure.

Krotona has two onsite wells for its water supply, referred to as the South and North wells because of their locations on the property. The South well provides water to our residential community, School, Library, Bookshop and all student and guest units. The North well is used exclusively for the irrigation of Krotona's central landscape. Despite the drought, our water needs are being met and, while there may be conservation measures on the horizon, the water supply at Krotona fortunately remains stable and steady.

Our community looks forward to the day when students and guests are once again on campus attending educational programs and enjoying the serenity and quietude of the grounds, the beauty of the mountains, and the feeling of sanctuary and peace that make Krotona the special place it is.



Susan Johnson, Newest Krotona Resident

Nelda Samarel

Susan Johnson, along with her two feline housemates, Leedee and Tucker, arrived at Krotona January 31. Susan left her Scotts Valley home of many years, exchanging the Santa Cruz Mountains for Ojai.

Susan grew up in Sunnyvale before it was known as “the Silicon Valley,” and when it consisted mainly of orchards. After attending DeAnza and Cabrillo Colleges, studying music theory, jazz improvisation, geology, and pre-med, she found her true calling.

While managing a health food store, Susan learned about nutrition, herbalism, and other natural remedies and knew she wanted to help others find optimal health. So, in 1982 she began the study of Traditional Chinese Medicine, including acupuncture, Korean hand therapy, bleeding techniques, craniosacral therapy, and body-centered psychotherapy, working with several world-renowned masters of the healing arts.

Maintaining a private clinical practice in Chinese Medicine in Santa Cruz County, CA for 33 years, Susan also has been teaching a Taoist approach since 1985. She has published



numerous articles on the subject, authored a book for acupuncture practitioners, *Master Tung's Magic Points: A Definitive Clinical Guide*, and has been president of the Acupuncture Association of America for the past 27 years.

Susan joined the Theosophical Society in 1986 and has been facilitating the Santa Cruz Study Center since 1997. A frequent visitor to Krotona, she “decided to close my acupuncture practice, pack up 33 years of accumulation, and say ‘goodbye’ to friends and loved ones in order to 180-degree my life to live at Krotona.”

She will be managing the Krotona Library, where she has been quite active in preparing for its quiet

re-opening after COVID. (Please see article on page 7.)

Susan says that she is “so very happy to be (living) here and scored the best possible job in the world, (in the Library). I am enjoying the constant stream of wildlife, including regular visits from bobcats, hawks, deer, rabbits, and so many different species of birds.”

The Krotonian

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School Highlights

Maria Parisen

Context and Creation

Theosophy enriches our faith traditions with perspective, encouraging attention to the universal ideas and practices at the heart of religion itself. Freedom of thought is an essential foundation, the ability to inquire, question and observe within self and Nature truths about our lives together that need to be brought to light.

In these times of rapid change, perspective helps keep fear at bay, relaxing the tendency to protect personal space. We all need room to breathe freely again, not to be tethered to beliefs and habits that no longer serve the immensity of soul and spirit. The creative life pouring through Nature, drawing the human soul into communion with its divine source, needs open hearts and minds, bridging differences. At the same time, an archaic language must be mastered: Revelation through symbol, myth, and metaphor. Spiritual perception deepens through direct participation in the imagery of our collective story, learning through our heart.

Theosophy presents for our investigation a vision of human transformation in the context of a universal creative process. Maturing into the fullness of human potential requires an awakening of latent wisdom and compassion. Reflecting upon the essential unity of all life inspires a creative, life-affirming response to what life brings to our attention. This universal yet uniquely individual context conveys how deeply we belong in a world of many dimensions and countless, interdependent sentient beings. Radha Burnier, former president of the Krotona Institute and international president of the Theosophical Society, in *The Way of Self-Knowledge*, writes:

The study of Theosophy in the true sense is the study not only of theosophical literature; it is the study of the book of life, the observation of human nature, the contemplation of Nature and the phenomenon of the

created world in such a way that there is a sense of the One Existence.... the constant flow of the mind towards the One.

Krotona School's fall theme is "Context and Creation." We will continue online this year. Classes will be recorded, as approved by faculty, and made available to registrants and inquirers. Krotona's website includes full class descriptions, updates, and registration instructions. Please check the website for last-minute schedule changes.

Sept 28 – Oct 1: Pablo Sender. **"Realizing Our Eternal Nature"**

Oct 26 – 28: Cynthia Overweg. **"Awakening Heart Wisdom: Courage, Connection, Compassion"**

Oct 30: Ananya Sri Ram Rajan, Cynthia Overweg **"Harvesting Gratitude: A Morning of Healing and Renewal"**

Nov 2 – 6: Alex Bianchi, Eneida Carbonell, Kirk Gradin, Martin Leiderman, Pablo Sender. **"Second Annual Secret Doctrine Forum: The Reawakening of the Universe"**

Nov 9, 16, 23, 30: Leon Berg, Lori Austein. **"Circles of Resilience"**

Nov 19 – 21: Robert Ellwood. **"Finding the Quiet Mind: A Weekend Retreat"**

Dec 3 – 5: Angela Murillo, Luz Tamarit, Gaspar Torres, Alberto Vidaurri. **"El ser, la inmortalidad, y la evolución"** (In Spanish)



Krotona Library and Krotona-Quest Bookshop
Now open by appointment.
Bookshop: 805 646-0873 • bookshop@krotonainstitute.org
Library: 805 646-2653 • library@krotonainstitute.org

Krotona Library staff and volunteers are excitedly anticipating the opening of the doors to the library after such a long hiatus. With the library closed, we have taken the opportunity to deep clean from top to bottom and now the sparkling great picture window brings the breathtaking mountain view right into the archives of new and old titles.

In September the Library reopened slowly, starting by appointment only, while precautionary protocols are maintained to keep our visitors healthy and confident. Visitors will be able to take advantage of our new touch-free hand-sanitizer and breathe deeply, knowing that our new air filtering system is providing all who enter with wonderfully fresh pure air.

Susan Johnson, manager, and **Idarmis Rodríguez**, resident staff, have diligently prepared for the reopening by attending a professional development online workshop, “Designing For A Flexible Future.” This program gave a thorough overview of current ideas both inside and outside library spaces and how they can be adapted to a variety

of programming activities and changing circumstances, with short and long-term strategies for providing safe and meaningful library services.

Cristin McVey, head librarian from Borrego Springs (CA) Public Library and a long-time Theosophist, visited with lots of ideas and helpful hints to aid in the reopening of Krotona Library.

With invaluable contributions from Krotona residents, **Cor Overweg** and **Idarmis**, and former Krotona Librarian, **Mary Jo Kokochak**, along with interfacing with the Ojai Public Library and the internal flow of resources among the three main Theosophical Society in America libraries (Krotona, New York, and Olcott Memorial Library in Wheaton), exciting ideas are brewing for post-pandemic community events.

Open or closed, our Library is blessed to be a part of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy, which stands as a calm beacon of light for all the world.

Update on Krotona Reopening

Ananya Sri Ram Rajan

With the distribution of the COVID vaccines in place, plans to reopen Krotona Institute in the fall were fully explored in the summer. We have been carefully watching the regulations and recommendations sent out by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), California Department of Public Health, and by Ventura County in order to practice the safest measures for optimum health for visitors and staff alike. It has been a great relief that California has consistently made decisions based on CDC recommendations so the messages have been very straightforward and clear.

While it is easy to know what to do when guidelines are given, heads of departments at Krotona discussed hypothetical scenarios in order to understand what is best for our Institute. “What ifs” were considered in detail to prepare for various situations that could possibly arise, with the physical and emotional well-being of staff and visitors being a continual concern. Krotona does not fit into a regular business niche, so we had to consider the Ventura County COVID guidelines for hotels, churches, and schools and develop a plan that covered everything.

Prior to the current COVID surge, Krotona Library and Krotona-Quest Bookshop were planning to be open by appointment only. Even before the increase in COVID cases due to the Delta variant, it was decided that both visitors

and staff, whether vaccinated or not, would be required to mask in order to ensure everyone’s safety. This decision was consistent with the Ventura County mandate for universal masking when indoors in public venues.

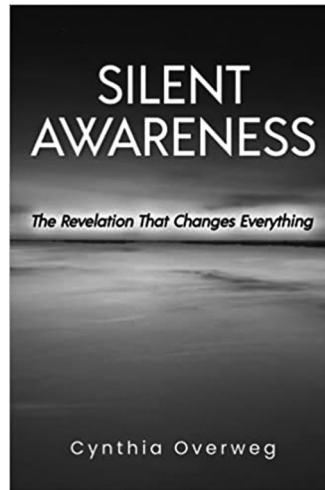
It goes without saying that many of our friends have missed being here and the Krotona residents have missed them. Now that many have been vaccinated, we are exploring whether to allow guests to stay at Krotona for personal retreats. This will contribute to the overall well-being of our retreatants, and slowly allow Krotona to return to a sense of normal, financially and energetically. Unfortunately, this, too, will have to wait for a “safer” time.

One thing that is certain: We all have been affected in some way by the last year and a half. How we respond to it may be different but, essentially, we all have been affected. This reiterates to us that we have more in common with each other than we know. Krotona is a perfect oasis to find sanctuary, to renew, and bring oneself back to balance. As we all find our way through this pandemic, please continue to visit our website www.krotonainsitute.org for updates on our reopening.

July 4 was a day for celebration at Krotona, not only for Independence Day, but for the wedding of long-time Krotona School students **Ellen Draper** and **John Duran**. Both California natives, Ellen and John have known each other for 30 years, having met while working together on community projects in Sonoma County. As life often does, it separated the two until they “reconnected” with each other in 2008.



John considers Krotona as his “spiritual home,” having visited on and off since the early 1970’s, and both expressed their gratitude in being able to make their wedding vows here. Krotona resident, **James Voirol**, was the officiant. The new bride and groom reside in Sebastopol, CA, but plan to be back to Krotona often.



Silent Awareness: The Revelation That Changes Everything is the title of the newly released book by Krotona resident, **Cynthia Overweg**. She draws from the wisdom of sages and mystics from around the world, the book offers an easily accessible framework for unveiling the silent awareness in which we are whole and complete. The book also includes easy-to-follow suggestions that relax body and mind so that we can live fully in the present moment, aware of the hidden beauty that underpins life.

Krotona resident **Elena Dovalsantos**, presented a lecture entitled, “Unity: The Secret Is in the Center,” in July at the 135th Summer National Convention of the Theosophical Society in America. She also has Part I of an article published in the August *Theosophist*, “Mastering the Cyclic Nature of Existence.” The second part is being published in the September issue. Elena has had a busy month!

We welcome **Mario Esquivel** as a new full-time staff in the maintenance department. Mario has been living in Ojai for the past 21 years with his wife and family, which includes three adult children living throughout the US and a 20-year-old at home. He says that he loves the beauty and peaceful nature of Krotona.



*When you do things from your soul,
you feel a river moving in you, a joy.*

Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi

Theosophical Society in the Ojai Valley

Douglas Borgatti

This past June the membership of the Theosophical Society in the Ojai Valley (TSOV), the local branch of the Theosophical Society in America, elected new board officers for the upcoming 2021-2022 year. The TSOV is independent of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy but traditionally has been holding its weekly meetings there. Many of Krotona's residents are also TSOV members who add valuable insight and guidance to the meetings.

Seven members were elected as board officers: Francis Mosse, President; Lisa Love, Vice-President; Dana Hachigian, Corresponding Secretary; Idarmis Rodríguez, Recording Secretary; James Voirol, Treasurer; Pablo Minniti, Trustee; and Douglas Borgatti, Trustee. Both Francis and Lisa live in the local community while the other Board officers are Krotona residents. The newly elected board is a very dedicated, team-oriented group who are eager to introduce Theosophy and study its concepts with the membership.

As with many other organizations across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted TSOV meetings last year. Consequently, the new board decided that the priority for this year, in accordance with California health guidelines, is to have a program with a simpler format, including: reducing the number of monthly meetings from four to two; following a "study group" approach using traditional Theosophical texts with very few or no public lectures; and promoting the involvement of more participants using the meditative inquiry approach.

The newly elected TSOV board is off to a good start and is fully committed to the membership.

*The way of unity is love
manifested as service.*

N Sri Ram



Idarmis Rodríguez, Pablo Minniti, Lisa Love, Dana Hachigian, Francis Mosse, Douglas Borgatti. Missing is James Voirol.



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Fall 2021

*When the mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be
heard in the purity of the silence.*

Sri Aurobindo



As a Theosophical community, Krotona:

1. Nurtures living in harmony and compassion with self, others, and nature;
2. Inspires spiritual transformation through an earnest quest for Truth and living the ageless wisdom, Theosophy.
3. Offers a peaceful, welcoming environment to encourage a life of self-inquiry, study, meditation, and selfless service.