
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.

A Message from the Chair

Chuck Post

Was Franklin Merrell-Wolff a bodhisattva? That is, was he a spiritual teacher motivated by great compassion and a wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings?

Those that knew him well say so. Andrea Pucci, who was one of Wolff's caretakers toward the end of his life, tells of one evening when Franklin was particularly restless, unable to sleep. She said to him, "Rest, Yogi . . . rest . . . rest." To which the 97-year-old replied, rather vigorously, "I will never rest until all people are enlightened!"

In his declining days, Franklin's fidelity to the *Kwan-Yin* vow was intact—he was not ready to rest until all were aboard the raft.

I learned of this episode from Joel Morwood, to whom I spoke by telephone on February 6, 2015. The rest of our conversation can be found below. (Note: many who knew Wolff referred to him as "Yogi.")

In this Issue

Robert Holland

Our Spring 2015 newsletter features an interview of Joel Morwood, who spent about a year-and-a-half with Franklin Wolff in the mid-1980s. Joel went on to establish the Center for Sacred Sciences in Eugene, Oregon. We hope that you enjoy Chuck Post's conversation with Joel.

We were saddened to recently learn of the passing of Swami Satyananda Giri. Satyananda had a profound respect for Franklin Merrell-Wolff, and a number of his works directly take up Wolff and his work. You may read more about Satyananda's own life and work in a commemorative article by Jeff Baker.

In this issue you will also find an update on the Fellowship's work on the Wolff Archive. We are pleased to announce that we have posted ALL of the audio recordings of Franklin Merrell-Wolff on our website, which may be accessed using the Wolff Archive tab. We have also grouped these recordings into various categories in an effort to make their access more manageable. These categories are listed in the update below. There remains more work to do on the recordings. We have fifty-five recordings that have not yet been transcribed, and we have purchased some software to help us in this task. We have also yet to proof nineteen transcripts—these should be posted shortly.

This summer we will be sending you a booklet of quotes submitted by members of the Fellowship. You still have time to submit more!

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**Joel Morwood, Founder
Center for Sacred Sciences**

An Interview by Chuck Post

Post: Before we get to your experience of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, please tell me about your earlier life.

Morwood: I'll make it brief. I was raised in New York City. Like many in my generation, I was called to Viet Nam. And like many, I became a bit of a revolutionary upon my return. Disillusioned with that process, I began a career in documentary movies. That led to Hollywood.

Post: I'm aware that you co-produced *The Jazz Singer*, among other films.

Morwood: Yes, I was in Hollywood from '77 to '83, landing a vice presidency in a well-established production company. But once again, I found disillusionment—this time in the money

chase.

Post: It sounds like a spiritual journey was knocking at your door.

Morwood: Literally. I planned a trip in my VW van. I was curious about the many spiritual communities that were populating the U.S. at that time, especially in the west. That's what got me to Lone Pine, and Yogi.

I was collecting video material on this trip. There is a video interview of Yogi on the Fellowship's website I did at this time, along with Dianne Harrison. I was only there four or five days, and then resumed my trip.

Post: What was your impression of Wolff at that time?

Morwood: I was impressed. Instead of the trappings you might expect in a leader of a spiritual community, Yogi was unaffected, comfortable in his skin—and his coat and tie. I found a great respect for him, his intellect and his humanity.

Post: What happened after you left Lone Pine?

Morwood: Two months later, as I was coming to the end of my "tour" of communities, I had my awakening.

Post: What was that like?

Morwood: I've described it elsewhere. And describing it is not easy. Let's just say I began to see things as they are. It's quite dramatic, but not much more can be said.

Post: What then?

Morwood: I had been shooting video throughout my trip. I returned to Los Angeles to edit and complete the documentary. Then I returned to Lone Pine where I rented a cabin close to Franklin's home. I was there for a year and a half. I left in the spring of '85.

Post: Franklin died later that year. What are your memories of Franklin during this time?

Morwood: Wisdom in slow motion. These were his final months of life. I would sometimes be called upon to, let's say, "interpret" for Franklin when visitors came to talk to him. He was a bit slow in responding to their questions, had trouble sustaining a conversation. I helped the process. Of course, there were chores to do to keep up the property and the daily routine. Andrea Pucci was instrumental at that time in the care for Franklin.

Post: Any memories come to your mind?

Morwood: There were humorous times. One day after a sustained rain storm, the stream behind the house overflowed and began to cut a rut in our access road. We went out with shovels to try to save the road from washing away. Franklin's gait was unsure, and two of us were close by in case he might fall. Once he almost did, and Andrea took hold of him to prop him up. He barked at her, "Unhand me, woman!" His style of speaking, like his clothing and other manners, were as dated as they were endearing.

Post: What are your memories of his thought process, his spiritual teaching?

Morwood: I think this is the meat of this interview. So let me go to the essence of his teaching, at least what stood out for me at that time.

What I learned from Yogi was that practices are extremely important, but they don't function the way we think they do. Practices don't lead to enlightenment. They exhaust the search for it. It is when that search is finally and completely exhausted that enlightenment often dawns.

Franklin's own words might express this best:

The final thought before the "breakthrough" was the very clear realization that there was

nothing to be attained. For attainment implied acquisition and acquisition implied change of content of consciousness. But the goal is not change of content but divorcement from content. Thus, Recognition has nothing to do with anything that happens. I am already That which I seek, and therefore, there is nothing to be sought. By the very seeking I hide Myself from myself. Therefore, abandon the search and expect nothing. This was the end of the long search. I died, and in the same instant was born again. Spontaneity took over in place of the old self-determined effort.

(The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object, New York: Julian Press, 1973, p. 81.)

Post: "I am already That which I seek." Quite a distillation!

Morwood: There's something else I need to say about Yogi's teaching: It is so subtle.

Let me put it this way. It's what he didn't say that was a big part of his message. A story will illustrate this.

There was a young seeker that hitchhiked across the country to get to Lone Pine. After a few days, this young man made a comment while several of us were there in the living room, including Franklin. The youth was disappointed. He had expected more from his experience in Lone Pine. No siddhis, no miracles. Franklin was not the guru he was expecting.

Franklin just took it in, without judgment. No defense, just a total acceptance of this young man and his self-expression. Not at that moment, and not later.

What I am trying to say is that sometimes it is not what Franklin said, but what he didn't say. I began to notice that there was often meaning in his silence. There was an aura of significance, and teaching, even in the small things.

Post: You are now a spiritual teacher in your own right. Tell me about it.

Morwood: I was persuaded by a friend, Amit Goswami, Ph.D., among others, to accept the role of teacher. We established the Center for Sacred Sciences in Eugene, Oregon. That was some years ago. Dr. Goswami is now pursuing his own work and is not connected with the Center.

Our emphasis at the Center is the reconciliation, in our fast-moving time, not only of mystical traditions at the heart of the world's religions, but now science as well. Quantum Theory among other developments in science has opened the door for an overdue rapprochement between science and religion.

Post: What is the size of your learning community in Eugene?

Morwood: It's hard to say now, since we have a distance-learning program, but in Eugene we have three practicing groups of forty to fifty, a Sunday meeting of fifty to sixty.

Post: Thanks for sharing your time and recollections of "Yogi."

Joel's books include *The Way of Selflessness: A Practical Guide to Enlightenment Based on the Teachings of the World's Great Mystics* (Eugene, Ore.: Center for Sacred Sciences, 2009) and *Naked Through the Gate: A Spiritual Autobiography* (Eugene, Ore.: Center for Sacred Sciences, 1985).

Joel Morwood can be contacted through the website of the Center for Sacred Sciences at <http://www.centerforsacredsciences.org>.



In Memoriam:

Swami Satyananda Giri

Jeff Baker

The community of Franklin Merrell-Wolff admirers lost a dear friend with the passing of Satyananda Giri, a beloved religious teacher and mystic, in Chennai, India. He became aware of Franklin's *Pathways Through to Space* when his uncle, a mathematics professor in California, sent him a copy in 1976.

Swami Satyananda Giri was philosophically aligned with the tradition of Shankara's *advaita* (nondualism) from the age of about eighteen. He immediately recognized it as a brilliant piece of intellectual enquiry, but at the time, he never thought that such states of consciousness really existed. It was only three or four years later that he came to the realization that Shankara was describing actual states of consciousness. He admired the way Franklin Merrell-Wolff carried the advaitic tradition further, and in particular, Wolff's attempt to reconcile Vedanta with Buddhism.

Satyananda was born February 23, 1947 and died March 31, 2015. He was educated in St. Thomas convent school (Mary Provincius, S. J., headmistress), Madras Christian College School (Kuruvilla Jacob, headmaster), and Madras Christian College, Presidency College, Madras (B. G. L. Swamy, Harvard botanist, principal). He was a student of Afzal al Ulama Syed Azamatullah Sahib who taught him Islamic history and culture. Swami worked for a time at *The Hindu*, one of the biggest newspapers of the world. Because of his varied background (in Roman Catholicism, the Scottish Enlightenment and Sufism) he became more liberal in outlook than many traditional Brahmins. He was a Hindu monk belonging to Sri Gnanananda Tapovanam, Tirukoilur, South India.

Satyananda published a number of books in the fields of history and philosophy, including *Shyambala* (1999), *In the Twirling of a Lotus* (2004), *Akbar* (2009), *Kant* (2010) and *Naropa* (2011). His last work, *Men of Straw* (2012), details a troubled period in India's history—the crucial two years of India's independence and partition.

Swami's book *Kant* begins with Franklin Merrell-Wolff's book, *Pathways Through to Space*. Sharing Franklin's respect for Kant and German Idealism, Swami wrote the book to expand upon the parallel he saw between Kantian idealism and the approach to transcendence that has been part of spiritual traditions in India for thousands of years. In the first portion of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant introduces the idea that space and time are not objective realities but are the forms of our faculty of sensible intuition. As such, space and time are subjective and ideal, and form a kind of schema in which we coordinate all external sensibles. Satyananda considered Kant's general conception of space as the most important portion of Kantian philosophy, and noted that it helped pave the way for Wolff to use the symbol of the "Great Space" for Transcendent Consciousness. Swami said Space is the greatest deity of which we can conceive.

Satyananda also wrote an article on the political philosophy of Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Titled "The Vertical Thought Movement of Franklin Merrell-Wolff," this essay may be found on the Member's Forum page of the Fellowship's website. In addition, the Fall 2013 issue of this newsletter featured an interview with Swami Satyananda.

Swami's friendship will be missed but his memory will live on in the wisdom of ascended sages.



Update on the Wolff Archive

The Fellowship is continuing in its efforts to collect the entire Wolff Archive, as set out 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's Website

We are pleased to announce that all of the recordings of Franklin Merrell-Wolff have been posted on the Fellowship's website. In addition, we have categorized the recordings in a manner way that attempts to reflect a primary focus or motivation for each recording. So, you may now access the recordings on the Fellowship's website in two ways: (1) through the "Complete Listing" link, which will take you to a chronological list of the audio recordings; and (2) through links that take to a particular category of recordings.

We have grouped the audio categories into the following ten categories:

1. My Philosophy
2. On Yoga
3. On Aurobindo
4. Psychology and Epistemology
5. Society and Politics
6. Death, Dying and Reincarnation
7. Theosophical Reflections
8. Readings and Reviews
9. Autobiographical
10. Conversations, Discussions and Addresses

Please note that these categories are not meant to be exclusive nor exhaustive, but rather, are designed to make a review of the large number of Wolff's recordings more manageable.

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).* This summer 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-five 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.

A Quote from Franklin Merrell-Wolff

I recommend the most honorable kind of life that you can live: In all human relationships to cultivate the attitude that the end is the triumph of good; not my good, but Good as such.

The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship

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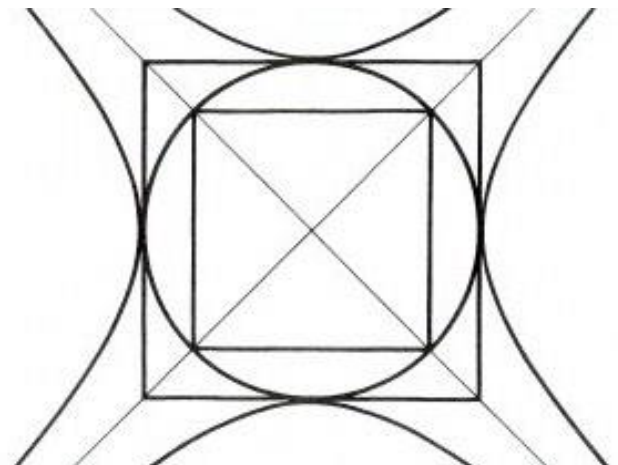
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A Convention Photo of the Assembly of Man