Celebrating Fifty Years
by Mirabai Starr

It was 1973 when my family ambled up Lama Mountain in the old RV in which we had been traveling the hemisphere in search of an alternative “lifestyle.” Lama was at the top of the counter-culture list of sacred destinations. I had just turned twelve, and the combination of deep silence and holy song I encountered left me breathless and thirsty for more of whatever it was Lama embodied. I have been drinking from this wellspring ever since, and it has transfigured my life. In fact, it has shaped everything I do and am.

Lama turns fifty this coming year, and we are dedicating 2017 to gathering our far-flung family of pilgrims, teachers, and beloveds. We are celebrating our half-century of thriving existence in every way we can think of, and you are invited to participate. Each of you has a unique seed of Lama in your heart, a unique story to tell. We’d like to hear it. Here are a few ways you can get involved:

♦ Join us for a special anniversary week of connection and celebration during Summer Solstice, Tuesday June 20 - Sunday June 25.

♦ Visit any time from May 22 - September 24. We will re-union all summer long.

♦ Celebrate Opening Day with us, Sunday May 28.

♦ Bring memories, photographs and mementos to share. We will dedicate a memorial altar to all our beloved Beans who have died.

♦ Invite everyone. Help us reconnect. Our doors are open to everyone.

♦ Help us organize. We need a team of beloveds to make this event great. Contact joe@lamafoundation.org or mirabaistarr@gmail.com.

Maybe your heart has been quietly yearning for a point of re-entry, an invitation to reconnect, an impulse to step up and offer yourself to this Living Temple where your life was forever blessed. Come. Return. Carve out the Summer Solstice and make your way to the Mountain. Help us celebrate our legacy and consciously envision our future. Take refuge in a circle of old friends and friends you’ve never met. Lay down your burden and be renewed by the Spirit of this land.

In these times of global strife and excruciating otherizing, uphold Lama’s commitment to standing for Peace, to modeling a Meeting of the Ways, for staying true to Love at all costs. You are an integral link in this web of inter-being.

See you at Lama!
Our Mission Statement
The purpose of the Lama Foundation is to be a sustainable spiritual community and educational center dedicated to the awakening of consciousness, spiritual practice with respect for all traditions, service, and stewardship of the land.
Asha: Yes. Some friends had told Steve and I about a house they were leaving at Nambe Pueblo, near Santa Fe, and invited us to stay there. We had visited the place before, on a previous trip to California, and had gone to a couple of peyote meetings with friends in the mountains nearby. We decided to go. Ram Dass visited us there, but by then we had given up using acid, because Meher Baba had told us to stop. We had also stopped using grass. That cooled the relationship with Ram Dass a little, but we remained friends.

Ammi: Was this a communication you had gotten from Meher Baba?

Asha: Yes. He sent somebody to us who had said, “Your guardians will go away.” Sometimes, when we were taking acid, our eyes would stop functioning properly. Everything appeared multiplied. I might see twenty of you, or you might disappear, things like that. If it got too freaky, we had a picture of Meher Baba from his book *God Speaks*. We would concentrate on that photo and our vision would always come back to one. He was our guardian angel. So when he said to stop, we stopped. It wasn’t just Ram Dass - that cooled our relationship with a lot of people.

But we had other friends with us at Nambe. Jonathan Altman was staying with us and had wanted to participate since the very beginning. Stewart Brand, who started the *Whole Earth Catalog*, was also a close friend of ours. And there was another man, Walter Chappell, a photographer and pianist, and a student of Gurdjieff. Plus, there were over two hundred people in New York waiting to hear from us.

Ammi: You were looking to start a community?

Asha: Yes. After Steve and I got married in 1961, we took a cross-country road trip. Somewhere in the Mojave Desert, Steve turned to me and said that he wanted to start a college. At the time, I thought, “How’s he going to do that? He doesn’t even have a high school degree.” But that was the first sign of Lama, and when Jonathan came along he said he’d put $20,000 into it.

By that time, it had evolved into something we called Solux. Steve’s idea was a huge sunken hall that had all the major arcana of the tarot. Along the sides were apartments, and in the center you climbed a ladder to the top of a central dome. I thought it was ambitious, but I was entertained. There were many people back then experimenting with different lifestyles, the macrobiotic folks, the sexual freedom people, etc. Steve and I were relatively conservative, but there was a place at Solux for everyone. *Life* Magazine heard about Solux and tried to write about it, but we told them no. We felt we had to keep society out of it.

Ammi: So you and Steve were looking for a place while living at Nambe?
Asha: Yes. Steve drove around New Mexico and all over the Southwest looking for a piece of land. Finally, we found a place near Taos. It was 400 acres, but it didn’t have a lot of water. We wrote a long letter to Meher Baba, asking for his advice, but when Steve went to mail the letter he found that one had already arrived from Meher Baba’s representatives in New York. It said that he was going into a coffin for a year to be in seclusion and he wasn’t going to receive any correspondence. So we didn’t send the letter to him.

Stewart Brand had introduced us to another man, Herman Rednick, who lived at the south end of Taos in a little house on Pilar Hill, just as you come up over the ridge on top of the gorge. He was an artist, a painter, and a guru of sorts. We went down and asked him if he would be our community advisor. He said yes, but only if we had no drugs, gathered in silence for half an hour every day, and were a small community.

Our vision went from this enormous community of Solux to a much more modest scheme. Herman went with us to look at the land, and he said no. It didn’t have any water, and he suggested that we wait. We had two hundred people in New York by this time, just waiting around. After about two weeks, as he was painting, Herman got this intuitive feeling to go to his gallery. There, he met a man, Leonard Coin, who said he had a piece of land north of Taos, about one-hundred acres, that he would sell for $20,000.

We went to look at it. It had all these different ecologies, beautiful pine forests, a fertile valley with deep black soil, and a spring - which was exceedingly rare. We loved it, and bought it shortly afterward. Somebody had put a square foundation there many years prior, but no building. They had also dug out the spring, which was unfortunate, because it used to be a rushing stream. They had dug it out with a bulldozer, which removed the impermeable layer of clay. The water sank into the sandy soils underneath and went underground, which is why there’s not as much water as there once was.

We moved up there in the summer of 1967. We had a sign outside saying, “No drugs. No alcohol.” That sifted out a lot of people. Till then, we had had a lot of people in New York and New Mexico who wanted to join us, but when we said no drugs that was over. New Buffalo started at about the same time, which was a much more fun place.

Ammi: How many people came with you? Steve and you, and Jonathan? Three?

Asha: Yes, our numbers had gone down because of the no drug rule. People started coming shortly afterward though, Van Arsdale, Sylvia Rodriguez, Ron Hassler and Stewart Brand. Many people were coming and going. Stewart put the first tepee up, and we had the yellow bus. Herman had told us to be quiet for half an hour each day, and we kept that practice.

One of the first things we did that summer was buy a big redwood water tank. We cleaned out the spring, and dug a hole for a new water line. There were cows all over the mountain back then, and the pool at the spring was filthy. We had to fence them out. That’s mostly what we did the first summer. I don’t remember a lot more. A lot of people visited. We had young children. It was a busy time.
At the High Hermitage

by Elaine Sutton

After I left Lama to live and work in Santa Fe, I returned each autumn to do a retreat at Lama’s High Hermitage. A week alone in the mountains. No phone, no computer. Just my wild mind winding down.

During a late October retreat, it snowed. I awoke to eight inches of glistening whiteness. The last of the aspen leaves lay like gold coins tossed on a crystal carpet. The next day was sunny, most of the snow melted by noon. By afternoon it was a balmy seventy degrees. Tired of being inside, I dragged the rocking chair out into the soggy meadow and continued to meditate. I pulled off layers of winter clothing - hat, jacket, sweater. I took off my shirt. The air felt sweet against bare skin. Eventually I took off my pants as well. Soon I was sitting naked in the sunlight wearing only my Uggs. I was practicing Metta, a Pali word meaning loving-kindness. All day I repeated the phrase, “May all beings be well, may all beings be happy, may all beings be free from suffering.” This mantra pried open my heart - and many times a day I felt waves of love washing over me.

After hours of sitting outside, I felt a presence. I opened my eyes and ten feet away was Gideon, an enormous St. Bernard-shepherd mix who lived on Lama Mountain. “Hello Gideon,” I murmured, “nice to see you again.” Then I looked closer, and realized it wasn’t Gideon it all. My new companion was a cinnamon colored black bear sitting on her haunches gazing at me in what seemed like a friendly way. “Well hello there bear,” I said, “Pardon my appearance, I wasn’t expecting company.”

The bear remained seated. For the next twenty minutes I repeated my mantra. The bear made small humming noises. She lifted her head, swung it from side to side. Her feet were like wrinkled black leather. Her eyes were dark and luminous. I had a strong impulse to fall into her arms, to rest my head against her solid shoulder, and nestle into all that soft, dense fur. I thought of Native American myths I had read about women who marry bears. I understood I could not marry this bear, but I had a moment of wanting to run away with her.

I also wanted a picture.

Slowly I stood up, and slowly the bear stood up. The first twinge of fear entered my consciousness. She was much, much bigger than me with six-inch claws. She dropped down to all fours and strolled with me over to the cabin.

At the doorway I hesitated - I did not want a large bear in the small cabin. “Please wait here, friend,” I said, opening the door and slipping inside. I found my camera and went back outside. The bear cocked her head and looked at me. I took a few shots. “Thank you,” I said, “I’m going back in now.” I stood naked in the doorway for several minutes. This would end. This long moment of unusual intimacy. I bowed. “Thank you for your beauty and wildness. Thank you for taking a chance, and crossing over some line with me.” I entered the house, and closed the door.

Meditating on Death

by Ammi Kohn

Every year, before the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I sit on the bench I commissioned for Lama. The air is usually warm, and the wind is gentle. The view across the valley is uncommonly clear. I close my eyes and begin to visualize my family gathered around the bench. It is my memorial service.

As I enjoy the breeze, the smells and the sounds, my mind drifts over the years at Lama: David Cooper’s silent retreat in 1991, the path to the ISC - as it was before the fire, heavily wooded, dozens of interviews and visits during my years of oral history seva, and finally drifts back to now, twenty-five years after I first visited Lama. Today, I am eighty-three years old. I sit on the bench, hands on my knees, absorbing the sunlight, becoming my surroundings.

What more powerful setting for meditation on death can there be than sitting in silence where my remains will rest?
I remember a life, traveling around, finally returning to my spiritual home and a place of precious memory. In this place, my children and close friends will gather to remember me, and my years at Lama. Around this very bench, a memorial service, in remembrance of me. Slowly, my mind sinks into darkness, the elusive awareness of my identity dissolving. An approximation of death in life? The silence of my end? I reacquaint myself with death, assimilating as much as I can the end to which I approach at every moment.

I awake to Lama, to the time and place that quickened my spiritual energies, to Lama where I experienced a broken heart, to Lama where I will rest, finally and completely. My body’s odyssey ends here, where I sit and gaze out over the valley. In restful silence, I connect peacefully with my end in this place and in a past that holds so very much for me.

Lama, my beloved, in death as in life.

Have a Piece of Lama History?
A permanent collection of Lama documents and materials resides at the climate-controlled Center for Southwest Research at UNM. Please consider donating items of historic value to this collection. Contact us at info@lamafoundation.org for details.

Be Here Now Originals at the NM Museum of History
May 2017 through March 2018

Starting in May, 2017, the NM Museum of History will be hosting a show “exploring the history of counterculture, communes, and the rise of several activist movements unique to the Southwest,” during the 60’s and 70’s. Plans are underway to include five of the original artworks from the pages of Be Here Now, as well as photographs and history of Lama. The show will be held at the Palace of the Governor’s in Santa Fe, NM.

“Yesterday, Jack and I attended the closing event at Lama, and we were so moved by the experience it only reiterated our desire to be sure we are highlighting the history of Lama,” said Meredith Davidson, co-curator of the exhibit.

Concurrently, plans are moving forward to digitize the original artworks and to find a permanent location to archive the physical copies.

From Bindu to OJas
A pristine copy of From Bindu to OJas will be installed in the Library at Lama on Opening Day, May 28, 2017. Please join us for this special occasion.
Celebrating 50 Years
Help Us Reach 100

Fifty years after its founding, Lama Foundation remains a unique refuge for the world’s spiritual and religious traditions, a place where people of all ages learn and grow with reverence for land and spirit.

Please help us keep the Spirit alive.
The Heart (and Teeth) of Lama  
by Emma Avalos

Joe Miller said that the best part of the zikr is when it’s over. There is a silent vibration that resonates through the circle, connecting each heart as we breathe in and out, the zikr pulsing in our veins. The Love-Song wakes up inside, answering a longing I’ve had all my life. Afterward, I call out, “Remind me again!”

Since leaving Lama in 2013, I have often had a hard time integrating into my new life. I find myself comparing my life now to what it was at Lama, and I long for that same feeling of connection. I believe that the Mountain, the creative vital force that is the Lama land, is alive and sentient. She alternately made love to me and chewed me up - masticating me for days at Community Camp, for months as a summer steward, and finally for years as a resident. The community structures and culture of Lama were her teeth, the stony ground of experience, which brought burnings and illuminations to my heart. These amazing (and extremely uncomfortable) experiences were a kind of prayer offered up to the Mountain and to the Divine. She used me to crack open my own heart.

When it was time for me to leave, I felt like the Mountain spit me out all wet and shiny into the world, much like it felt to crawl from the door of the sweat lodge on my hands and knees, out into the night, looking up at the stars, my skin raw and new and fresh from the fire. I still feel like I’m in that raw moment. I’ve left Lama and the Southwest behind, but sometimes I grasp for what I had there, mistaking what happened at Lama for something outside of myself. I call out, “Remind me again!” I grieve. I compare. I miss the community of Lama Beans and the vast and wild land herself.

Some months ago, I was sitting on a hill overlooking our farm, watching the sunset. It was a Friday, Shabbat, and I realized that someone had probably just lit the Sabbath candles at Lama. I covered my eyes and repeated a favorite prayer, the Shema - Listen, all who wrestle with God, God is One. The bright sun transported me to the Prayer Room candle. I saw the same flame in my own heart. I knew that it had always been there. The food I fed to all those Beloveds can be fed to the same Beloved wherever I go. The spring and all the waters of the world run in my veins.

Since leaving Lama, I’ve been navigating some serious health conditions. I repeatedly get the message from mainstream society, and even some voices in my own head, that the “cure” is somewhere outside of myself - a medicine, a doctor, a treatment. But the emergent message chewing me these days is that my body is telling me, through these physical challenges, that I need to listen to it and the wisdom of healing deep inside me.

I believe Lama awakens a Love-Song in everyone who comes up the road, a zikr or medicine song we carry inside for our own healing, and for the world. Over time, I’ve learned that this zikr never really goes anywhere. These days, it’s not always clear whether the Divine is chewing me up, or making love to me, but the gifts from my time at Lama continue to unfold and blossom. Maybe the best part of Lama is after we leave, like when the zikr is over and we throb with silence, knowing the Love-Song has been inside all along.
A Moment With the Beloved

I drove back and forth from Atlanta to Taos this summer to discover Love, undefined. And I’m ok with that outcome. My stewardship showed me how to fly with the wings that have grown from leaps of faith.

As a nineteen-year-old in college, what came alive for me during that period of time was powerful and unexpected. I don’t think I’ll ever be the same. I had the privilege of taking on the responsibility to water, weed, and transplant perennials in the ISC sanctuary everyday. Lama Mountain is powerful country, so I attempted to keep track of what I was learning, but in the end, after filling six pages of my journal with valuable lessons, I only scratched the surface of the guidance I received. In three short months, I absorbed strong messages from even stronger people. They came from residents like Nathalia, and from Lama Beans like Sara Morgan. Those strong women came to the rescue when I was the head cook in the kitchen, and I was in need of some healing. Other people took me under their wing and showed me how to engage in seva by maintaining my intention and not getting lost in the work. I am so appreciative for the opportunity to learn how to grow deeper, rather than how to grow up.

The greatest blessings came from speaking the language of the heart. The common understanding between people, the supportive expressions, and the sense of unity felt like the essence of Lama. These things manifested in people from all walks of life, often in the times that I needed them most. Pure experiences of learning, loving, and having trust in my faith came alive when I remained mindful and present in the moment. Whether sitting around the kitchen table late at night, engaging in heart club, or contributing to the fiery conversations of the spirituality group during annual meeting, there was always a Divine thread running through my experiences. Its fibers were made up of love, service, and the remembrance of the Divine. That thread pulled all of my grief, fear, and perceptions of separateness together, dissolving them into love and allowing the healing process to begin. I have had a fundamental rearrangement of my attitudes, ideas, and beliefs. What I thought I knew about living a spiritual life was enhanced and built upon, and it has been integrated into every aspect of my life. I can now weave my actions well into the fabric of my soul because the conditions have been established for me to be who I’m supposed to be.

Lama is truly a meeting of the ways, and I’m not exactly sure how to articulate that. I find it hard to put the time that I spent there into words. It enabled me to do profound work, work that I believe every person should have the opportunity to do - to identify with the people around them, to love others and to feel loved, and to make a difference in their community. The Divine navigates me through this world to find clues along my journey, so that I may serve people, and I’m always reminded to lead with my heart. I am everything that I am because people took the time to love me. Much of that love came from the most effective intentional community in the world. Thank you Lama Mountain, and the family of understanding that sits upon it, for loving me unconditionally. I am forever grateful for all of the love you gave.

Summer Stewardship and Residency at Lama

Stewardship is an immersion in community life, service and spiritual practice. Summer stewards join the residents to form the heart of Lama Foundation’s summer. Stewards participate in morning silence, meditation, practice and heart tuning, Zikr, Shabbat, heart club, and more. Every year is unique. Stewards are asked to contribute tuition and to give thirty hours of seva (service) a week. Stewards who arrive by August 1st may apply for residency. In September, we will focus on special events, workshops, and programs to celebrate stewards and residents.
You have given your hearts, your dollars, your guidance, your time, your materials, your care. Thank you.

Congratulations to our 2016 Raffle Winners

- Grand Prize - Devi Mathieu
- Second Prize - Jean Stevens
- Third Prize - Susan Lime
- Fourth Prize - Helen Chantler
- Fifth Prize - Zet Baer
For this year’s newsletter, we wanted to list and thank everyone who has touched Lama over the last fifty years. It would be impossible, of course, to capture everyone. The names we know for certain would alone fill over fifty pages - tens of thousands of people. When you add in the folks who were touched by Lama but never visited, perhaps reading Be Here Now or attending a retreat inspired by Lama, the number easily reaches into the hundreds of thousands, even millions. One spirit. Many hearts. Thank you.
Holiday Sale!
25% Off All New Flags and Strings

New to Lama’s Cottage Industries

- Classic designs on new high-quality color cotton fabric with stitched edges.
- New designs available in color.
- Prayer flag string sets. We have several pre-made sets available. Or, create your own custom string: pick five or more and we will string them together for you at no additional cost.
- 25% off all new products from November 15 - December 31, 2016.

Visit www.shop.lamafoundation.org for more details.

To Order Prayer Flags:

www.shop.lamafoundation.org

Contact us at 575-586-1269 or flags@lamafoundation.org
This issue of Lama Alive

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(And several others we can no longer identify - thank you!)

Special thanks to Ahad Cobb for the historic photos. These photos and more are available in his book Early Lama Foundation.

Front Cover Photo:
Birgit Gutsche
Lama Foundation Summer 2017

May 22-28  Live Here Now
    May 28  Opening Visitors Day
June 1-22  UC Boulder Design-Build Project
June 4-11  Mureeds Retreat with Asha Greer
June 9-11  Lama Youth Mindfulness Retreat
June 20-25 50th Anniversary Celebration
    June 25  Annual Meeting
July 6-19  Global Youth Leadership Institute

July 28-August 3  Contemplative Environmental Practice
    July 28-August 2  Church of Conscious Harmony
    August 9-14  Women Singing in Circle
August 18-Sept 1  UC Riverside Sustainability Class
    August 24-27  Family Camp
September 24  Closing Visitor’s Day
September 26  Langley School Program

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