Stephen Josephs Photograph Collection

1972-1978
13 images
Call no.: PH 013

Read collection overview Collection overview

The Guru Ram Das Ashram was founded in Montague, Massachusetts, in 1972 by Steve Josephs under the inspiration of Yogi Bhajan. Affiliated with the 3HO (Healthy Happy Holy Organization) and the Sikh Dharma Brotherhood, the ashram provided instruction in Kundalini Yoga and Tantric meditation, and at one point, there were as many as 21 residents of the house. United in an arranged marriage by Yogi Bhajan in 1972, the Josephs (then called Gurushabd Singh and Gurushabd Kaur) left the ashram in 1983.

The thirteen digital images in the Stephen Josephs Collection document the early years of the Guru Ram Das Ashram, and its founders Stephen and Alice Josephs (Gurushabd Singh and Gurushabd Kaur). The collection includes images of Yogi Bhajan, the Josephs, and their infant son Sean (Sat Narayan Singh).

See similar SCUA collections:

Famous Long Ago  Intentional communities  Photographs  Religion  Spiritual change

Background on Stephen Josephs

In 1969, Harbhajan Singh Khalsa introduced Kundalini Yoga to the United States. A charismatic former public servant from India, Yogi Bhajan, as he was known, taught the yoga of the Sikh gurus, centering his practice on self-discipline and self-awareness, but emphasizing worldly engagement, rather than ascetic
withdrawal. Through his 3HO (Healthy, Happy, Holy) organization, Yogi Bhajan rapidly built an avid following among the so-called hippies, offering a holistic spiritual alternative to the prevalent drug culture. In the five years that followed the Yogi’s arrival in the States, more than one hundred yoga ashrams were established throughout North America and Europe, to spread his teachings.

Established by Stephen Josephs (Gurushabd Singh) in 1972, the Guru Ram Das Ashram quickly became a regional center for instruction in Kundalini Yoga and Tantric meditation. After attending a course in Tantric Yoga in Paeonia, Colorado, Josephs acquired a house for his new ashram on Taylor Hill Road in rural Montague, Massachusetts, and almost immediately began to attract students, many of whom lived communally on site. Their day, Josephs recalls, began at 3.30 AM, with two and a half hours of rigorous yogic practice and music, followed by meditation and the work of the day. At its peak, the ashram had as many as twenty one residents, whom the ashram was able to feed for a mere dollar a day per person.

Josephs met his wife Alice (Gurushabd Kaur) in 1972, while the two were attending a tantric yoga course in Washington, D.C. During that course, Yogi Bhajan singled the couple out and called them onto the stage, saying he saw an arc of white light between them. After asking the audience if he had permission to engage them in marriage, and finding enthusiastic approval, the Yogi married the Josephs four days later. Although they left the ashram in 1983, their marriage has endured.
Josephs completed his doctorate in education at UMass Amherst in 1974 for a study of the Guru Ram Das Ashram, *Education of the spirit; the dynamics underlying personal and spiritual growth into spiritual commune.*

### Scope of collection

The thirteen digital images in the Stephen Josephs Collection document the early years of the Guru Ram Das Ashram, and its founders Stephen and Alice Josephs (Gurushabd Singh and Gurushabd Kaur). The collection includes images of Yogi Bhajan, the Josephs, and their infant son Sean (Sat Narayan Singh).

### Collection inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yogi Bhajan, leader of 3HO, taken at a Tantric Yoga Course</td>
<td>ca.1972</td>
<td>Digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurushabd Singh, Gurushabd Kaur with Sat Narayan Singh in the middle (now Stephen, Alice and Sean Josephs)</td>
<td>ca.1972</td>
<td>Digital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gurushabd Singh, Gurushabd Kaur with Sat Narayan Singh in the middle (now Stephen, Alice and Sean Josephs) ca.1972 Digital

Livtar Singh Khalsa at the recording of "Jewels from the East," an audio tape album by the Khalsa String Band ca.1972 Digital
Livtar Singh Khalsa at the recording of "Jewels from the East,"
an audio tape album by the Khalsa String Band

ca.1972 Digital

Two unidentified women singing

ca.1972 Digital
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gurushabd Singh and Kaur</td>
<td>ca.1972</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurushabd Singh and Kaur</td>
<td>ca.1972</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Ram Das Ashram, Taylor Hill Road, Montague, Mass.</td>
<td>ca.1972</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurushabd Singh (Stephen Josephs)</td>
<td>ca.1972</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gurushabd Singh (Stephen Josephs)  
ca. 1972  
Digital

Gurushabd Singh (Stephen Josephs) playing guitar  
ca. 1972  
Digital
Administrative information

**Access**
The collection is open for research.

**Provenance**
Acquired from Tom Fels, 2008.

**Processing Information**
Processed by Dex Haven, November 2009.

**Related Material**
Josephs' dissertation on the Guru Ram Das Ashram, *Education of the spirit; the dynamics underlying personal and spiritual growth into spiritual commune*, is available for circulation through the Du Bois Library, call number 2398.

**Language:**
English