

Ex-PBaller is serving on a higher plane

By LOU GIAMPETRONI

I always admired Ray Bayer because he could run down a paddleball hit past him and return it to the front wall.

With a grunt.

That's what I remember about him as he -- a top-level open player in the 1970s -- gave the best in the sport a run for their money.

For the last 10 years, Bayer -- who will be 60 in November 2004 -- has been in India, and other places on the globe.

He spreads the word about Breath and Open Counseling. He got into it after reading a book given to him by Steve Keeley in 1986.

"I guess it was in '86 when



Bayer

the beginning."

Bayer said the book "was in the form of spontaneous talks given by Osho, an Enlightened Mystic in India. I'd never heard of him before.

"It was one of those experiences where someone put into simple words what I've felt on a very deep level but could never fully put together on my own."

From his days at Michigan State University, Bayer said, "I'd always been in touch with the 'Human Potential' movement that was an outgrowth of the '60s.

"And this guy was light years ahead of anything I had read or experienced up to now. For the next couple years, I searched for everything I could find in book form by him and then one night it just struck me that I couldn't miss this man while he was still around!"

So Bayer, then working for Pro Kennex in San Diego, left in June

of 1988 to Pune in India where he spent six to eight weeks that year.

"I would need volumes to adequately describe what happened for me then," said Bayer. "The short story is that I had some experiences with certain 'Breath' techniques used in the East for thousands of years and just starting to be known about in the West.

"For me, this was the missing piece from my education in psychology at MSU. I went back to India every year for the next five years to participate in every training and course that offered deeper experiences with the Breath Therapy.

"This led me to the next step which was to quit my job, sell everything and move to India. WHEW. I had no idea what pain I was in for ... Talk about an 'Identity Crisis.'

"Not only that, I decided to donate half of my net worth to the Commune in Pune to further the work of Osho."

Bayer said that for the next 2-3 years, "I spent 6 months in Pune and 6 months in San Diego. It was such a hell watching my friends go on with their 'normal' lives while in SD and I had no idea who I was and where I was in all of this!!

"In Pune, I kept on in the groups and trainings there. Now I was assisting the leaders and helping in the groups. Suddenly, I was asked to lead a short 3-day Breath group there ... Gulp!

"I had always been terrified to speak in front of groups of people, much less act as a facilitator or group leader! But in comparison to the risks I had already taken, it seemed silly to turn it down.

"It turned out to be such a beautiful experience. A seed had sprouted in me, it seemed ...

"For the next couple years, I led groups and gave sessions in Breath and Open Counseling while in Pune."

The next step, Bayer said, was when someone from Israel who



Bayer (left), Keeley ... circa 1975

had participated in a group he led asked him to go to Israel and lead the group there.

"What an amazing turn of events," Bayer said. "I went there and led two groups that were hugely successful and gratifying for me. And then more people started asking me to come to their countries and slowly my time for being in San Diego grew less and less."

Bayer said he now is traveling "all over the world and getting paid for something I would gladly do for free ... I meet people who, to me, are the salt of the earth!"

"My life had turned into a blessing beyond words ... I share what I know about the Breath and Meditation techniques and so much comes back to me!

"But Lou, I really miss PB still ... I keep my paddles with me in Pune and I still have two balls which I cherish. There is an outdoor wall for the tennis players to warm up on but I had them paint some lines on the cement and whenever I can I teach someone there a bit and we play.

"So, tell the guys; if ever in Pune, India, look me up and we can play a little one-wall with the black ball against a black wall ... It's a real Meditation."