
THE FRANKLIN MERRELL-WOLFF FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

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The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship is a publicly supported, non-profit corporation whose mission is to educate the public about the twentieth-century American philosopher Franklin Merrell-Wolff through his writings, audio recordings, teachings, and life. Our activities include publishing and distributing his works, and the sponsorship of forums and events to study and discuss the life and work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, as well as to explore the connection between Wolff's teachings and those of other traditions.

Season's Greeting from the Chair

Chuck Post

In this Issue

Robert Holland

At end of year—and at seventy-five-years old—getting reasonably close to the end of this mortal experience, I cannot help but be appreciative of the new life that Franklin's insights have given me.

The Christmas tradition is all about new life: new beginnings, in the form of a child, a messenger and a reminder of the return of sunlight, and Light. Franklin was that for me, and for the few fortunate enough to meet him, or his work.

In this issue we offer some first-hand experiences with Franklin from John Flinn, whom I recently interviewed. I hope you enjoy my interview as much as I enjoyed interviewing John. I would also like to remind you of John's recent contributions to the Member's Forum, both of which commemorate his time with Franklin. The first is a remarkable set of sketches he made during the years 1970-1982; the second is a thirty-six minute video from 1979—John has titled it "Travels with Yogi."

May the Christmas Light be known to you this season!

When his second wife, Gertrude, passed away in May 1978, Franklin Wolff was overcome by a profound sense of grief. Gertrude's death had been sudden and without warning; moreover, Wolff was over twenty years her senior and he had long assumed that she would survive him.

Many of Wolff's students were puzzled—and perhaps dismayed—by Wolff's reaction to Gertrude's death. Indeed, how could an enlightened being—one personally acquainted with immortality—become so distraught by the loss of his wife?

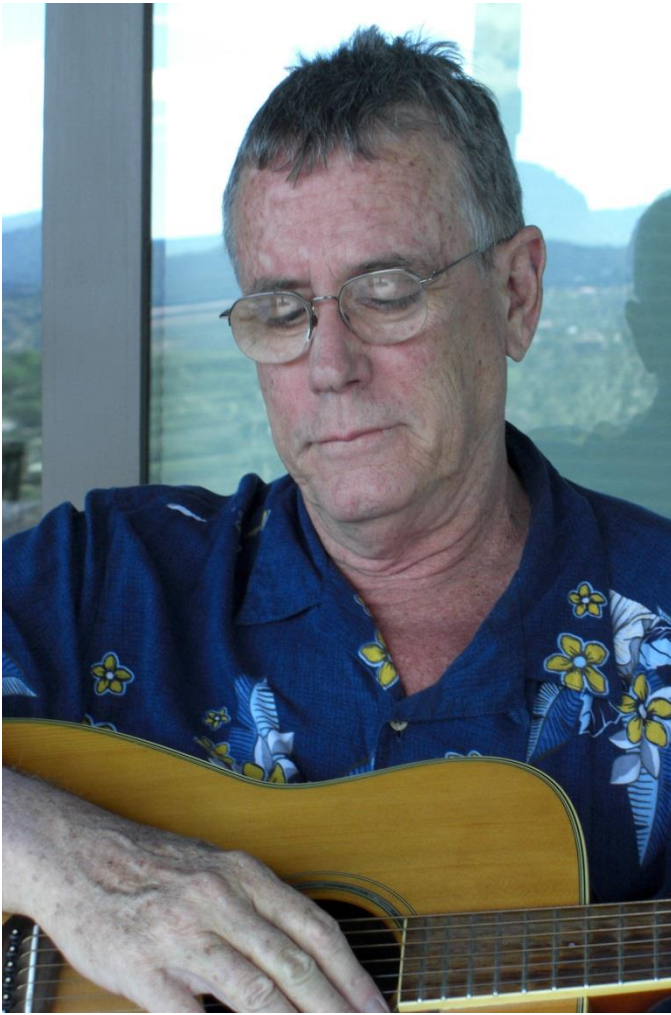
John Flinn, who twice served as Wolff's caretaker after Gertrude's death, did not share these doubts. Perhaps this was because the Franklin Wolff that he knew was more "genuinely human" than most of us knew. Or, perhaps it was because John intuited that Wolff had accepted this pain in order to teach us all a lesson. (Joseph Rowe, another of Wolff's caretakers, expresses as much in his excellent memoir "The Gnostic of Mt. Whitney"—see the Members Forum page of the Fellowship's website). One thing is for certain, John's love for "Yogi" comes out in this issue's interview.

This issue also contains a brief update on the Wolff Archive and a detailed update on changes that we have made to the Fellowship's website. Of particular note is the fact that we have begun to upload archival material to the website, which now may be accessed by all visitors. In addition, you will find in this issue a list of ways to help with the Fellowship's activities, and two quotes from Wolff that speak to the role of teachers.

In closing, I would like to join Chuck in wishing all our members Happy Holidays!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1	A Message from the Chair
1	A Note from the Executive Director
2	An Interview with John Flinn
4	Update on the Wolff Archive
4	Update on the Fellowship's Website
5	You can help!
6	Quotes from Franklin Merrell-Wolff



John Flinn

Caretaker and Artist

An Interview by Chuck Post

John Flinn came to Franklin Merrell-Wolff in time to absorb his wisdom and keep him company; and to cook for him, and to drive for him—and he is still “in touch” with him.

John started life in Fort Worth and now lives in Phoenix. He is a retired commercial artist who plays a musing guitar and takes life as the magical experience it was meant to be. To spend time with John is, perhaps, to get a glimpse of Franklin.

I recently sat down with John to collect his memories of living with Franklin at Lone Pine in Wolff’s later years, and to muse about the meaning of Franklin in his own life. I hope you enjoy my interview as much as I enjoyed interviewing John.

Like many others, John came in contact with

Franklin’s work through John Lilly, M.D., the author and consciousness researcher who had been instrumental in helping to get *Pathways Through to Space* republished in 1973.

In the fall of 1978, John made his way to Wolff’s Lone Pine, California home—and to make his way into Franklin’s life at a challenging time: Franklin’s wife, Gertrude, had just died in May of that year. Having survived his first wife, Sherifa, no doubt Franklin was tired of being the one to carry on afterwards. And he was still in human form, a form designed for feeling as well as thinking.

Gertrude’s death came on suddenly. She had been Franklin’s partner in building their home, and sharing his leadership of the “students” for almost two decades.

There were other members of the community surrounding Franklin, including his two step-grandchildren and some “greats,” but most were not living in Lone Pine. Some did, however, and lived in nearby dwellings, where they had come to study with Franklin.

And there were occasional visitors who, usually in the warmer weather, would come from far away to meet the man who wrote *Pathways*.

A few months following his first meeting with Franklin, John was asked if he would consider moving to Lone Pine to assume the duties of Franklin’s current caretaker, who was due to be leaving soon thereafter.

He moved to Lone Pine in June of 1979 and occupied the main house with Franklin. He remembers Franklin arising every morning early: he would open the door to John’s bedroom and let in the cat, Harvey, who would reach up to paw the bed and echo Franklin’s “Good morning” wake-up call. This started the day.

Franklin was still physically active then, and would sometimes tinker with the car, a Mercedes. Franklin retained his practice of dressing in coat and tie, unless working on the property. In his early nineties, he could still care for himself, and of course, his mind was still quite sharp.

John was put in charge of the kitchen and the driving and other things. But what he remembers best are the times he would sit with Franklin, talk with him, feel his grief, and absorb his wisdom.

John puts it this way:

Being near Yogi was like having a stick stir up the mud at the bottom of the lotus pond which is the Unconscious. Much of my relationship with him played out on the dream level: some big dreams, dark and light and graceful, in many ways a classic Jungian journey, encounters with archetypes and a walk with the guru.

Since John happened to land in Lone Pine at the very time of Franklin's lengthy healing process, this factor dominates to some extent his memories of the first year and a half he shared with Wolff. Yet there was strength in Franklin, an awareness that ran parallel with the grieving process.

According to John, there was the overarching wisdom, a set of mind in Franklin that was observing its own grief. In a sense, it was a lesson-in-flesh of ultimate mastery. Franklin was still in human form, carrying human vulnerability, but "going to school" on the process at the same time.

He was profoundly in touch with his feelings. As John puts it, "occasionally overcome by them, but always willing himself forward, driven by his vow to serve Humanity and continue with the Work through to his natural end."

John also put it another way. Since Franklin was very much a *jnana* (wisdom) practitioner, approaching the ultimate life mysteries primarily through study and thought, the event of Gertrude's death thrust him into dealing with the heart and "the depths and heights of the feeling component of the psyche."

Maybe he was playing catch up with heart matters. In his nineties, he was still learning as well as teaching.

John marveled at the conjoining of feeling and thought in this master. John himself, in these subsequent years, has embraced more of the *bhakti* (devotional, feeling) path to balance the intellectual, as he was influenced by Franklin's example.

There were others in the community, but John occupied one of the closest positions, sharing the house with Franklin. To help support himself during this period, he got a part-time job cleaning telephone booths twice a month along a

sixty-mile stretch of California Highway 395, which runs through Lone Pine.

In time, life would call John back to Phoenix, at the end of summer, 1980, where he resumed his graphics career. Soon, however, he realized that his time with Franklin was not through, and so returned to Lone Pine in August of 1982, for what he calls his "Second Term."

He stayed with Franklin, continuing his role as companion and "sidekick" as before, until returning again to Arizona in the fall of 1983.

At this time, just a little over five years after Gertrude's passing, two key individuals arrived from New York City to take John's place in Franklin's home. One was Andrea Pucci, who would stay from then on, and the other, Ellen Vogel, who would come back the next year. Together they looked after Franklin until his passing in October 1985.

When John visited Franklin again, several times over those final two years, he could see improvement in Franklin's emotional health and well-being. John attributes this to the company of these two very caring women, whose yin energy was a needed balance for Franklin.

John returned to Lone Pine for visits, including the last of the annual Summer Conventions in August 1985. Franklin presided over this gathering, just two months before his death. John remembers that at the end of Franklin's talk to the gathered guests crowding the main room of his home that beautiful Sunday morning, Franklin informed them that his public work in this world was now done and that he would soon depart. After a few closing words, he arose from his chair and walked back into his office, leaving everyone in stunned silence.

After the meeting broke up, John followed Franklin into his office, and expressed how powerful and how beautiful the service was, and how moving his announcement. Then John went outside to shed some tears in private.

John would return to accompany Franklin on the last two of his annual trips to the California Coast: in 1984 (the Redwoods) and in 1985 (Palo Alto). Franklin came home to Lone Pine from the last trip with a persistent cough that was quickly diagnosed as pneumonia and he was taken to the small hospital in Lone Pine for

what was to be his final week of life. John observed that Franklin knew of his imminent demise and was entirely ready for the experience of conscious dying he'd so long prepared for.

John said that in that last year and especially those final weeks, Franklin "seemed as complete and balanced as anyone can be, his hair and beard grown silver and white, he was in full flower at the end. I told him during our last breakfast alone that I'd watched him go through hard times and struggle with grief and sorrow, and had seen him over the preceding year come to a point of balance and healing and letting go. I remember the look of acknowledgement he gave me, the famous twinkle in his blue eyes as he silently nodded."

John feels that Franklin is still with him, still available to him, still guiding him.

He is pleased with the Fellowship's work in making Franklin more available, especially to the wider world via the Fellowship's website; John is also certain that there will be a broader discovery of Wolff's audio and other work. "As the years go by, more than one person will hear Franklin's teaching and philosophy at just the right time in their journey, and the High Indifference will make a big difference as they walk their own pathway."

As our visit neared its end, John shared a song he had composed on his guitar, a quiet tribute to the man who had stirred his soul many years ago. And still does.

Update on the Wolff Archive

The Fellowship is continuing in its efforts to collect the entire Wolff Archive, as defined in the November 12, 2012 settlement with Doroethy Leonard. In the meantime, the material which has thus far been collected has been cataloged, scanned and is being posted on the Fellowship's website. When the Fellowship is in possession of the entire archive, this material will be placed in a special collection at Stanford University.

Update on the Fellowship Website

If you have visited the Fellowship's website lately, you will have encountered a few changes.

A major change is that visitors no longer need to login in to view the material in the Wolff Archive, which is being steadily posted on the site. Please note that members must still login to add quotes to the wiki-quote project and to update their email address. Here is a detailed summary of the changes made (or to be made) to the site:

The *Home Page* has been simplified: it now features Wolff's visage along with a statement of the Fellowship's mission and the website's role in this mission.

The *Franklin Merrell-Wolff tab* contains eight pages that narrate aspects of Wolff's lifework; these pages have been modified as follows:

- A downloadable version of the *Biography* and *Philosophy* pages (in pdf format) has been added to each of these pages.
- The *Aphorisms* page has been slightly reformatted and now includes a foreword to the aphorisms (taken from a pamphlet edition of the aphorisms published in the 1970s). In addition, a link to a recording of Wolff reading the aphorisms has been added to the page.
- The *Mandala* page now includes a half-hour video presentation in which Wolff explains the genesis of his mandala; this video also introduces, for the first time, several three-dimensional models of the mandala. A shortened version of this video (without any audio commentary) will soon be added.
- The *Photographs* page will be supplemented with additional photographs and reformatted.
- The *Interviews* page now includes a fifty-eight minute video made by Joel Morwood; in addition to a conversation with Wolff, this video includes a hike to the Ashrama.
- The *Works About* page now includes Facebook pages that feature Franklin Merrell-Wolff.

As mentioned above, the **Wolff Archive tab** is no longer restricted to members of the Fellowship. In practical terms, this means that one does not need to login to access material from the archive. We have also revised the organization of the archival material as follows, each category having its own page:

1. *Aphorisms & Poetry*—Wolff’s aphorisms and poetry are found here.
2. *Audio Recordings*—a complete library of Wolff’s audio recordings from 1950-1984 is available for listening and download. A transcript accompanies each recording.
3. *Books*—besides books published by Wolff, documents (such as reviews and marketing material) relevant to these works are found here.
4. *Correspondence*—Wolff’s correspondence, sorted by correspondent, is found here.
5. *Essays*—all papers and articles penned by Wolff fall under this category.
6. *Lectures, Notes & Outlines*—in this section of the Wolff Archive you will find Wolff’s numerous lectures, some in finished form, most in outline. In addition, this section of the Wolff Archive contains a number of miscellaneous notes found among the items in Wolff’s estate, notes that range from the recording of a passing thought to those that document various books in Wolff’s library.
7. *Mementos & Memorabilia*—various items that Wolff kept in his office are documented here.
8. *Organizations & Group Work*—contains documents that relate to Wolff’s work with various groups and organizations over the course of his life.
9. *Sherifa*—wrote a number of short works that can be found here. In addition, her journals and correspondence are relevant to the work that she co-led with Wolff.

10. *Gertrude*—wrote a book titled “Man Evolving,” which may be found here. She also penned a number of short articles and essays, all of which are cataloged here.

Thus far, we have posted the material for (1), (3), and (5); (6) is currently being processed. In addition, most of the audio recordings (2) are available; as we add more recordings, this page will be updated with some new groupings of this material. Please check the site frequently for updates, which are being made daily.

The Member’s Forum page under the **Forums tab** has been reformatted; here you will also find links to the Fellowship’s Facebook page, discussion group and latest newsletter.

Under the **Fellowship tab**, you will find the Fellowship’s mission statement, along with links through which you may join or donate to the Fellowship.

The **Fellows Page** is visible only after a member has logged-in: here members can access past issues of this newsletter, may revise their contact and login information, and may also submit quotes to the wiki-quote project.

You can help!

The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship is just that—a group of individuals who share an interest in the life and work of Franklin F. Wolff. A number of our members have asked how they might contribute to Fellowship activities, so here is a partial list:

1. *Login and submit your favorites Wolff quote (or quotes)*. Early next year we will publish an e-book with quotes submitted by our membership. We would like to gather as many as possible.
2. *Check the Works About page* (under the Franklin Merrell-Wolff tab) and let us know of any references to Wolff and his work that we have missed. For that matter, we would welcome comments on any aspect of the website.

3. *Contribute to the Members Forum.* This page (under the Forums tab on the website) is dedicated to the publication of our members' essays, poems, videos, and other material related to the lifework of Franklin Merrell-Wolff. This material could be historical or philosophical, or perhaps a piece inspired by Wolff's life or work.
4. *Help us transcribe audio recordings.* We have fifty-six recordings remaining to be transcribed.
5. *Donate!* The Fellowship is a public charity, which means that it is entirely supported by contributions made by its members. Our most immediate needs include the expenses for: scanning, storage and shipping of the Wolff Archive; website hosting and design; email marketing services; and U.S. mail services.

The Fellowship is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) corporation, so your donations are fully tax-deductible. The easiest way to contribute is via the Fellowship tab on Fellowship's website.

Quotes from Franklin Merrell-Wolff

Our first quote is taken from the essay "The Dual Nature of Man," in which Wolff concisely summarizes the teacher-student relationship:

The teacher symbolizes Spirit or the Higher Self of the pupil. As the pupil relates himself to his teacher so also he brings about in himself the ascendancy of his own spiritual nature. When the work that a given teacher can do is finished, the student will be graduated.

The next quote is taken from the introduction to Wolff's publication, *Yoga: Its Problems, Its Purpose, Its Technique*, and the subject matter is

self-effort:

He who would find and walk on the Path out of misery and realize Liberation must cultivate the spirit of the careful adventurer. Never can he mount to the heights on the shoulders of others. The greatest prize of Life is the fruit, only, of self-effort. Nor is it possible to find any map which marks every step of the Way. Those who have gone before have, it is true, left such knowledge as they have acquired for those who follow in their steps. But as no two human beings are exactly alike, so for each there is a phase of the Path which is unique. The finding and mastery of this phase calls for original discovery and hence, requires in him who walks that Path the spirit of the pioneer. And even though temporary failure may be experienced, it should always be remembered that while the true adventurer lives he LIVES in the fullest sense of the word.

The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship

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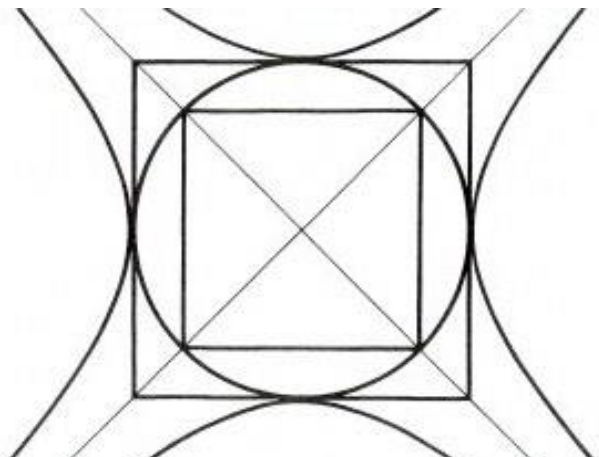
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A Convention Photo of the Assembly of Man