

STARING DOWN THE SPIDERS

Corvallis herb seller is on mystical path.

BY ALEXANDRA ARCH

Those who have heard the tales of Harold Keith of Corvallis may notice how his eyes widen in excitement and his fingers comb through his peppered beard as he speaks. As an herbalist, healer, world traveler and spiritual investigator — to name a few of his “job titles” — Keith has more than a few stories to tell.

Keith has been a herbalist for 40 years and claims to be one of the first of his kind in Oregon. In 1981, Keith and his wife, LaVerne, founded a New Age herbal company called Zenith Advanced Health Systems which produces and markets several nutritional supplements. Zenith features a “super-pill,” or a complete nutritional formula combining all the vitamins, minerals and herbs that the body needs in one pill, according to Keith.

“[The company] took off like a sky rocket,” he said, explaining that his products now reach an international market. Keith has traveled all over the world to collect the raw materials for those products, attempting to “find any hidden super herbs that prolong life and supercharge the immune system.” In addition to his personal research, he also seeks advice from the naturopathic community, global herbalists and nutritional scientists.

Keith maintains a fascination with healing and the practice of yoga. He uses a 9,000-year-old healing tradition called “laying on the hands” to channel higher frequency energy into people, but Keith will only work on what he calls “incurables,” or terminal cases (for free). He reports several success stories — claiming that he woke a woman from a coma and helped heal a man named Mushroom of cancer. Blending this high frequency energy practice with meditation, Keith also teaches a kind of yoga called Surat Sabda that focuses on sound and light.

One of his greatest passions, he explains, is searching for Babaji. Babaji means “Holy Father” in Hindi and refers to a legendary Indian guru thought to be more than 8,000



“Be firm like a rock, deep and serious like the sea. Think of the Earth as a Mother. This is one Earth. Don't be divided by thinking of yourself as belonging to different countries. This is one Earth. ” —Babaji

years old. Keith is a self-proclaimed “independent investigator of Babaji,” and has traveled to India three times in the last 10 years to search for the elusive guru, but has only met him in a dream state and through several out-of-the-body experiences.

When asked to explain Babaji, Keith pauses and attempts to telepathically contact the guru for the guidance of what words to use. With no reply, Keith shrugs and simply says, “Babaji is the behind-the-scenes guardian of consciousness of the planet.”

While searching for Babaji, Keith traveled through many remote villages. He relates one encounter at an Indian temple:

“I arrived at this one very famous temple in northern India. The Indian monks who lived there came out and asked me, “Are you a student?”

“I am an independent investigator of

Babaji. I am looking for God-realized beings,” I said.

“We have a famous, famous God-realized being. We built this temple for him,” the Indians responded. “But he is traveling right now ... but we could show you his cave.”

“At this particular temple, the holy man lived in a cave for 17 years and didn't leave except to drink some water from the river running out front. After 17 years, he achieved God-realization (or sumati). I wanted to sit where this guy has sat for 17 years — maybe I'll get to feel something here, get some vibe or something going on here.

“Do you mind if I go sit in this cave?” I asked.

“No sahib, feel free,” they responded.

“Down we went to the basement of this temple where there's a little rabbit door, just big enough for me to crawl.

“Entering the cave, I get a feeling for the dimensions in the dark — it's probably six feet wide by eight feet long. I look back and about 10 Indians are craning their necks looking in.

“Sahib, would you like us to turn on the light?”

“Yeah sure,” I replied. They flip a switch outside of the cave and a light goes on, and I see at least 40-50 spiders the size of softballs with legs three-four inches long. I'll never forget their faces. They had 16 eyeballs — I counted them. The eyeballs were weird, they were like trout eyes. So I don't like spiders, and these guys were gigantic. So my mind suddenly kicked into high gear. I started thinking, what do they eat? They were pretty fat and they had big mouths. They kept looking at me with those little fish eyes and then kept looking over at the end of the cave where there was a shelf. There sat the king spider — a spider that was twice as big as all the rest of them. He must have been a pound. And I'll never forget his 16 eyeballs. I was looking at him and he was looking at me. So I said something to him, like, “How you doing? You got some pretty ladies here. Pretty good place here. You guys having a good time?” (I had to break out in some easy conversation). And I looked at him, as he was looking at his minion and looking at me, and I was cool. I didn't want to appear to be scared. “I'm going to be leaving now,” I told the head spider. He looked at the rest of the spiders and they looked at him and they all kind of nodded in agreement ... and I crawled out of there and closed the door.

After I got out of there I knew that I had passed some kind of test because the monks were all very humble in my presence and they said that I could stay in the master's quarters. I wonder what happened to the people who freaked out? Which reminds me — on the other side of the temple were God-realized beings who lived in a tree and nobody bothered them because they thought they were monkeys. But that's another story.”

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