

The so-called Holy War at Lama was neither holy nor a war — it was actually much more a community family identity crisis.

Co-Founder Steve Durkee, who left in 1971, returned in 1974 as Shaikh Noorudeen, newly converted to Islam, with a group of students who had been with him in Jerusalem. Noorudeen contracted with Lama for his group to live in the Intensive Studies Center, complete the construction of the building complex, and hold the Center's first intensive program — in Islamic Sufism.

Over the course of two years, Lama Foundation became increasingly polarized into two separate communities — Lama Central, open, universal, loving, not all that clearly defined, and the ISC, “Islamic Studies Center,” zealous, fervent believers, very clearly defined in what they were doing. In the spring of 1977 Noorudeen demanded that everyone on the land convert to Islam or leave. Then he backed off and made a gentler demand — that everybody submit to the law of the book of either Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Still a Continuing Member, Noorudeen told Lama Coordinator Siddiq, his former brother-in-law, that he was going to come to the Spring Meeting and refuse consensus to anyone who did not submit to his demands. Siddiq responded by failing to call the Spring Meeting, postponing the confrontation. There was massive suspicion, paranoia, and emotional anguish at this time. Everybody's fate seemed uncertain on both sides of the equation.

I went with my concerns to Shirin, pouring my heart out to her. She replied, “I'm not worried. I see a positive outcome to this.” I said, “How can you possibly see a positive outcome to this?” She said, “I see the back of Noorudeen's head driving down the road, going forth to fulfill his vision by founding an Islamic community” — which is exactly what eventually happened.

At the summer 1977 Annual Meeting, Nuriddin brought in Muslim scholars to expound the superiority of Islam. On the other side of the circle in the Dome, the Lama residents and many long-term friends of Lama testified to the vitality and validity of the value of the experiment so far. It was a real confrontation of values. Mythologically it was Kronos, the Saturn father, trying to devour his children. All of the people participating in the Lama experiment were the embodiment of values, structures, and intentions that Steve





and Barbara Durkee had originally set forth. Now, this experiment was challenged by its father wielding an awesome 1,400 year old, highly successful religion. The people participating in the Lama experiment stood their ground. Archetypally, the children would not allow the father to devour them. They bore testament to the strength and success of the experiment. The Muslims preached Islam a lot. They were very convincing, but no one was convinced.

The final resolution, reached outside the meeting and off the land, was that all the founding members of Lama should leave the land and entrust the Foundation to the care of the younger generation of residents, releasing the Foundation from the original family constellation which had been torn apart by infidelity and religious divisiveness.

The traumatic confrontation of the Holy War was followed by a period of healing and renewal, under the leadership of Jamil and Arielle, reintegration of the core community, and a deeper realization of the ideal of love, harmony, and beauty.

Lama was now in its adolescence. By this time, ten years after its inception, the ideals of brotherly/sisterly love, selfless service, welcoming the guests, and embracing and respecting all spiritual paths had become deeply implanted in the community. As a contrast to the strongly gated community where everybody had to pay their way or leave, Ram Dass had suggested to us that we have a refugee status, that we allow space for one or two people who couldn't pay for themselves, who couldn't take care of themselves, who just needed refuge.

There were some days when harmony seemed to pervade the land, where there was such harmony between people simply living everyday lives, doing everyday tasks, nothing new, nothing special, but such deep harmony and love that it was like a little bit of heaven on earth.