

You have all my love
My darling dove
Below, above
I am ever with you
You are ever in my heart
We are never apart
You, a part of my heart
I am always with you.

Meher Baba

(*Lord Meher* 1948)

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Meher Baba Center of Northern California

INsights

Community Newsletter

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Check out the newly updated website, thanks to Jeanne Mojé MacDonald (first link above).

Newsletter wallas:
Ben Leet, Lisa Greenstein, Cheri Nelson &
Karen Talbot

Dear Reader,

In this issue Sue Jamison tells the story of her surprising discovery of Ella Thorpe Ellis, a California writer who met Meher Baba as a child during the 1930s. Ella's most recent memoir, *Dune Child*, includes the story of Baba's visit to the dunes in Oceano and is reviewed here by Ben Leet.

You can purchase Ella's book, *Dune Child*, at our El Cerrito Baba Center bookstore or online at Amazon.com

Also, please save these dates for exciting upcoming events (see articles below for information):

**Wendy and Buz Connor's film premier ~
February 18**

Baba's Birthday Celebration ~ February 25

Discovering Ella Thorpe Ellis

by Sue Jamison

 Ella.jpg

I had known Ella casually through the YMCA where I work. She attended the senior aerobic class 2-3 times a week for many years and, other than passing pleasantries, I really did not know much about her except that she was a successful writer of children's books. Physically, Ella is a small woman with kind eyes and features that suggest an inner serenity, and I always knew she must have had an interesting life.

The local library and the YMCA have a lunch time "Meet the Author" series, where local authors come and talk about their books. In this literary rich Bay Area of San Francisco it is not uncommon to find oneself sitting next to a Nobel Prize winner or a Pulitzer Prize winner at the

local coffee shop. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that most everyone knows someone who has written a best selling book or is writing a book of some kind.

I had noticed that Ella's name was listed as a speaker talking about her latest book *Dune Child* and presumed it was another children's book. Unfortunately, I can never attend as I teach during the time it is held.

It wasn't until one of my co-workers, knowing that I was a follower, said to me after the meeting "Oh, too bad you couldn't come. You would have enjoyed her talk. She talked about meeting Meher Baba." I almost choked on my lunch and resisted the temptation to scream "WHAT!" Instead, I said in my calmest voice "WHAT!"

Then as I learned more it all became clear to me - *Dune Child* was Ella's recollection of growing up as the only child in the Bohemian collective beach community on the California coast known as "The Dunes". Her book includes wonderful memories of her childhood growing up among artists and writers - many of whom became famous in their respective arts, including her parents, John Steinbeck, Edward Weston, Upton Sinclair, and others who visited the community off and on.

The Dunes are known to Baba Lovers because Meher Baba visited there in 1932 at the request of Sam Cohen. I immediately contacted Ella and confided that I followed Meher Baba. Her eyes filled with tears, and she wistfully said "I will always remember looking into His eyes, they were the kindest eyes. I still remember it all so vividly." (Ella is 83 years of age). She was so happy to know

that I knew about Meher Baba and absolutely delighted to be invited to speak to the Baba group. She said she had not had any contact with any other Baba Lovers (except for Naosherwan, who had contacted her recently). She told me that meeting Meher Baba was the most significant event in her life. I gave her a photo of Baba around the time she would have met him. She was most grateful and said she did not have any photos of Him. (She certainly does now!)

I continued to have contact with Ella to set up a meeting date and the other arrangements. She was so happy and grateful to be able to share her memories of meeting Baba with us all. Baba was and continues to be special to her, in fact, she says she has vivid dreams of Him and feels He is watching over her and that makes her feel very loved. Just after she spoke to our group, Ella and her husband moved from Berkeley to Santa Cruz, and she has not been well. I am so glad Baba gave us all the opportunity to meet this delightful lady and hear her Baba story in person. I highly recommend reading Ella Thorp Ellis's book *Dune Child*, not only for the wonderful account of meeting Baba, but also for the fascinating look into the political and cultural history of California during the Great Depression set in a place that was unique.

The Baba and the Princess

By Ben Leet

 Ocean map

Ella Thorp Ellis, author of her memoir *Dune Child*, spoke at the El Cerrito Meher Baba Center August 2011. She met Meher Baba when she was 6 ½ years old. The year was 1934, Christmas Day, in the middle of the Great Depression. Oceano, where she lived, was an artists' community that had sprung up on the extensive sand dunes south of Pismo Beach and San Luis Obispo, 190 miles north of Los Angeles. Sam Cohen had met Baba in 1932, and when Baba returned to Hollywood in December 1934 to work on the screen play of his movie, Sam wired Baba inviting him to visit the beach community where he lived. There were 18 people in Baba's retinue when he traveled to Oceano. They spent only two days but left a lasting impression on the inhabitants.

Ella's impressions began on the beach sitting on a gunnysack full of clams at age four. The artists' community survived on clam chowder and culled vegetables from the local produce packing plant. They supplemented their diet with a rare goose or swan that a neighbor might shoot with a shotgun. They all suffered from a common ailment, deficiency of vitamin M, or money, as Sam Kerawala describes the malady.

Ella was the only child living in the dunes. She had a dog named Dribbly and a goat named Dancer. "Dribbly, named after a dribble of white spots down his throat and chest, loved everyone but he loved Dunham [Ella's father] and me the most. He followed us everywhere, tail wagging, and soon even the coyotes accepted him. Our goat, Dancer, also black and white and only a little bigger, apparently thought Dribbly was her kid. At least that's how my mother explained why Dancer herded and licked the dog. They often slept curled up together. Sometimes I'd curl up and nap with them." This gives you a sense of Ella's style in *Dune Child* and in conversation.

The book is populated with extraordinary characters, poets, novelists, and artists. Novelists John Steinbeck and Upton Sinclair, and photographers Edward Western and Ansel Adams make brief appearances. Her father, Dunham, was

the editor of a literary journal, *Dune Forum*, and then the co-manager of Upton Sinclair's gubernatorial campaign, the well known EPIC plan, End Poverty In California. Ella and Upton did not hit it off at all. "I was more comfortable talking books and gardens with Halcyon ladies than trying to play with children, something I was having trouble learning to do, only partly because I didn't run as well as kids who hadn't had polio. Besides, everyone in Halcyon was a Theosophist. Winonah said this meant they shared both love and food, which was better than socialism where you only shared food. My mother said Theosophy was a mixture of the teaching of Jesus and of Hindu Avatars."

When word came that "the Baba" was to arrive with a retinue of 18 others, the community built a cabin for him to sleep in. They expectantly awaited his arrival. "The Sri Meher Baba traveled with a retinue that sounded to my mother like the court of King Arthur. Princess Norina Matchabelli of the perfume family and Mrs. Patterson, heiress to the Chicago Tribune, particularly interested Marion [Ella's mother]". . . "It was during the building of the Sri Meher Baba's guest house that I came to know Sammy Cohen, a Dunite who lived in a cove about a mile down the dunes, near the poet Hugo Seelig. Gavin and the heiress Mrs. Patterson hired Sammy to help build the Baba's house because he'd become a devout Hindu and, therefore, the Baba would feel Sammy's good karma. Sammy had even read the Baba's writings. I became Sammy's shadow. He was young and laughed a lot and would tell me incredible stories of his father's sausage factories in Brooklyn. Sammy loved his parents but he had to leave because he'd converted to Hinduism and could no longer eat even kosher sausages."

When Baba at last arrived at the Dunes, Ella was walking with poet Hugo Seelig. "Hugo and I were nearing the path into Moy Mell when three touring cars filled with the Baba and his disciples passed us and slowed to a stop." Ella wanted to run to the car, but Hugo stopped her and together they watched from a distance. "Hugo grinned but continued watching intently as the newcomers, led by a man with curly brown hair to his shoulders, pressed their hands together. It looked like praying, though no one said a word. . . . I thought they looked like a royal procession, everyone walking straight and proud." "Every Dunite from miles around appeared, bearing gifts of food or drink, sitting quietly in a semicircle outside on a sand dune. Sammy and Hugo were invited inside the community house for an audience but I sat on a dune with Doggett." Then at last Baba called for Ella.

Ella remembers Baba calling her to come and meet him, she remembers his bright eyes, and that he kept her at his side with his hand on her shoulder for perhaps five minutes or more while he conversed, in silence, with the adults. She recalls his very animated face and how he could focus his attention on the one he was talking to. "He put his hand on my head and I felt warm all the way down to my toes. He pressed gently and I smiled. I knew he didn't speak. I remember a greenish slate and chalk but I didn't see him use it. He held an alphabet square in one hand. He had an interpreter. I meant to tell the Baba how much Sammy admired him, but there was Sammy sitting next to him. I don't remember if I said a word, but I do remember feeling blessed in the warm glowing light from his face. And I remember the happiness in my mother's eyes."

"I can still look out and imagine the Baba and the Princess Matchabelli, and the heiress Elizabeth Patterson walking over the tops of the dunes. I can close my eyes and call up the Baba, his robes blowing in the wind, with the women in jackets and jeans and berets on either side of him. The women were talking and it didn't seem to bother either of them that the Baba didn't say a word. I can still hear the waves crashing onto the beach behind them."

We were all quiet and gentle with each other for a while after the Sri Meher Baba and his friends left. There was a lot of meditating and talk of the soul. "We're a bit hung over on spirituality," as Carl put it. "He's the holiest man we'll ever meet," Hugo said and my mother noticed tears in his eyes.

Ella's talk was recorded on video, and eventually it will become available. Probably *Dune Child* will become a massive best-seller, probably in a few hundred years. It offers a rare glimpse of the Sri Meher Baba and his retinue of a princess, an heiress, artists and spiritual aspirants. *Dune Child* is a complex story filled with joy, innocence, companionship, sorrow, and disappointment. Ella's mother and father split up. Her mother eventually was committed to a state mental hospital. Her father, though successful in many ways, had three unsuccessful marriages. It is a story enriched by the brief and bright appearance of the "Hindu Avatar". It was a real joy to have Ella speak to our group.

Ella wrote a brief personal history to accompany a web page devoted to her writings. See the web site <http://www.oocities.org/ellathorpellis/BioFrame.html>. At this site, one can also read Ella's synopses of her novels. Her synopsis of *The Year of My Indian Prince*, her novel published in 2000, tells the story of a teen romance involving a young protagonist much like Ella herself at that age, a 16 year-old young woman who is confined to a hospital with tuberculosis. Ella contracted polio as an infant and then tuberculosis when she was a young woman.

The following is her brief autobiography:

When I think of home I see myself as a small child digging clams at dawn, alone at low tide on a California beach. We were poor, I'd had polio, and my father edited *The Dune Forum* magazine for a literary commune in the sand dunes. When my parents separated and my father went east to found The Utopian Society, I was sent in to town to live with a country doctor's family. Later I returned to live with my father, then my mother, then an uncle who was a painter, part of an affectionate extended family but always missing the last family and the dog I'd had to leave behind with them. We drifted up the coast following the Pacific Ocean, more at home with the seals and the surge of the surf than with our new neighbors.

Getting tuberculosis as a teen-ager and having little to do but read and dream eighteen hours a day for three years probably turned me into a writer. I discovered that what I liked to read were adventure stories that grew out of conflicts between people who could surprise me, would spring to life and lodge in my memory forever. I loved reading Carson McCullers and Anton Chekhov, and I would have married Scott Fitzgerald if he hadn't already died.

I put off writing to marry and have three sons and then to move across the world to Argentina. There I began to write about people I loved and was lonely for: my mother, my little brother. When we came home to Berkeley, I longed for Argentina and wrote about saving horses during a drought on the ranch where we'd spent summers, basing my hero and his friend on two of our sons. I found that growing up in five households had given me a treasure chest of characters, who could be called up for any story I wanted to tell. However, any character worth the two years I work on a book soon takes over. One day I'm writing about a boy named Luis, based on my son, when suddenly this boy begins to talk and act and think magically differently than any son of mine. I'm hearing him speak as I type and it's getting hard to keep up. That's what makes a story, and what makes writing fascinating, almost addicting.

Premiere of "I Am the One Reality" with Wendy and Buz Connor

Join us on Saturday, February 18th, for the West Coast premiere of a new film about Meher Baba "I Am the One Reality" with special guests, Wendy and Buz Connor and a fundraiser for Meher Free Dispensary at Meherazad. This event will be held at the home of Alan and Karen Talbot, 721 Crossbrook Drive, in Moraga, 925-376-4325. There will be an Indian dinner served from 6 - 7 p.m. and a program from 7-9:30 p.m.

Produced by Wendy & Buz Connor, this film contains never before seen footage of Meher Baba taken by Elizabeth Patterson on two different occasions in 1933. The first occasion was in April when the Western women first traveled to India to be with Baba and His Eastern women disciples. The second was in June during the group's trip to Portofino, Italy. Interwoven with photos and excerpts of diaries of Elizabeth, Kitty, Margaret and Delia, the film tells the story of these two special events.

Special guests Wendy and Buz Connor will talk about the making of the film. Buz will delight us with his singing.

The film "A Jewel in a Field" will also be shown. This film depicts the current work in the dispensary that was initially established by Dr. Goher in 1970.

Donations in any amount are welcome. There will be a \$25.00 suggested donation at the door. 100% of all donations go directly to Meher Free Dispensary, providing free medical care to the poor and underserved living in rural villages near Meherazad. Checks should be made payable to Meher Fund, Inc. We welcome any silent auction items. To RSVP or to offer goods or services, please email aktalbot@talboito.com.

We hope to see you on the evening of February 18th. Jai Baba!

 Baba long hair

MEHER BABA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY!

Berkeley Fellowship of the Unitarian Universalists'
Meeting Hall, at Cedar and Bonita Streets in Berkeley.

Saturday, February 25, 2012, noon-4 p.m.

The event begins with a potluck lunch at noon; entertainment will get going at 1:30 p.m., and we'll conclude with birthday cake and Arti before 4 p.m.

The organizers are seeking help with:

Setup: beginning at 10 a.m.

Decoration: to assist Annie and Vern Stovall

Food setup and potluck coordination: on site help, as well as

transportation of food-related materials to and from the venue--call Janet White at 510-843-4417

Entertainment: contact Adrienne Shamszad, our M.C., shamszad@gmail.com

Cleanup: with maintenance-wallah Fred White

We look forward to seeing you there, and hearing from you beforehand.

Robert, from "Stoned to Rock"

by Allan Y. Cohen

This was accidentally missed in the last issue which was dedicated to Robert Dreyfuss' memory, so we share it now.

"In the earliest days, Robert was as hip as any of the psychedelic seekers, as much as a "dervish" monk as any of the people who would ultimately come to Meher Baba. Our brother Robert was blessed with a center of gravity unlike almost any other. In the earliest days, I saw it as mellow introversion. Later, in the Baba-work of the mid- and late 1960s, I became to know it as an a profound strength, a core of rock-like faith and spiritual perspective. In our early collaboration with Rick Chapman in Baba's drug work, when I would get excitable and over-analytic, Robert was there with a word or two, bringing us back to Earth and uttering simple truths. That firmness in a common sense inner reality held through constant bouts of illness, overcoming old instincts to withdraw from the madness of the world and enjoy God without distraction, making a wonderful life with new learning, enjoying a sweet family and a willingness to share his stories with others. The simple trip from head to heart, reflected in his every talk by a hand gesture I shall never forget, was traveled with honor and faith and perseverance, with a toleration of others and a deep indifference to the nagging pulls of illusion. As he now enjoys the unlimited company of his Beloved, he's likely assented to yet another term of service for the Avatar. His close companions will be with him again, one place or another, one life or another...and our consciousness will only be richer for it. Jai Baba Bhai!" ~Allan Cohen

Announcements

Center Library Note:

Would you like to be a "patron"? We have a library for your reading pleasure and convenience. Our library is housed upstairs in a bookcase at the MBCNC Center on Stockton Street. We have had 14 borrowers over the past year. You may access a list of the holdings at the web page meherbabameherbaba.org; look for library, and open the book or video pdf files.

When you visit the Center, remember to check out the library books. We would also like donations. For a list of books we need see the section at the end of the library holdings.

Contact the Newsletter about donations.

The Trust

All who wish to share in the commitment laid down by Meher Baba through the Trust should contact Jack Mormon, ambkj@aol.com

Meher Baba Information

For introductory information about Avatar Meher Baba, e-mail: info@MeherBabaInformation.org

or write to P.O. Box 1101, Berkeley, CA 94701.
<http://MeherBabaInformation.org>

Meher Baba Center of Northern California

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El Cerrito, California 94530
(510) 525-4779

Meher Baba Center of No.CA website

Meeting schedule is online at www.meherbabameherbaba.org

The Meher Baba Center is open for drop-in and book store
most Saturdays 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. (check website for details)

Directions to our Center:

From Highway 80, Interstate 5, going north or south, in El Cerrito,
take the Central Avenue exit exiting east, toward the hills. Cross San Pablo Avenue.
Go under the BART train tracks and less than a block after the tracks,
turn left on Richmond Avenue. Head north on Richmond Avenue until Stockton Avenue
(the first stop light), turn right on Stockton. About two blocks onward, the Center
is located on the left side of the street. Address and phone are listed above.

More Local Meetings

Lafayette - Sunday Afternoons

Monthly meeting at the home of Kirk and Marlene Allen.
Please call to confirm. (925) 284-4066

Sonoma County - Arti happens once a month, usually the first Sunday.

Locations vary. Call Ellen Van Allen at 707-528-0357 for specific information.

Sacramento area - Meeting times and locations vary

Contact Marilyn Buehler (916) 812-9496 inquiry@radiant-light.org

Los Gatos - Sunday Evenings

At the home of Clint Snyder
Call (408) 395-6865

contact for messages to newsletterwallas: newsletter@meherbabameherbaba.org

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