

Krotona Institute of Theosophy, Ojai, California

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.



A Love Letter to Krotona

Betsy Stix, Ojai Mayor

Condensed version of Open House talk

It is such an honor to be here today. My relationship with Krotona over the years is deep, long, and loving. Happy birthday Krotona. Here's my birthday card to you. You have affected my life in so many different ways so let me count the ways that I love you!

As a Student. I moved here 24 years ago and was fascinated by Annie Besant's life story, Krishnamurti, and the Theosophical Society. I made my way to Krotona and was greeted by the signs to protect the animals. As a former animal rights activist and advocate, as well as a very enthusiastic vegan, I felt at home immediately. Then I visited the library and met Lakshmi. I was overwhelmed by her warmth. There were so many wonderful classes at the Krotona School—Uma Goswami, Ravi Ravindra, and Andrew Harvey are a few of my favorites—now Peter Russell.

As a Mother. I brought my sons here to see the library and meet Lakshmi. They really loved her. So much so that when our cat Sissy needed a more sophisticated name with more gravitas and maturity, we chose "Sissy Lakshmi." She's 19 and a daily reminder of Lakshmi's grace and friendship. My sons are 24 and 27 and still come back and visit the campus.



Photo by Brian Thornhill

As a Teacher at Besant Hill. I wanted kids to understand the vision of the founders and the legacy and history of the land, so organized school field trips to Krotona. The whole school arrived on a bus to such a warm welcome! The kids asked such deep and thoughtful questions, and the staff here answered with such wisdom and respect.

As a Yoga Teacher. Krotona remained the grooviest and most coveted spot in town for teachers. It is the jewel in the crown of Ojai,

hosting dharma talks and late night kirtans. It even got a little wild late into the night! Krotona staff were always so gracious, thoughtful, and kind.

As a Daughter. My parents retired to Ojai. I brought both of them here many times to enjoy the natural beauty, gardens, and the serenity. I hold such a fond memory of one of my last excursions with my mom to see the lilies and roses on a perfect spring day much like this one. She was such a lover of beauty and nature. Thank you Krotona. You are such a gift to the community!

As a Mayor. What an opportunity to see if my practice is working!! And to realize that it's a lifelong practice! Yesterday Peter taught us that in Greek to forgive means to let go. Can I

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A Week of Transformation

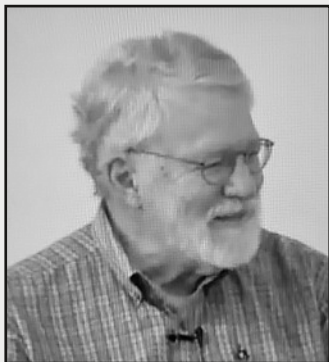


Under the theme of "From Inner to Outer Transformation," the Krotona School of Theosophy hosted four morning programs featuring the Theosophical Society in America (TSA) Vice-President Rozi Ulics, TSA President Doug Keene, TSA former president Barbara Hebert, and Krotona's Pablo Sender, director of the Online School of Theosophy.

Each speaker presented on a key aspect of the spiritual life in their own unique way. Rozi Ulics, in her talk "The Law of Essential Unity," shared her insight using the wonderful and simple example of how well our hands work together "informed and guided by our indwelling presence" to expound on the quote from a Mahatma, "Poor, poor humanity, like the limbs of one body that are constantly at war with one another..."



Doug Keene's exchange on "Ksanti, Patience Sweet" followed the next morning. His quiet gentle demeanor epitomized the topic, inviting participants to explore their own



experiences with the virtue of patience in their lives. Questions such as "how has patience changed your life?" as well as "how does patience help us survive in the world today?" were pondered.

Pablo Sender's talk "Yoga in *The Voice of the Silence*" focused on the transformative aspect of the yoga of sound (*nada yoga*) found in Fragment

One of the book, a topic not often explored or discussed. It was welcomed by participants who reflected on their own experiences with inner sound in their spiritual journey.



Barbara Hebert's presentation "Transformation: Implications and Applications in Daily Life" enquired into the question "what is our duty?" in our spiritual work. With love being the answer, Barbara then explored the difficulties and joys seekers experience while walking the path by quoting *The Voice of the Silence*, "Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself."



A Love Letter to Krotona *Continued from page 1*

release the grip of the mind and come back to the connection among all beings that has been there all the time? Breathwork really helps! And so do you, Krotona! I have so much gratitude to you for consistently renewing my sense of faith and hope in humanity in uncertain times. The more awake we are, the more creative we become in our thinking and action. Let's wake up together! Thank you, Krotona, for all that you give to our community, and happy birthday from us all! We love you! Let the evolution continue! Love and blessings to us all on this momentous day. ■



A Week of Transformation *Continued from page 2*

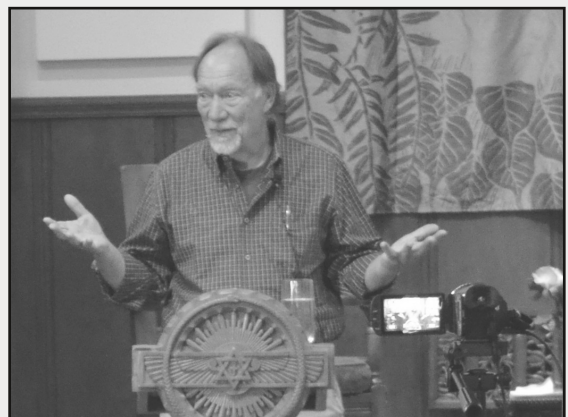
Despite the serious nature of the topics, the workshops were lively, informative, and left participants with kernels of wisdom on which to meditate. We hope to have the recordings of the talks on our website in the near future.



On Saturday, April 20, a public meeting celebrating an "Invocation to the Angels" was conducted by the International Order of Freemasonry for Men and Women, Le Droit Humain. Dressed in full regalia based on their degrees, the Masons were an impressive sight amidst the tessellated carpet.

Later in the afternoon, physicist Peter Russell spoke about concepts from his book *Waking Up in Time* which provoked a stimulating question and answer session afterward. Each program was well-attended and much appreciated by participants.

Krotona would like to thank the Freemasons for offering a glimpse into a normally private ceremony and the speakers who took time out of their busy schedules to share their insights in a creative yet profound manner. And many thanks to our participants. Your presence and support mean a great deal to the work of Krotona. We cannot do it without you. ■



Kind Words and Good Wishes

If I could, I'd send each of you a special "THANK YOU" for the wonderful Sunday event you hosted.

I did not get to personally say hello to everyone but it was a delightful, moving and educational day as many commented on. The food was outstanding! Here's to another 100 years . . .

Celeste Matesevac & Marcia Doty

A friend of mine was very impressed with your recent open house. She is not an impressionable person so well done!

Bret Bradigan, Editor,
Ojai Quarterly Magazine

Congratulations Krotona! You are a great center of spiritual inspiration for those who have visited you.

Thank you!
Nelly Nouel

Hearty Congratulations to Krotona Institute on your Centenary Celebrations. The Institute has been a Lighthouse of Divine Wisdom to Humankind. May you continue to illuminate Minds and dispel Darkness, as you step into the next century. Warm Greetings from Blavatsky Lodge, Mumbai, India (est. 1880)



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A Jewel of Ojai

Krotona remains a dear treasure to many people. At our Centennial Open House held on April 21, our audience of over 100 people had the honor and pleasure of partaking in a blessing by Julie Tumamait-Stenslie, a Chumash elder, followed by the heartfelt reflections of Krotona President Linda Oliveira, Theosophical Society in America (TSA) President Doug Keene, and Ojai Mayor Betsy Stix. The speakers each warmly shared what Krotona means to them, while also providing insight into the nature of our organization and its ability to transform the lives of others.



Photo by Julio Acala @ OjaiWild.org

Krotona aptly rests on the land where the Chumash, the indigenous people of the area, have lived for thousands of years. It is without question that the Chumash principles of working in harmony with the earth's rhythms, honoring one's ancestors and the seven directions through song and prayer, and walking through life with humility and compassion, have added to the nurturing vibration of the Ojai Valley. These

practices intertwine with Krotona's own culture, undoubtedly enhancing it.

Linda Oliveira stated that the impact of the natural environment of Krotona spiritually "can help us connect with plant and animal life forms and provide a greater sense of the consciousness which is around and within us." She continued by saying that being in a natural world "brings us closer to those realms of consciousness which are beyond the physical, yet which are just as real, in fact, even more so." Such an experience may seem superfluous until we consider how this translates from the "me" to the "we."

TSA President Doug Keene stated that "in this time of global crisis, many are looking for depth in their experience and understanding...we search for something more enduring, more real...one place to find these enduring principles is within the Theosophical tradition." He compared Krotona to "an oasis, but also a way station, where we learn to take our energies and abilities out into the greater world in an empathetic and practical sense. We each have something to share, even if it is only our own humanity, letting others know that they are not alone."

The sharing of one's humanity was summed up in Mayor Stix's reflections of Krotona's influence on her life as a student of Theosophy, a mother, daughter, teacher, yoga student, and as mayor. Her "love letter to Krotona" was a perfect example of how Krotona, through its programs, library, serene surroundings, and its residents continues to be, in the words of Doug Keene, "a valued treasure, a jewel, which radiates for us, and beckons us to come and find the peace and stillness we seek."



Forever Blessed

Elena Dovalsantos and Ananya Sri Ram

How does one express the deep heartfelt gratitude to a number of people who made something meaningful even more so by their commitment, dedication, generosity, and support?

When former Resident Head Guru Prasad and the Krotona Board appointed a Centennial Planning Committee, no one had any idea what the celebration should look like. It was clear that we wanted to honor Krotona, its reason for existence, our Krotonian predecessors, and to reverently express our indebtedness for all Krotona has given. The committee provided a necessary framework to help get the ball rolling. It was quite fascinating to watch collective thinking manifest something beautiful from what started as just a nebulous idea. Their suggestions included a street banner to advertise the event, memorabilia, a historical display, magazine articles about Krotona and its history, a commemorative video, a program with a theme exemplifying our work of “inner to outer transformation,” and a finale consisting of an open house and reception. Once the foundation was set, it

would have been impossible to produce the outcome without every resident willingly lending a hand in a variety of ways. An “all hands on deck” was called and all the residents cheerfully responded.

Trying to acknowledge every resident individually and the many different tasks each one undertook would be repetitive as many wore different hats, stepped in where needed, and worked to “express something of the soul’s fullness” as our founder AP Warrington wrote over a century ago. Teams were created to spruce up the grounds, paint posts, replace campus signs, upgrade housing units, move furniture, and improve the hall and its acoustics. “How can I help?” became our mantra.

On the actual days of the celebration, residents and outside volunteers joyfully decorated the meeting rooms, manned the technology equipment, directed parking, greeted and registered attendees, ushered, and served as tour guides. Finally, what would a celebration be without a food team and reception planners serving beautifully



Krotona President Linda Oliveira and her husband Pedro

plated dishes on elegant black tablecloths? Someone commented that they never thought there could be such a great variety of vegetarian food!

Krotona's centennial would not have been complete without the presence of its president, Linda Oliveira, and her husband, Pedro. As many know, Linda and Pedro live in Australia, but both were determined to attend the celebration. A rather serious medical issue almost didn't make this possible, but we were blessed and incredibly grateful to have them with us, healthy and whole. Their gentle, wise demeanor and lovely sense of humor added to the festivities.

Our deepest gratitude also goes out to the speakers for the events. A special mention of

Steve and Karen Schweizer and Chris Bolger for their hard work on our remarkable video and Janet Kerschner for her historical presentation on Krotona. A big thank you to the volunteers who came from all over and did plenty of grunt work: Maria Rosa Martinez and husband, Ernesto Garcia (Argentina), Joanne Johnson (Mt. Vernon, Washington), Elena Kolesnykova (Las Vegas, NV), Peggy Heubel (San Leandro, CA), Susan Leiderman (Los Angeles, CA), Francine Oller (Santa Monica, CA), Kamala Nellen (Ojai, CA), and Rebecca Ketner (Ojai, CA).

And to all of you, Friends of Krotona, who honored our special day and donated precious funds, may your light shine ever brightly! We are forever blessed by your presence and generosity. Thank you! ■



Krotonians, Centennial Photo 2024

Back row (L to R): Rochelle Voirol, Annie Johnstone, Doug Borgatti, Dana Hachigian, Luz Tamarit, Susan Johnson, Pedro Oliveira, John Beers, Randall Bush, Jorge Hermosa, Nghia Nguyen.

Second row (L to R): Jim Voirol, Idarmis Rodriguez, Pablo Minniti, Elena Dovalsantos, Linda Oliveira, Maria Parisen, Vimala Prasad, Guru Prasad, Duc Huu Huynh.

Front row (L to R): Carol Nicholson, Pablo Sender, Michele Sender, Ananya Sri Ram, Chris Lawson, Teo Lawson, Liz Cantemir, Juniper Lawson.

Not pictured: Richard Ellwood, Ann Hermosa, Sue Prescott, Mihaela and Jhaura Wachsman.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*Live and breathe in all, as all that
thou perceivest breathes in thee . . .*

The Voice of the Silence

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.