Science now tells us with certainty that the Universe as we know it began more than 13 billion years ago. Some call it the “big bang,” others have described that moment as “the great light.” By whatever name, one fact has become abundantly clear. Everything that followed since the first moment—atoms, molecules, cells, plants, birds, cathedrals, humans, satellites, bombs, cell phones, roses, and mosquitoes—are part of one interconnected, interdependent system.

For 60 years, the central purpose of the Foundation for Global Community—and all of the organizations that preceded it—has been the education of the individual. The educational process has always included the largest context, the primary principle “All Is One,” and the fundamental realization that there is a Power greater than the Self, and humans have the capacity and the responsibility to discover how to love.

In January 2005, the Foundation for Global Community (FGC) recognizing the urgency of meeting the many challenges present in today’s world, decided its resources could more productively be invested, not in the work of FGC itself, but rather in important and emergent ventures powered by the vision, passion and insight contained within those projects and organizations.

As a result, the Board of Trustees made the decision to embark on a five-year plan. First, to encourage independence of its own viable projects, such as Hooked on Nature, Global MindShift, Valley of Hearts Delight, Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, and Exploring a Sense of Place. Second, to liquidate the various assets of FGC, and to thoughtfully invest those resources in important, well-managed elements of the emerging global community. All the assets of FGC were sold (real estate holdings, the conference facility in the Santa Cruz mountains near Ben Lomond, and our Center and offices in Palo Alto). In the last three years the Board has been investing those assets ($17.7 million) in worthy projects and organizations in the United States and the world.

How It Began

We could say our roots go back 13 billion years to the beginning or back to the pre-history time when deep insights and spiritual thoughts started coming through human intuition. However, we’ll start with a more recent time frame, the latter part of the 19th century. This was the period when Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* had been published and the conflict between science and religion over which one was the rightful determiner of truth grew ever more intense. A young chemistry professor in Canada, Henry Burton Sharman was becoming convinced that the objective approach of science could and should be applied to the study of religion since both searched for the same universal truths about reality.

In 1900, Sharman and his wife, Abigail, enrolled in the University of Chicago as doctoral candidates, she in English and he in semantic, biblical, and patristic Greek. During the writing of his doctoral thesis, Sharman uncovered a revolutionary new view of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth as a teacher and not the messiah. His work was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1909 and greeted with great criticism by conservative scholarship. The Chicago Examiner wrote, “Dr. Sharman declares Jesus never uttered teachings credited to him.” Comparing that and other critical statements with what has been written and widely accepted by New Testament scholars in the past 20 years, makes it clear that Dr. Sharman was far ahead of his time.

In the 1920s and ’30s, Dr. Sharman began holding six-week seminars each summer at a retreat in the Canadian wilderness. He was seeking to reach the future leaders of society, so he invited college students and professors to explore issues raised by the teachings of Jesus. He used the Socratic method of question asking and challenging individuals to think and validate their own answers.

Two of the people who attended those early seminars in Canada with Dr. Sharman were a Stanford professor, Harry Rathbun, and his wife, Emilia.
A chronology of activities and events our various organizations participated in over the past 60 years. To give a sense of what was happening in the world at the same time, other news events are occasionally included.

1950–1959

SEQUOIA SEMINAR

Having experienced in Canada the intelligence and effectiveness of Sharman’s seminars, Harry and Emilia Rathbun, along with Leon and Lucille Carley, were dedicated to creating a similar program in California. Harry Rathbun was a Professor of Law at Stanford and Emilia was a teacher. Leon Carley was a highly respected attorney in Palo Alto and Lucille, a nurse. Together, the two couples were the co-founders of Sequoia Seminar. In 1946, following the end of World War II, their first seminar was at Klamath Falls, and from 1947 to 1950 at Asilomar on the Monterey Bay Peninsula. Room and board for the four-week seminars was $115. There was no charge for tuition.

In 1951, Sequoia Seminar found its home in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Ben Lomond. The Quakers (AFSC) had been given 50 acres of land; Sequoia had received $10,000 from a seminar participant who had bequeathed it his G.I. insurance benefit. The Quakers and Sequoia agreed to share use of the facilities and a meeting lodge, Casa de Luz (House of Light), was built with recycled lumber during the summer. There were only two seminars that year: a four-week ($35) and a three-week ($115).

What was happening in the world? The U.S. was engaged in war in Korea, Dwight Eisenhower was elected president, and a gallon of gasoline cost 28 cents.

The program of seminars continued to grow. In 1954, there were three introductory seminars, one designed for people who wanted to lead a weekly discussion group, and one for college students to fit their fall schedule. Four years later, there would be six introductory two-week seminars and, for those who wished to continue to be involved, nine one-week programs, which were led by the Rathbuns. Room and board was $70 and $35 and the “no tuition” policy continued, probably because Dr. Rathbun remembered that Stanford, his alma mater, did not charge tuition when it first opened its doors.

1960–1965

Recognizing that couples with children are very reluctant to leave them for two weeks in the summer while attending a seminar, a special “family” seminar was scheduled for eight couples and their children.

In the world at that time, the U.S. had 2,000 military “advisors” stationed in Vietnam and East Germans began building the Berlin wall. In 1962, the pressure grew more intense. The U.S. resumed atmospheric tests despite widespread protests and discussion. The Cuban “missile crisis” brought fear to America’s door. LIFE magazine had page after page devoted to an article on “How to build a bomb shelter in your own backyard,” and Rachel Carson’s book, *Silent Spring*, awakened a new cause for concern.

In response to all that was happening in the world, our members were encouraged to continue and attend one of the one-week Sequoia Seminars that were held that summer. A dramatic presentation, *People, War and Destiny* was staged at a number of theatres in the Bay Area. Seven women marched in San Francisco with signs declaring “good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth.

In August, 200,000 black and white marchers, standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, heard Martin Luther King, say “I have a dream.” And in November, the whole world seemed to come apart with the assassination of President Kennedy.

There were ten introductory seminars and 28 Quest for Meaning groups meeting weekly in homes throughout the greater Bay Area in 1964. Work was underway on a second lodge at Sequoia Seminar. The sounds of conflict were the sounds of 1965. President Johnson sent 27,000 ground troops into Vietnam and by the end of the year there would be 170,000. The Freedom March went from Selma to Montgomery and the Watts section of Los Angeles erupted in flames. This was also the time we began a relationship with St. John’s Missionary Baptist Church in East Palo Alto. Invited by Father James Branch to join the church, a group of our members was baptized the following Sunday and spent the next year helping to raise funds for their school.

The Jesuit priest and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, used the term “noosphere” to communicate an emerging sphere of consciousness. New Sphere was chosen as the name for our community.

1966–1971

In 1966, 112 Quest for Meaning groups were meeting weekly, a sign that participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to their lives. People were encouraged to continue and attend one of the five one-week Sequoia Seminars that were held that summer. A dramatic presentation, People, War and Destiny was staged at a number of theatres in the Bay Area. Seven men spoke about A Vision for Our Time.

The huge war protests continued with hundreds of thousands massing in Washington, D.C. Israel invaded the United Arab Republic, Syria, and Jordan in what became known as “The Six-Day War.” At the end of the year, there were 46,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam and 13,643 dead.

The women of New Sphere put on a symposium for women and took on a new name, Woman to Woman. In response to all that was happening in the world, the United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco. Doctors transplanted a human heart.

Our concern with improving race relations continued and we met with the Mission Rebels and the Black Man’s Free Store. A new program, “The Challenge to Change,” included an invitation to join a discussion group in the Fall. During the month of December, the Rathbun’s home became the center of the home and campus became “Christmas House” with the living room transformed with angels and the wisdom of the world’s great religions in a preview of what would, in later years, become “Bless Man.”

The pace quickened. The Viet Cong launched the Tet offensive. North Korea seized the U.S. spy ship Pueblo. The members of our community were working hard in offering an alternative to the draft, a concept of national service which led to a presentation to 3,000 women in the Circle Star theatre in San Carlos.

1971–1982

CREATIVE INITIATIVE

In a relatively short span of time we changed our name from National Service to National Voluntary Service to National Initiative and, finally, to Creative Initiative Foundation (CIF).

During the 1970s, in addition to its regular courses and seminars, Creative Initiative addressed the issues of drug abuse, environmental concerns, the effects of violence on TV, energy conservation, depletion of natural resources, the danger of pollution from toxic chemicals, and long-term radioactive wastes from nuclear power plants.

The focus of these activities was always on understanding and communicating the process by which individuals can become mature, responsible human beings.

*Creative Initiative—A Guide to Fulfillment*, written by Harry Rathbun, was published. We moved into 222 High Street, a big, old barn-like building in Palo Alto. With more space, a video production unit was built, and movable cubicle dividers allowed conversion into a large area. Willis Harman, Thomas Berry, Paul Ehrlich, Miriam MacGillis, Jean Shinoda Bolen, and Brian Swimme were part of a Speakers Series of presentations.

In 1973 there was a cease fire in Vietnam with American combat deaths at 55,000 and all deaths, including civilians, at two million. On Yom Kippur, the Arabs attacked Israeli and two days later, Israel counterattacked. Four days later, Creative Initiative women marched in San Francisco with signs declaring...
It was decided to commit 20 of his first term. It was to use the computing powers Carter and was intended to be released near the end and the Eagle) was finished. The United Nations International Women's Year conference was held in Mexico City and the Wings of a living myth, “God wants peace” and “Jews and Arabs are both sons of Abraham.”

Other significant events in that decade: facing certain impeachment, Richard Nixon was the first U.S. president in history to resign; 30,000 people in India died from smallpox, a disease that would be eradicated in just a few more years.

Indicating how we were growing, one summer there were 14 introductory seminars at Ben Lomond. A beautiful new lodge, Las Alas de Las Aguillas (The Wings of the Eagle) was finished. The United Nations International Women’s Year conference was held in Mexico City and 30 CIF women attended.

“Bless Man,” a pageant celebrating One Earth, One Humanity, One Spirit, was staged for the fourth year at Masonic Auditorium in San Francisco. A musical drama of a living myth, “1 is a Mystical Number,” addressed the issues of life and death, good and evil, masculine and feminine in performances at Spangenburg Auditorium in Palo Alto.

A talk by E. F. Schumacher, author of Small Is Beautiful, on the immense dangers associated with nuclear power, prompted an investigation by members of Creative Initiative. Discussion with senior engineers at General Electric followed. Convinced that the public was unaware of the issues, the women of CIF began a statewide educational campaign and collected 345,000 signatures on a “Call for Information” asking the Governor to hold hearings. When a citizen’s referendum qualified for the ballot, the issue became political and CIF as a non-profit educational foundation could no longer be involved. As a result, most of the members decided to join Project Survival and work to pass Proposition 15. It was defeated 60–40, but the public’s new awareness of the risks, along with the tremendous costs involved, resulted in no new nuclear plant being built in the U.S. since that time.

Beyond War began as a grassroots response to the threat of nuclear war. Early efforts focused on educating about the crisis and showing “The Last Epidemic,” a film about the effect of a one megaton hydrogen bomb dropped on San Francisco.

We developed a graphic way of showing what the reality was in the world at that time. With each small BB pellet representing one million tons of TNT, we asked people to close their eyes and listen to the BBs that stood for all the bombs dropped in World War II, including the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We would drop three BBs into a metal bucket. Then (with eyes still closed) “here are the BBs that represent the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and the Soviet Union today,” and we would pour 18,000 BBs into the bucket. The effect was overwhelming, “I had no idea” was a typical comment.

The Beyond War Award was created in 1983 to honor the great efforts of humanity as it works to build a world beyond war. The first award was presented to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for their pastoral letter on peace. In 1984, the award went to the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and presented to the co-founders, Dr. Bernard Lown of the U.S. and Dr. Yevgeni Chazov of the USSR via a television spacebridge between Moscow and San Francisco .

On January 29, 1985, more than 80 ambassadors to the United Nations attended a presentation by Dr. Carl Sagan and Dr. Serge Kapitsa on nuclear winter. The ambassadors were told that even a limited nuclear exchange would threaten all life on the planet and no country would be exempt from the effects.

At this time, more than 15,000 people were actively communicating the Beyond War principles in 12 states. There was start-up activity in ten other states and 400 dedicated volunteer men and women were working full time on Beyond War.

The Beyond War Award went to the Five Continent Peace Initiative in 1985. The leaders were Olaf Palme of Sweden, Julius Nyere of Tanzania, Andres Papandreu of Greece, Miguel de la Madrid of Mexico, Raul Alfonsin of Argentina, and Rajiv Gandhi of India. Using every satellite available enabled the leaders and audiences in every country to see and hear. More than 50 million people worldwide viewed the program.


Beyond War opened an office in Iowa to relate to the 1988 presidential candidates. Plans were finalized to produce a joint book, and Soviet authors came to Sequoia Seminar, Breakthrough was published in both English and Russian.

1990-2010 FOUNDATION FOR GLOBAL COMMUNITY

With end of the Cold War, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, and other hopeful signs of change, Beyond War went through a process of thoughtful examination and emerged its focus to become the Foundation for Global Community. It seemed to us that in order to truly move beyond war, we, humans, had to discover the thinking and behavior, the values and processes that would enable a sustainable and resilient global system to emerge.

FGC produced a number of projects aimed at exploring and developing elements of what were believed to be important aspects of an evolving global community. Human relationships with the natural world, emerging cosmologies regarding the evolution of the universe and of life on earth, conflict resolution, food and agricultural systems, human personality systems, and new models of governance and organization were all explored.

However, when the activities and influence of the organization were compared to the considerable resources built up over many decades, and the urgency of meeting the many challenges present today’s world, it was decided that these resources could more productively be invested, not in the work of FGC itself, but rather in important and emergent ventures powered by the vision, passion, and insight contained within those projects and organizations. The Board of Trustees was not alone in sensing this situation; members of the FGC community also had expressed their concerns.

With a deep commitment to respond to changing times and realities, the Board of Trustees unanimously agreed to liquidate the various assets of FGC and to thoughtfully invest those resources in important, well-managed elements of the emerging global community.

All of the assets were converted to cash. Real estate holdings, the conference facility at Ben Lomond, our Center and office were all sold. The Trustees and a small group of Advisors has been investing those assets ($77.7 million) in worthy projects, individuals, and organizations who continue to pursue the ultimate vision of one earth, one humanity, one spirit.

The overriding belief of the Trustees of the Foundation for Global Community is that there is a life of vitality, of relevance to current conditions, and that one moment in that life of vitality is to know when that life is coming to an end, a time when it is more appropriate to die and, in that death, to provide the nutrients (or “fertilizer”) to new, growing contemporary forms.

Having successfully achieved that goal, the Foundation for Global Community closed on December 31, 2010. Amen!
These 97 recipients were each awarded grants from the Foundation for Global Community for more than $10,000. An additional 100 organizations received grants of $10,000 or less.

Total amount of grants to 197 recipients since July 2006 is $17,700,000.