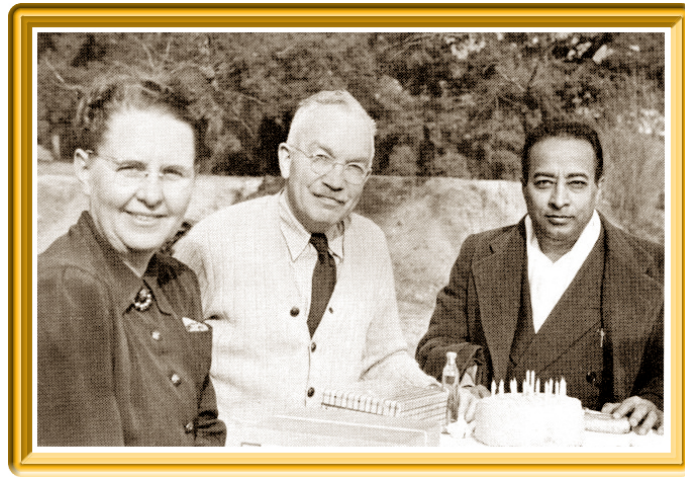


Dr. Lewis & “Mama Lewis”
The Householder Torchbearers



It seems that every single disciple of Yogananda has his or her own precious message and gift to share with all of us. Each of them is a torchbearer for a specific aspect of the Master's teachings. And certainly Yogananda loves them all equally.

What, then, was Dr. Lewis' role? He (Minott White Lewis, 26 March 1893 – 13 April 1960) is usually known as “the first *Kriya Yogi* in America,” as we read in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*. He is also remembered for his strong support for Yogananda when he first arrived in the West in 1920. Dr. Lewis opened the doors of his Boston home to him when Yogananda knew nobody and nobody knew Yogananda. Later the Master said gratefully: “Those who have been our friends in need we remember always. I have never forgotten those early days.”

But still, Dr. Lewis and his wife Mildred (16 September 1897 – 30 March 1988) seem to have perceived their contribution in a somewhat different light: they were an example of how to become successful householder yogis. Together they affirmed to the world: yes, you *can* be married and advance very highly, finding God.

At least this is how Dr. Lewis' daughter Brenda describes it in her book *Treasures Against Time* (1991): “Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswarji were householders, carrying the blazing light of Self-realization through the years. My father, as a householder, picked up that torch and carried it high during his entire life, lighting the world with a hope that those burdened with heavy worldly responsibilities can still find God.”

Brenda's husband, John Rosser, similarly wrote: “Doctor Lewis, one of Paramahansa Yogananda's most devoted disciples, is a proof that the goal of Self-realization is attainable in our lifetime even for householders.”

Mrinalini Mata also focused on this important message. In her eulogy for Mildred Lewis (as printed in the SRF booklet about Dr. Lewis), she said: “As a wife, Mildred strove with Doctor to live that perfect householder life exemplified by Lahiri Mahasaya. He was their ideal. Through their many years of seeking and serving God together, Doctor and Mildred have been an example on this path of Self-Realization of how husband and wife should be loyal, dedicated, and devoted to each other through thick and thin, helping one another along the path to God.”

The book *Treasures Against Time* perfectly reflects this householder situation, as it tells the story of both Dr. Lewis and Mildred, even telling Mildred's story first.

SRF has published a beautiful booklet, entitled *Dr. M. V. Lewis – The Life Story of One of the Earliest American Disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda*, which contains all the essential stories and facts. What follows is a brief summary with some further points.

Earlier incarnations

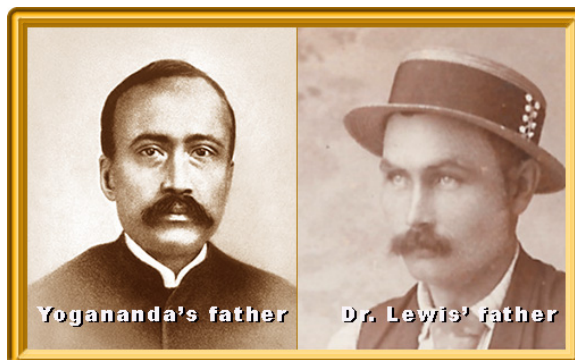


As reported by Swami Kriyananda, Yogananda told Dr. Lewis that, amazingly, his wife Mildred had been Queen Elizabeth I of England. A decidedly strong character. In this life she suffered severe health problems because of her earlier incarnations, Yogananda explained.

As to his own incarnations, Dr. Lewis said nothing, but there must have been many with Yogananda.

Parents

Dr. Lewis' father, **Stephen Henry Lewis (1857-1942)**, was a carpenter and builder. From 1920-23, Yogananda was practically a family member and must have met him several times. When "Grandpa" passed away, the Guru wrote: "I am happy you could join Grandpa Lewis' ceremony on time. He impressed me much by his visit when I was last there – so I wrote about him in *Inner Culture*. I really loved Grandpa– because your sweet body (Doctor's) came from him, and he was so nice to me. I am so pleased you and all your relatives liked my poems – they were real heart outbursts. Somehow Grandpa so looked like my father, and really I felt for him like I felt for my earthly father. After long I saw father one night, just as I saw Grandpa Lewis, and I know he is happy for his release." (Yogananda's father also died in 1942). Here is Yogananda's poem. As we shall see, deep meditation helps our relatives.



To Our "Grandpa Lewis"

Grandpa Lewis, you have gone from here,
But your spirit sincere,
Good and kind,
With us left behind
And shrined, in our memory's care.
Your beaming, welcoming face
Ever lighted with a friendly smile's trace
Whenever you met me.
We grieve for our losing you
But gladden for your freedom true
From old age's limitations
And fleshly lamentations.
Your children's love —
Your most spiritual son, Minott's meditation-treasures
Saved in vault of karma above
Has helped you beyond measure.

Dr. Lewis recounted how his mother, **Laura Blanche Wright** (1861-12 September 1926), passed away. She suffered a severe stroke. “The doctor said she might not live until morning. Yogananda was in Cuba at the time [spring 1926], and couldn’t be reached. I prayed to him mentally for help, and my prayer was answered: My mother recovered. A few months later she again fell ill. This time I was able to speak to the Master and ask him in person for help. He replied, ‘The Lord has spared her life quite some time now. If she lives another four months, we must be satisfied.’ It was four months later to the day that she left her body.” (From: *Conversations With Yogananda*, by Swami Kriyananda)

There is a fascinating sequel to that story: “Several years afterward [after her passing] the Master said to me, ‘Your mother has been reborn.’ I inquired immediately, of course, ‘Where is she living now, Sir?’ He told me where she was: up north in the state of Maine. After some time I had an opportunity to visit her family. Their little girl – my mother – was three years old by this time. The resemblance was uncanny. There were many little mannerisms, gestures, and movements – all exactly as they had been! The child didn’t remember me, but she showed an instant affection for me, and I, quite apart from my special knowledge, felt a natural affection for her.”

So Dr. Lewis’s mother, in her new incarnation, would be in her late eighties today (in 2019) and could possibly be reading this article. If so... hello to you!

Brothers and sisters

Dr. Lewis had one older brother, Wilbur Fletcher, and two younger sisters, Grace Mendon, and Laura “Dolly”, who married Roscoe O. Elliott. Roscoe is sometimes mentioned in Yogananda’s letters, for example as a kind donor. Sister Dolly was initiated by Yogananda into Kriya, as well as her son Dick, who too became a follower. The Master called Dolly “an angel”.

Children

According to his family, **John Bradford** (July 29, 1917 - November 26, 1996) received Kriya initiation from Yogananda when he was only eight. When, in 1945, Dr. and Mildred Lewis went to live in Encinitas, he led the meditation group in Boston until 1955. Bradford married Claire E. Lewis.

Brenda (April 21, 1919 - March 7, 2008) was a disciple, joined her parents when they went to live in Encinitas, served the work and published the book *Treasures Against Time*. She married John Rosser.



A householders’ support of the Guru

Durga Mata writes in *Trilogy Of Divine Love* that when, in 1920, Yogananda’s ship reached Boston harbor, he wrote: “Sleeping memories of friends once more to be did greet me, sailing over the sea.” In 1923 he published that poem in *Songs of the Soul*. It describes his inner situation.

On Coming to the New-Old Land – America

Sleeping memories
Of friends once more to be
Did greet me – sailing o’er the sea, –
Sensing my coming
The Pilgrim Land to adore.

The distant sleeping shore
 Lay in the twinkling night,
 Dim through the vanished light,
 The breeze wafted strong
 Strange thoughts
 That my brain did throng,
 Hopes sweet and richly wrought.
 The raven-winged gloom did perch
 On the portals of my mind and search
 My soul, my strength to awe;
 Yet crowds with joy oh, then, I saw
 Of phantom friends,
 Now come to lend
 Their cheer,
 And end my fear!

Yogananda, then, did not feel completely at ease when stepping on American soil, all alone and without any friends at the age of 27. “Strange thoughts” came to him, and “raven-winged gloom”. But “phantom friends” became truth, to “end my fear.”

Dr. Lewis and “Mama Lewis” (as she was later known) were two of them, “friends once more to be”, who “lend their cheer” to Yogananda, alleviating his inner concerns.

In *Treasures Against Time*, Mildred explains that, before meeting Yogananda, both of them had joined the *Rosicrucian Fellowship* in Boston, as he especially was looking for enlightenment. How they met the Master is a memorable story, which can be found on the internet. It happened on Christmas Eve 1920, when Yogananda showed Dr. Lewis the inner light and the crown chakra. He became the first American Kriya Yogi. What a glorious title to hold!

In his *Autobiography of a Yogi* Yogananda writes: “Four happy years were spent in humble circumstances in Boston.” (It wasn’t quite four.) Between 1920-23, Swami Yogananda lived mostly in Doctor’s and Mildred’s home, in 24 Electric Ave., Boston. It’s now a private residence, something which Yogananda had tried to avert. He knew that one day it could become a shrine and wrote in a letter (contained in *Treasures Against Time*, June 9, 1924): “Do not sell your home at 24 Electric Ave. You might rent it.”



At any rate, just imagine: Dr. Lewis and Mildred had the extreme blessing of sharing all that time with him, living side by side under the same roof, cooking together, meditating together, working for “Sat-Sanga” together, having fun and outings together. Yogananda was “family” for three years. Bradford (three years old in 1920) and Brenda (only one year old) were raised with “a Father, a Mother, and a Swamiji”, as Brenda later recounted. Actually the kids called him “Swamaji”.

One can also smilingly visualize normal home-life situations,

for example, how Mildred reacted when she saw that every time Yogananda showered, “water was everywhere, and towels were loaded with water.” She became “easily discouraged” in the task of keeping the house clean. (Were the men messy, at times?) It was, at least in part, a true family scenario.

Yogananda was almost unknown at that time, as was his spiritual stature. Also the Lewis family did not fully understand it yet. It took time to discover who he really was, especially for Mildred (as she herself recounts). At first they treated him more as a spiritual friend.

Marriage

Mildred was a practical down-to-earth woman. Dr. Lewis was more a seeker of truth. They enjoyed a loving marriage, which bore beautiful fruit. Yogananda praised it in a talk: “But marriage also can be successful. Those who are married should by all means make a go of it. It is not easy, it is not simple. As fast as they rush off to marry, so fast they fall out of marriage, because *friendship* is lacking. If people can develop that divine friendship out of marriage, then it is wonderful. Now Dr. and Mrs. Lewis are enjoying that. I think that is the only couple in which I have seen that friendship.”

However, it would be a mistake to think that since they were both saintly souls, marriage was an easy undertaking. From several remarks of Master’s, one can understand that at first it was a rather rocky road. Saints often have a strong personality and sometimes a peculiar one (Durga Mata writes in her book, for example, that the great Rajarsi was a food enthusiast, “even to the point of fanaticism, and being critical of others”, and once criticized Gyanamata for drinking tea. Unfortunately, small devotees easily get hung up on such human shortcomings, unable to grasp the spiritual greatness behind imperfect humanness).

Dr. Lewis was highly advanced, a philosopher, but on the personal level was also reported as having had his normal share of faults and “foibles”. Mildred was a gentle woman, but certainly not always an easy one. She was strong-willed and fairly outspoken with her decided opinions. In a letter Yogananda scolds her: “I invite constructive criticism, but ruthless public criticism, simply for the love of it, is against the laws of even simple friendship.”



Even toward the Master she could be outspoken, which he actually appreciated: “She is not afraid to tell me the truth.” Imagine her as a wife, in her earlier years! At any rate Yogananda told Mr. and Mrs. Lewis (from a talk): “If I were not here, you would have separated long ago.”

Her outspokenness, on occasion, must indeed have been tough, but in time she became transformed. Yogananda humorously wrote her this play on words (in a letter dated October 12, 1938): “I shall never call you *Mil-dread* for I never imagined how steadily and continuously you have really *milled* all my *dreads* about your temper forever, and become a saintly lady. This is not flattery but from my very heart.”

Rajarsi, too, had no easy time being married. Durga Mata writes: “Master told me that Rajasi attracted a mentally and physically invalid wife, to learn patience, and he surely did.”

Realistically speaking, the relationship between Dr. and Mildred Lewis wasn't all roses. But they, as Yogananda put it, "made a go of it", creating in time a highly beautiful, admirable and loving marriage, based on soul friendship. A wonderful example for us all.

The next phase

In 1922, Yogananda's first American ashram was established at Waltham. During that year Swami Dhirananda arrived from India to join him in Boston. He too was a major support for Yogananda in those early years in America.

In late 1923, it was time for Yogananda to start "conquering" the whole of the USA, beginning in New York. When he left, Dr. Lewis wanted to accompany his Guru, but the Master asked him to stay in Boston to lead the meditation group and to continue to raise money to support his lecture tours.

A sacred householder privilege: financial support

The financial support of the Lewis family was indispensable for Yogananda, who "depended" on it. As Durga Mata writes in her book: "Master struggled through the depression years of 1930, 1931. He depended upon and received from Dr. and Mrs. Lewis financial help the previous years, but this new undertaking of managing Mt. Washington was more than they and he could carry alone." At that moment, just in time, Rajarsi appeared, stepping in with his finances and saving the work.

In a letter dated January 4, 1935 (one day before his birthday), Yogananda wrote: "Dear Doc,...Tears came in my eyes when you offered to help. Think but for your help, and our Mr. Lynn's help, where would we be today."

In other words, Dr. and Mildred Lewis (and Rajarsi) acted as role models for all devotee householders by donating to a spiritual work. Money easily seems "unspiritual". Similarly, Yogananda's frequent pleas in letters for financial support (hefty amounts too) might be perceived as "unspiritual". But money is simply energy and when offered to a divine cause it turns into *sacred* energy. The giver of it is highly blessed, as Dr. Lewis was together with Rajarsi, and of course many other generous souls.

However, donating big sums (which were given) to Yogananda for his work wasn't always easy for Mildred to digest as one can see in various letters in which Yogananda asks her not to oppose or interrupt these donations. One thinks of Lahiri Mahasaya's wife, who once addressed him scathingly (*Autobiography of a Yogi*): "What about your responsibilities for your wife and children? I regret that you do not interest yourself in providing more money for the family."



At any rate, Mildred in the end always consented and received the Lord's blessing for it.

Connection with Yogananda as a householder

When Yogananda left Boston at the end of 1923, life went on for Dr. Lewis: going to work as a dentist, being a husband, a father of two small kids, with all the usual financial, emotional and practical issues to resolve, year after year.

Twice a year, for Christmas and Summer, the family traveled across the country to visit Yogananda, who

eagerly awaited them. Yogananda expressed his love in many endearing letters: “Please know this for certain: Christmas would not be Christmas without you both.” And: “Long have you been gone, and how much I miss you both. So you *must* come this Christmas. You both will have the cutest and newest likable Christmas present that you ever had. I have got them already – so you *must* come and stay as long as you can.” And: “Dear Doc,... I got a letter that [Mildred], Brenda, and a friend already started, and you are not coming. I am heart-broken. You must come – you must come – you must come – you must come – and pass your August vacation as early as possible. No getting away from it.”

After these loving visits they went back to their normal life again. Five years passed in this way.

Then, from September 1928 to February 1929, Yogananda returned to Boston. He was welcomed in the *Massachusetts State House* by Governor Alvin T. Fuller. Things had obviously changed: Yogananda was now better known. He had enjoyed major successes in numerous cities as a speaker. In 1926, he had even been received by the American president, Calvin Coolidge, in the White House.

After he left, the Lewis family passed six more years following the usual pattern of a householder life, with interspersed visits to the Guru. The task was now to maintain an inner connection with him for months at a time.

When Yogananda went to India 1935, their son Bradford (then eighteen years old) accompanied him for the first leg of the journey to England. He relates that Yogananda revealed two of his past incarnations there: as William the Conqueror and as someone living at Stonehenge.

In a letter dated July 2, 1935, the Master writes: “We are omitting Istanbul.” But England, Germany, Italy, Greece, Israel, Egypt (crossing other countries too) and, of course, India, were all on the itinerary.

On his return from India in 1936, the very first thing Yogananda did was to visit the Lewis family in Boston. Then he travelled onward to Kansas City to meet his most beloved disciple Rajarsi. Lastly he journeyed to Utah, where he met Daya Mata, Ananda Mata and Durga Mata. In other words, he met his closest devotees (with the exception of Gyanamata). In San Francisco he reunited with Tara Mata. Only then did he return to Mount Washington.

Another five years passed for Dr. Lewis, taking care of his family, working and being a normal householder devotee.



In 1941, Yogananda returned again to Boston for “a brief visit”, this time with Swami Premananda. Yogananda recounts in his *Autobiography*: “‘Sir,’ Dr. Lewis said to me, smiling, ‘during your early years in America you stayed in this city in a single room, without bath. I wanted you to know that Boston possesses some luxurious apartments!’” He stayed at the *Myles Standish Hotel* (see photo).

Three more years subsequently passed for “the Lewises” as normal householders. By now, Brenda and Bradford, their children, had grown into adults. (“Brad” and “Bren”, Yogananda called them). Loving letters were exchanged, of course. In one Yogananda wrote: “It has been quite lonesome since you left.” (Jan. 20, 1940). Or: “This is the honest truth – it took me days to get used to being

without you both.” (Jan. 21, 1942). And: “We dreadfully miss you. I could hardly eat – for it did not taste any good after you left. I enjoyed food through you.” (Jan 14, 1943)

Then, in late 1945, after 22 years of living as householders, at opposite ends of the country, Yogananda asked Mr. and Mrs. Lewis to move to Encinitas. For a little over six years, Dr. Lewis and Mildred were able to live close to Yogananda.

They formed, as it appears from letters and descriptions, a lasting friendship with Durga Mata.

It was a busy life for “Doctor”. He lectured and taught in San Diego, Hollywood, and eventually became responsible for running the Encinitas hermitage. Mildred often drove Dr. Lewis to Mount Washinton for classes. While he taught, she would visit Durga Mata. (Later Durga helped them with designing and completing their new house in Borrego Springs.)

Durga Mata writes how the Master silently helped the Lewis family: “Mrs. Mildred Lewis had a very enlarged heart and for years suffered with it. I directly asked him if he had taken Mrs. Lewis' heart condition on himself, and he shyly bowed his head in admission.” Mildred was healed, miraculously.



In 1948, Dr. and Mildred Lewis were both present during Yogananda’s “great samadhi”. During that cosmic ecstasy, close disciples one by one came to the Master. Durga Mata arrived first. “Then,” she writes, “came Daya, Mataji [Ananda Mata], Sailasuta, and Woody.” Afterwards, “he had us call the Lewises to come, too.” (Durga must have forgotten Mrinalini Mata, who was also present).

The Yogacharya blessing

In August 1951, Yogananda ceremoniously bestowed on Dr. Lewis the spiritual title of Yogacharya (“Teacher of yoga”), together with five others (see Self-Realization magazine, September 1952). What was this title all about? What was its meaning? What were Yogananda’s criteria for choosing the particular disciples who were to receive it? Why didn’t obvious candidates like Rajarsi, Gyanamata, Daya Mata and Mrinalini Mata receive it?

Interestingly, during that same Yogacharya ceremony on August 21, 1951, Yogananda also gave Rajarsi monastic vows, the orange robe and his monastic name. It appears that the Master performed two parallel ceremonies, each of which had its own distinct character. One was monastic. And the other? Let’s take a look at the disciples who received the “Yogacharya” blessing:

Dr. Lewis, an SRF teacher and householder.

Oliver Black (1893–1989), who led the SRF center in Detroit and taught there. Yogananda described him as his second highest disciple in



realization after Rajarsi. He was married to Ethyl Wood. Oliver Black went his own way and founded a community, *Song of the Morning Ranch*. Still he was listed in the SRF magazines until 1986 as being authorized to give Kriya initiation and as a householder with his own work.

Bernard Cole (Reverend Bernard, 1922 - late 1970s): he was unmarried when Yogananda made him a Yogacharya, but his mindset was that “I would have married in any case.” After Yogananda’s passing, he left SRF because of “organizational issues within SRF and the dogmatic limitations of the framework in which his guru’s teachings were being placed. One such tradition was the monastic vow of celibacy. Marriage was simply not allowed for resident teaching members of SRF... To marry meant he would no longer be allowed to represent the Self-realization teachings of his guru.” (See his website)

“Mother” **Mildred Hamilton** (1904-1991), who had met Yogananda in 1925. He made her a minister in 1949 and the SRF center leader in Seattle. Yogananda also authorized her to give Kriya Yoga initiation. She had a family with children. Six years after the Master’s passing, in 1958, she was dismissed for having been critical about changes occurring in SRF.



José Maria Cuarón (1890-1967), the leader of the SRF center in Mexico City and in Mexico. Yogananda authorized him to give Kriya Yoga initiation. He went on annual tours of the main countries of Latin America to give initiation. There is a picture of a 1958 initiation. He had his regular job and was a married man. His wife had come to visit Yogananda as well. His photo is shown here, with Swami Kriyananda and Daya Mata.

Dr. Pedro González Milán (1899-1985), the SRF center leader in Merida, Mexico. He was married to Ofelia Espinosa Sierra.

In 1965 Daya Mata named two more Yogacharyas:

Binay Narayan (1911-1971), who became the YSS General Secretary. His wife Shantana died very young. For years however he declined the offer to take monastic vows. When, in 1970, he finally became a renunciate, he relinquished his title of *Yogacharya* and, as is stated by SRF: “He was then known as Yogacharya Binay Narayan until he became a swami [Shyamananda].” He was a Swami for less than a year.

Ellsworth Edwin Dickinson (1876-1967), who is mentioned in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*. He ran a business in Alhambra. With his wife Mabel, who died in 1948, he had one son, Clair Everard.

“Yogacharya”, then, was a title which described a non-monastic teacher, or an SRF householder teacher. (Yogananda gave it to “actively” married disciples, Daya Mata to widowers).

But let us return to Dr. Lewis! As a householder, he taught classes to the SRF monks. What an inspiring message: his consciousness was what mattered, not whether he was married or monastic. He also gave classes to lay disciples and the public. The advantage in that situation was obvious: when Dr. Lewis talked about how to make a spiritual marriage work, it was with authenticity as he spoke as a husband. If he told devotees how to balance a work-life with meditation, he had authority. If he spoke about spiritual child rearing, his words came from a father. When monks or nuns talk about such topics, they certainly convey



beautiful concepts, but it is like someone speaking about the art of cooking who himself has never cooked.

Bestowing Kriya Yoga Initiation as a householder

When talking about Yogananda, it was always with the greatest reverence and he always conveyed the concept that Master is your personal friend. This in fact was Dr. Lewis' experience, which maybe no other disciple had absorbed in the way he had. His second greatest passion was Kriya Yoga.

Already in Boston, Yogananda had authorized him to bestow the sacred Kriya initiation: "If you see an exceptionally good student, give him Kriya. I permit you do so." That's what Doctor did until his passing: he, a married man, conducted sacred Kriya Yoga initiations.

Being SRF Vice-president as a householder

It is stated by SRF that, in 1946, Dr. Lewis became member of the Board of Directors and the third Vice-President of SRF. In 1952, after Yogananda's *mahasamadhi*, he was elected first Vice President, an office he held until his passing in 1960.

In August 1952, six months after Rajarsi had become the SRF President, it was discovered that he had a brain tumor. Durga Mata took care of him, with great help from the Lewis family. Durga Mata writes in her book: "The Lewises, bless their hearts, they were always on hand during my greatest trials, and helped me more than anyone else in those trying three years."

With Rajarsi less and less available, Daya Mata now began captaining the ship of SRF. She was efficient. Mount Washington started to be more organized with numerous new rules introduced.

In 1955, when Daya Mata became President, SRF became an exclusively monastic order. It doesn't take much to intuit what Dr. Lewis thought about this new development. Daya Mata writes that some members of the Board of Directors opposed this new direction she had felt from Yogananda. He, the role model of householders, was one of them. The other was Durga Mata (see her story).

He had his reasons, given that he knew how much Yogananda had treasured the idea of brotherhood colonies as well as the monastic path. In 1945, in the East-West magazine, Yogananda announced how the income from the *Autobiography of a Yogi* would be used: "Since all the proceeds will be used to build our *Golden World City* in Encinitas by the sea, you will also be forwarding our work there."

In 1946, Yogananda had written in his *Autobiography of a Yogi* how he and Dr. Lewis discussed the necessity of founding a *World Brotherhood Colony*, which "may inspire other ideal communities over the earth." Yogananda concludes: "Far into the night my dear friend –the first *Kriya Yogi* in America– discussed with me the need for world colonies founded on a spiritual basis."



In 1948, Dr. Lewis was a speaker at Yogananda's "Formal Opening of the Golden World City" at Encinitas, as described in the East-West Magazine, May 1948. Yogananda introduced him with these words: "And now Dr. and Mrs. Lewis, who were my first friends

in those difficult days in Boston, when few people came to hear me, because I had a small hall. (I didn't realize that in the West we have to conform to certain conventionalities.) Several years later when I had Symphony Hall, which was well known, it was filled to overflowing, and several thousands were turned away. But it is those who are friends in need that we remember always; and so I remember that whenever I ran short of money for the work –not for myself– I always bothered Dr. Lewis. I used to tell him then that we would have big centers, and he would say, 'But *when?*' He was hard to convince, but he wrote out checks for the cause, and once he was convinced, he steadfastly followed this path with great zeal. Now in his talks he not only gives words but the spirit behind the words."

At a Garden Party in 1949, Yogananda again spoke about colonies (Self-Realization magazine, Nov. 1949): "We live happily –our life is not one of fanaticism, nor of extreme materialism, but a balance between monkhood and materialism. These freedom-producing colonies are the only answer to the growing unemployment situation and the false doctrine of communal living guided by brute force [communism]. Only brotherhood lived and practiced, as it is in these colonies, will solve the tension between capital and labor and between the extremes of materialism and monkhood. The word has been said, and we must go on –not only those who are here, but thousand of youths must go North, South, East, and West to cover the earth with little colonies demonstrating that *simplicity of living* plus *high thinking* lead to the greatest happiness, and strengthen character."

Dr. Lewis was centrally involved: in 1949, in the Directory of Centers in the Self-Realization magazine, under Encinitas, it says: "**SRF Golden World Colony** by the sea, 100 miles south of Los Angeles. **Colony inn** for guests, students, and public. Administration Bldg, **Men's hermitage**, **Ladies hermitage**, Golden Lotus Temple of Religions (under construction), phone...., Meditation class Thursday 8 p.m., conducted by Dr. M.W. Lewis."

Householders and monastics being equal, walking hand in hand. This was gradually disappearing.

Swami Kriyananda, who succeeded Dr. Lewis as the SRF Vice-President, reports that Dr. Lewis "showed almost a kind of bitterness" about the way SRF was developing. However, he remained 100% loyal to SRF and served it with body, mind, and soul.

Nevertheless, for him personally, things were no longer all that easy it seems. At any rate, his son-in-law, John Rosser, writes in his introduction to *Treasures Against Time*: "Like all other saints, Dr. Lewis was tested to the very limit of his tolerance with physical pain, persecution, and, ultimately, psychological crucifixion. But he was equal to the occasion, for his love of God showed brightly above all outward trials; in the deep reverie of his meditations he was able to realize that those 'little tests' meant nothing compared to the great blessings God had bestowed on him."

What was the "persecution" and "ultimately, psychological crucifixion" all about? John Rosser preferred not to expound on it and nor do we.

Mildred, at any rate, decided that *Treasures Against Time* should be printed outside of SRF. Brenda wrote: "My



mother felt that printing this work, apart from Self-Realization Fellowship, was what should be done, for there was no reason for ‘extra hands’ working on it, when we had all the facts and figures in our possession; besides, first-hand accounts can not be gainsaid.”

Brenda later adds: “Therefore, this book does not represent any group or organization that would disseminate the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda in any way.”

Dr. Lewis similarly recorded an album *Hymn to the Masters* and copyrighted it in his own name (Catalog of Copyright Entries, 1956, Minott White Lewis 4May56 EU435989).

The whole Lewis family, it seems, tried to stay in harmony with SRF while not always agreeing. This duality is shown in the way they wrote Yogananda’s title. On the cover of their book and in general sections, they used “Paramahansa” (the way SRF writes it), while in the Master’s letters they printed “Paramhansa” (the way Yogananda had written it).



What happened to *Treasures Against Time*, about which Brenda wrote: “all I know is that it is God’s will that it be written”? A second edition appeared in 2001. Then, in spite of Brenda’s clear wish, “SRF took over the rights of the book.” After that it disappeared.

In a handwritten letter to a devotee who had inquired about available recordings of talks and songs by Dr. Lewis, Brenda replied in 1995: “I wish I could be more cooperative and provide these things to devotees, but it isn’t possible.... Perhaps next Christmas conditions will be such that I can provide some of the things you asked for.”

Now, fortunately, many talks of Dr. Lewis are available on the internet. The best source is <http://yyoga.org> (it loads slowly but the waiting is worthwhile).

High states of consciousness as a householder

Whatever the case, Dr. Lewis strove to rise ever higher spiritually. Concerning this goal, he told an honest story which happened with Yogananda: “I kept asking the Master to give me *samadhi*. One day I backed him into a corner, so to speak, and insisted that he give me *samadhi* ‘this very minute’! The Master looked at me deeply, demanding almost fiercely, ‘Are you ready for it, if I give it to you “this very minute”? Can you accept a complete change of outlook on everything?’ My will faltered. I looked down. ‘No, Sir,’ I had to confess. ‘I guess I’m not ready yet.’” (*Conversations With Yogananda*, by Swami Kriyananda)

However, Dr. Lewis *did* rise high spiritually! The great Sri Yukteswar (who hardly praised anyone) wrote him in a letter: “I heartily congratulate you that you have advanced so much in spiritual consciousness.” And in a letter (dated March 8, and before 1935), Yogananda told Mr. Lewis: “Recognize you have acquired great powers by these years of meditation, only you must learn to use them to change souls.”

His son-in-law, John Rosser, once asked him how long it had taken him, after Yogananda had first shown him the inner Light, to see that light at will. He answered: “It never left me.” When he

lectured, he “spoke from the Light,” as he said. What a marvelous statement. Maybe this is why Yogananda said: “He gives not only the words, but the Spirit behind the words.”

He and Mildred were on a special householder mission and were in written contact with Lahiri Mahasya’s grandson, Ananda Mohan Lahiri, and great-grandson, B. Lahiri (see *Treasures Against Time*). The Master had written to Dr. Lewis in a letter: “Lahiri Mahasaya will work through you.”

Moral for devotees

Most of the readers of this articles will be householders. Dr. Lewis is a perfect role model for all of us. He was determined spiritually, while having his family and work life, and evolved highly. In fact, he exemplified Yogananda’s encouraging words in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*: “A true yogi may remain dutifully in the world; there he is like butter on water, and not like the easily-diluted milk of unchurned and undisciplined humanity. To fulfill one’s earthly responsibilities is indeed the higher path, provided the yogi, maintaining a mental uninvolvedness with egotistical desires, plays his part as a willing instrument of God.”

His passing as an evolved householder

Following a short illness, Dr. Lewis passed away on 13 April, 1960, aged 67. The way he did so was glorious, as many devotees know. He and Mildred (who lived much longer, until 1988) are buried in the *Forest Lawn Memorial Park* in Glendale, together with Yogananda and numerous other disciples.

Dr. Lewis once told Swami Kriyananda, “The Master was reminiscing with me the other day. He spoke as an intimate friend of our years together. ‘We’ve had a good life,’ he said. ‘It seems only yesterday that we first met. Soon we will be separated, but in a little while we’ll be together again.’” What a promise! So Dr. Lewis might, right now, be happily reunited with Yogananda.

In her book, Durga Mata printed a letter of Dr. Lewis’ to her, in which he writes: “As Master said to me, just before he left us, ‘Doctor, as we began in God’s Love – let us finish.’”

Love! That was the true story of Dr. Lewis, Mildred Lewis and Yogananda.

