

**Barbara Elsasser** was initiated by Swami Aseshananda after eighteen years at Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, Ramagiri Ashram. Living in the Sri Sarada Devi House for the last ten years of Swami's life, Barbara felt irrevocably blessed.

*Written submission.*

At the of age twelve I decided to give myself to God, eventually spending eighteen years at Eknath Easwaran's Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, Ramagiri Ashram, where I was a Trustee and Easwaran's photographer, passionately practicing his eight-fold path of sadhana.

One day I said to God: "You are the Wind and I am the leaf." Soon after, a divine breeze dropped me at the feet of the Holy Mother. Initiated by Swami Aseshananda, I lived in the Sri Sarada Devi House near the Temple and saw Swami twice a day for the last ten years of his life.

I'd heard from others outside Portland how Swami had been described as "the most powerful spiritual force in the western hemisphere," "a living saint," "a jivan mukta," "established in Brahman," and "beginning where words end." However at the Portland temple where Swami's humility and fearlessness abounded, there were no such accolades. The words "base metal into gold" and "renunciation" come to mind.

When the revered President of the Order, Swami Bhuteshananda, came to visit Swami, it was an auspicious occasion. The phone rang at the Sri Sarada Devi house and Swami himself said they would be right over. I was alone in the house when the two swamis arrived and it was clear Swami Asheshananda had something on his mind. With speed and alacrity he drew a chair in front of the shrine for Swami Bhuteshananda and asked him to bless me. Swami told me to kneel in front of Maharaj Bhuteshananda and practically pushed me to my knees himself, so intense was his intention. After I was blessed by Swami Bhuteshananda Swami visibly relaxed and they left the house.

The times I phoned Swami were potent and occurred when something dire appeared to be happening. I would call the temple and tell him the gist in a few seconds. He would say firmly in a booming voice, "It never happened" and slam the phone down to end the conversation. This unique blessing and teaching method had the uncanny effect of resolving each situation. Once Swami apparently wanted me to understand something without his needing to use words. For several seconds on the phone he was absolutely silent. The message came through so loud and clear it still reverberates in my consciousness. Only once my heart did not want him to say, "It never happened" and immediately he intoned in a gentle voice, "Don't dwell on it."

The subtle and prolific grace pouring from Swami defies description, he being the humble servant of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother. Nor did his grace stop after his passing.

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