



Heartstone Lodge

South River Highlands Country Retreat

Be with Nature, Be with Spirit

BY RAY WHITSON

You often hear the phrase about a vision being manifested ... you can experience it at South River Highlands Country Retreat and the Heartstone Lodge. Co-owners Antonia Albano and Barney Brown are offering pure magic in the surroundings and facilities there. While the comfort of these two areas, located on a sprawling 250 acres, is only 10 minutes outside of Lexington, it feels worlds away! The

spiritual backgrounds of Barney and Antonia permeate the retreat and its offerings at prices that are incredibly affordable. There is no way to adequately describe how much there is to be appreciated, and readers are encouraged to go to www.SouthRiverHighlands.com and www.HeartstoneRetreat.com to get a full understanding of this amazing retreat center and event facility.

Perched above the confluence of the South River (a very feminine energy) and the Maury River (a very masculine energy), the property is actually two separate retreats with the Heartstone Lodge being the event area at the front of the property and South River Highlands Country Retreat towards the back.

Heartstone Lodge and Retreat Center

Just 12 years ago this was a working dairy farm with a massive old barn and other aged structures on a plot of ground worn completely bare by the herds of cows. Today it is lush with gardens and grasses and beautifully renovated buildings that you would never guess were anything other than new construction. The building renovations have been executed primarily under Barney's supervision and are still ongoing. The grounds are dotted with sculptures designed by Antonia and there are special areas in which one can meditate, relax, or connect with the energy its beauty offers. Attention to detail is evident everywhere. The event spaces and the guest rooms were

built using locally sourced woods and decorated with tasteful furnishings throughout.

The Heartstone Lodge is the renovated barn that has three floors, the first being a huge great room that can accommodate up to 120 people, with a beautiful two-sided fireplace, and an adjoining fully equipped commercial kitchen. The second floor offers another large meeting room along with guest rooms. The third floor consists entirely of sleeping areas.

The grounds and the lodge are of such size that there is an almost endless array of events held there: weddings, spiritual retreats and workshops, business seminars,



Above: Heartstone banquet

Below: Wedding





Yoga seminar

graduation parties, family reunions, church retreats, and holiday parties ... with plenty of beds for sleepover attendees. The grounds can (and have) accommodated tents as well. You'll find yourself drawn to the area under a 65-foot long pergola that at one end has a round fish pond. This pond is actually the bottom couple of feet of a silo once used on the dairy farm.

The two private guest studios are renovated old farm structures and are good examples of the comfort and luxury offered to guests. Decorated with Antonia's fine eye, you'll be especially amazed by the beds. The high-quality mattresses also have pads to further increase the level of comfort. You may not want to sit or lie on the bed upon arrival, as you might not want to get up for the rest of your stay!

South River Highlands Country Retreat

South River Highlands Country Retreat consists of five restored cabins, walking trails, dense woods, hay fields, and a breath-taking 360-degree views of the Roanoke Valley from the amazing Mount Grace. Mount Grace has an incredible "infinity labyrinth" surrounded by Antonia's metal sculptures. These sculptures, called the Geometries of Love, pulsate with an energy all their own.



Stonecutter's great room

The cabins, which range in age from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, were painstakingly moved from other areas and reassembled exactly as they were with additional living space added to each. Each in a secluded setting, perfect for rest or introspection, the rustic exteriors belie the space and comfort of the contemporary interiors

with all their modern conveniences included. Again, you must go to the website to truly appreciate what is being offered for such a reasonable price.

The real crown jewel of this part of the retreat center is Mount Grace and The Grace Walk labyrinth. The vistas are stunning, especially if you live an urban life. The Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Allegheny Mountains to the west, converge together in the south to form the base of the Roanoke Valley. There is a procedure for entering



Stonecutter's cabin



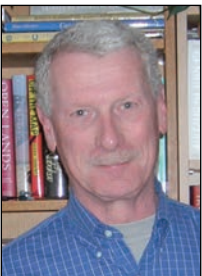
Above: The Grace Walk
Right: Infinite Love

and obtaining maximum advantage of The Grace Walk; instructions are available. From personal experience, I can tell you that insights are easily obtainable in this sacred spot of earth. Please do allow yourself to feel this magic. Photos don't do it justice.

Heart and Soul

This exceptional retreat center is easily accessible off I-64 and offers a stay you won't forget. Be sure to schedule events or stays, as this retreat is no longer a well-kept secret. Barney and Antonia have put heart and soul into this undertaking—respect the property and the facilities, and you'll find yourself immersed in its amazing energy.

To schedule and make reservations, visit www.SouthRiverHighlands.com or www.HeartstoneRetreat.com or call (540) 463-2593. ☯



Ray Whitson is a 20 year resident of the Charlottesville area and has been on an evolving spiritual journey during that time. He is a writer and is the publisher of this magazine.

