

Mike Di Feo, a disciple of Swami Aseshananda, attended the San Francisco Vedanta center and visited Swami Aseshananda several times between about 1989 and Swami's passing.

Written submission.

I live in San Rafael, CA, and attended the San Francisco Center actively from the late 1980s through 2000. During one of my visits to the Olema Retreat where I often spoke with Swami Sahajananda, a monk named Vimutka told me that there was a swami in Oregon that was very special—a direct disciple of Holy Mother. Vimutka mentioned that it would be a good thing for me to visit him. Some time went by and I eventually went to see Swami in Portland.

After the initial visit, I went to see Swami about five additional times. The last time, Swami was ready to leave his body. He was tired and spent most of the time in bed. He used the rest to gather all his strength for the Sunday worship.

Swami softened my heart. He did it by example, quietly and inspiringly. I believe with every bit of my heart that “The Grouchy Swami,” as my nine year-old daughter called him, was an enlightened soul. He saw in me something I could not find and brought it out so I could feel it with every bit of my being. I am sure that is what happened to him when he was in the company of Holy Mother, Sarada Devi. But whereas Swami was ready and was enlightened, I was neither, and so continued as a householder to finish my responsibilities and work out my karmas. Nevertheless, he changed my life from the inside. So because of Swami, I became a better husband and a better father, which is probably my destiny.

I still see clearly and feel Swami's stern character in the Sunday lectures as well as his loving disposition while addressing us in private. Swami is simple, but in his simplicity he shows us truth, love and freedom. That was the wonderful trait passed on to him by Holy Mother and heightened by his contact with the direct disciples.

I never attended Swami's funeral, because, as far as I am concerned, he never died and will never die.

Swami is free and in his infinite freedom, he is looking after all of us. I can feel that he is there when I need help and he is there to guide me when I go astray. And in my heart he will always be there waiting to help when I need him.

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One last thing: I had the privilege, approved by Swami, to go on bicycle rides with Mr. Bush on Sundays after the worship. Mr. Bush and I would ride to a place by the river,

have lunch, and then return. Mr. Bush told me wonderful stories about Swami. He specially mentioned the strength of character Swami had when they encountered difficult times. I remember in one of those lunches we were talking about Swami and Mr. Bush said, "He is the real deal. That is why I gave it all up when I met him." [Stuart Bush was a member of a distinguished Oregon family.] He said it with such conviction and open heart, that it stayed with me: I can remember it today as vividly as it happened about 15 years ago.

Swami Asheshananda would say, "Truth is simple, we just make it complicated because we want to play." And he very well showed us what he meant in every one of his worships. They were simple and of the highest truth.

Submitted March 2008