



TURNING WHEEL

Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Fall 1992 \$3.00

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PILGRIMAGE

**THROUGH INDIA AND NEPAL
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA**
DECEMBER 19TH '92—JANUARY 3RD '93.
FEBRUARY 7TH '93—FEBRUARY 27TH '93.
PRACTISE MINDFULNESS IN THE BEAUTY
AND SERENITY OF THE PLACES WHERE
THE BUDDHA LIVED AND HEAR THE STORY
OF HIS LIFE. YOUR GUIDE IS SHANTUM
SETH, ORGANISER OF THICH NHAT HANH'S
PILGRIMAGE TO THE SACRED SITES.

LETTERS

Dear *Turning Wheel*:

We know from the platform at Houston that lesbians and gays are the new scapegoats, and the hot breath of the emerging Republican theocracy claims abortion, adultery, and homosexuality to be capital crimes. Their rage is not abstract, theoretical. Thirty years ago Californians were against capital punishment. 12 years ago there were few homeless, except in the worst of cities. That's just for starters!

So let's SIT. And BREATHE. And then be social activists. And get out the vote!

— Pat Rea, Cotati, California

Dear *Turning Wheel*:

The test-site piece by Susan Moon and Melody Ermachild contains a glaring factual error and a misleading leap of surmise. Concerning the conduct of the government mercenaries, the lack of unnecessary cruelty was true only with the identifiable church people. On Saturday afternoon a female deputy tried to tight-cuff me, although I was cooperating fully. On Sunday there were dozens of throat-crushing stick chokes, along with several gut-kicks and at least one head-stomping.

The "disheveled young man" is a respected activist and my friend. I found his unconcealed grief disconcerting, but that's *my* problem. The cryptically related caterpillar incident I consider a valid kensho.

I live in a tent now, where it will be 100 degrees colder in a few months. We beggars usually seem self-preoccupied to the well-fed and overdressed, don't we? The work of activism is difficult for the many who struggle for their daily survival. There are many of us, but there are even more people who have sold out, are in denial, in apathetic complacency.

As one whose contact with Buddhism has been hindered by my lack of a middle-class income, I applaud the effort to lighten up on racial purity in American sanghas, but class is a bigger barrier, and more difficult to overcome, in large part because it remains such a taboo subject.

— Richard Schmidt, Taos, New Mexico

Dear *Turning Wheel*:

I love your inclusion of so much art and poetry. Our art is an expression of our zazen.

I can't believe I'm coming out of the closet as a bisexual so gracefully and brazenly (that's my style though). Thank you for addressing us at last.

One more thing: My definition of sexual misconduct is sex without love. Even married people are not safe on this one. We need to avoid rigid interpretations of the precepts. Using people as sex toys is misconduct, plain and simple.

— Judy Seikyu Harris, Lanesboro, Massachusetts

Dear Turning Wheel:

I am a Buddhist, doing life for armed robbery. In your issue on Buddhist prisoners, the writers spoke of hindrances they encountered as a result of "being in prison." I want to say that there are no hindrances or prisons except the ones we create: prisons of addictions, prisons of love and hate, prisons of success and failure, prisons of self.

Being here at this moment in time, I have no hindrances, nor am I separated or in prison.

Live without discourse; smile and be at peace with all of existence. Activism creates karma — the word itself bespeaks it. If we live without discourse then karma turns the wheel, not our creations.

I will be here for a long time, but I'm not in prison and there are no hindrances. I know nothing, for there is nothing to know. Just allow Buddha to be.

— Arthur Weathers, Metro C.I., 1301 Constitution Rd. SE, Atlanta, GA 30316

READINGS

Lesbian & Gay Civil Rights At Risk in the November Election

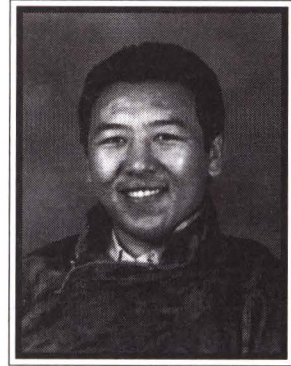
In both Colorado and Oregon, proposed state constitutional amendments will appear on the November ballot that would legalize discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Both measures are sponsored by Christian Right groups, who have announced plans to take their battles on to several neighboring states if they are successful on election day. If one of these measures becomes law, it would represent the first time in U.S. history that a constitution has been amended to take rights away.

Oregon's Measure 9, proposed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA), would stipulate that 1) the state cannot "recognize" phrases such as sexual orientation; 2) state and local governments cannot "promote, encourage or facilitate" homosexuality; and 3) public schools, colleges and universities must teach that homosexuality is "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse," and should be "discouraged and avoided." Together, these provisions mean that agencies at all levels of government could deny services, not to mention funding, to any individual or group thought to promote, encourage or facilitate homosexuality.

The proposed amendment in Colorado, Amendment #2, is the project of a Colorado Springs-based group called "Colorado for Family Values." It differs from the Oregon measure in that it would add a "meta-law" to the state's constitution, stipulating that the state and any of its political subdivisions would be prohibited

from adopting or enforcing any law or policy which provides that homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation,

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— Graeme MacQueen

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BUDDHISM, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER

José Ignacio Cabezón

This book explores historical, textual, and social questions relating to the position and experience of women and gay people in the Buddhist world from India and Tibet to Sri Lanka, China, and Japan. It focuses on four key areas: Buddhist history, contemporary culture, Buddhist symbols, and homosexuality, and it covers Buddhism's entire history, from its origins to the present day.

The result of original and innovative research, *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender* offers new perspectives on the history of the attitudes toward, and of the self-perception of, women in both ancient and modern Buddhist societies. It explores key social issues such as abortion, examines the use of rhetoric and symbols in Buddhist texts and cultures, and discusses the neglected subject of Buddhism and homosexuality.

"It fills an important gap in the field—a serious, textually close reading of gender's influence on Buddhist thought and vice versa."

— Anne Klein

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conduct or relationships constitutes or entitles a person to claim any minority or protected status, quota preferences, or claim of discrimination.

The last three words are the most threatening to civil liberties, since they mean that no future law or policy could acknowledge equal protection to sexual minorities as such. In fact, the proposed amendment would very likely prove unconstitutional on just this point, violating the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. But the legality of new legislation cannot be reviewed by the courts until after it has been adopted.

Financial contributions (and locally, volunteers) are needed by groups in both states seeking to defeat these amendments. In Oregon, contact the No on 9 Campaign, P.O. Box 3343, Portland, OR 97208-3343; tel. 503/232-4501. For Colorado, contact the Equal Protection Campaign, Box 300476, Denver, CO 80203; tel. 303/839-5540.

Zones of Peace Project

BPF member Ivanka Vana Jakic, a native of the former Yugoslavia now living in Seattle, has initiated a far-reaching project to declare sacred sites and major places of worship and pilgrimage in many nations to be "International Zones of Peace," areas free from military aggression and war, and totally demilitarized in peace- and wartime alike. In the U.S., which is historically exempt from external military aggression but suffers many indigenous forms of violence, Jakic has proposed that Zones of Peace could include "protection from terrorism, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, exploitation and vandalism." Eight Zones of Peace were declared in Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1991 by a joint meeting of government officials and religious leaders from four religions. Although these sites have been desecrated in the ongoing civil war, Jakic writes that they "continue to serve as inspiration and models in establishing future zones of peace all over the world." The seven nations of the South Asia region, led by Sri Lanka's endorsement, are also considering a closely related proposal to establish "Sacred Heritage Sanctuaries" throughout the region. Jakic is now pursuing the creation of Zones of Peace in Seattle. She has received the endorsement of the Dalai Lama, Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, the Maha Bodhi Society of India, the Jain leader Acharya Shri Tulsi, and many others for her project.

The Zones of Peace Project encourages individuals to begin in their own communities to build interest in creating local zones of peace, and then to collaborate with the Project to collect endorsements from local sanghas and religious leaders and designate the major local religious sanctuaries. Networking with other religious communities, they can then approach city officials with a

request that the city declare its religious sanctuaries as zones of peace. Please contact Vana Jakic, 4004 SW 328th St., Federal Way, WA 98023; 206/874-2619. ♦

Help HIV-Positive Burmese Women

UPI reported on April 3 of this year that at least 25 HIV+ Burmese women who had been working as prostitutes in Thailand were injected with cyanide after being repatriated to Burma by Thai authorities. Moreover, several independent reports state that this is not an isolated incident. On June 9, 45 more Burmese women were seized from brothels in Ranong province in Thailand and transferred to detention centers in Bangkok, where their fate is currently being negotiated between Thai authorities and the Burmese embassy. Some of these women too, including three who are between the ages of 14 and 21, are known to be HIV+.

Interviews with the young women revealed that they had been lured from their border villages by Thai nationals and then forced to live and work as prostitutes under extremely restrictive circumstances in Thailand. The International Lesbian & Gay Human Rights Commission, which has issued an urgent action appeal on behalf of the women, reports that their conditions in Thailand were "prison-like," and that rape, torture, beatings, and food deprivation have been reported.

Many of the women indicated that they wished to return to their home villages in Burma and to be reunited with their families, but they fear for their lives at the hands of the Burmese military regime (SLORC, the "State Law & Order Restoration Council" which has refused to hand over power to the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi).

Public attention to the April atrocities led Thai authorities to declare that they would not repatriate any more HIV+ Burmese citizens. However, the Bangkok Post reported on July 31 that the Burmese Ambassador to Thailand met with aides of the Thai Prime Minister to discuss the return home of the Burmese women. According to the article, Minister Saisuree Chitkul told press that the Burmese women will be sent home to Burma and that the Burmese government will "look after their safety."

Considering the April cyanide injections and the deplorable human rights record of SLORC, however, there is good reason to doubt the assurances of this Burmese regime.

A Thai government research report from December 1991 found that nearly 50% of 200 women in the brothels of Ranong province had tested positive for HIV. Almost 75% of these women were Burmese nationals. As economic conditions continue to worsen at the hands of SLORC, more and more Burmese women and children are unable to support themselves and may be forced to seek work as prostitutes over the border.

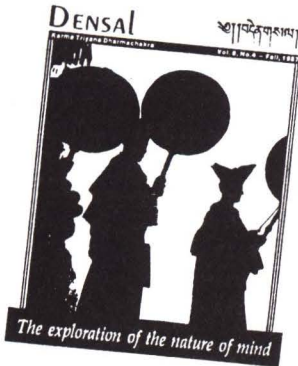
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You can help in two ways: 1) by reminding Thai authorities that they have gone on record agreeing not to repatriate HIV+ Burmese nationals, and urging them to adhere to this policy; and 2) by demanding that Burma allow the presence of international monitoring agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to ensure the safety and well-being of all repatriated refugees. Addresses for both Thai and Burmese authorities are given below.

For more information, call Donna Rae Palmer or Executive Director Julie Dorf at the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 415/255-8680 (fax 415/255-8662).

Please write or fax:

THAILAND

•His Royal Highness
King Bhumibol Adulyadej
The Grand Palace
Na Phran Lan Road
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

•Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Pong Thon Adireksan
Saranomya Palace
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
fax 66-2-224-7095

•Governor of Ranong
Suchart Thmongkol
Sala Klang
Ranong 85000, Thailand

BURMA

•U Thaug, Ambassador; and
U Ohn Gyaw, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Embassy of Myanmar
2300 S St. NW
Washington, DC 20008
fax 202/332-9046

•Kyaw Min
Myanmar Ambassador to the U.N.
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fax 212/737-9046.

We invite your response to opinions expressed in this issue. Send us letters for our letters column. If you wish to respond to a contributor directly, we will forward your letter. Writers like to hear from readers.

COMING THEMES:

Winter '93 Turning Wheel will focus on animal rights and rights of other sentient beings and the first precept (no killing). Deadline: November 13, '92.

Tentative themes of subsequent issues are as follows:
Spring '93: Race and sangha. Deadline: February 15.

Summer '93: Right livelihood, money, poverty, wealth. Deadline: May 17. **Fall '93:** Right speech, censorship, violence in the media. Deadline: August 16.

Thai Monk On Trial

Sanorng Ubonthorng, a member of the Santi Asoke religious congregation, is currently on trial in North Bangkok for "impersonating members of the Buddhist monkhood." In fact, Sanorng is one of 79 monks ordained by Phra Phootirak, the leader of the Santi-Asoke congregation. This congregation lost recognition by the official Thai Buddhist religious hierarchy in 1989, because the leader, Phra Phootirak, had expressed support for a political candidate and party. He was disrobed, and 79 monks he had ordained were also arrested in August 1989 — for "impersonating monks," since their official recognition as monks was rescinded with the disrobing of Phra Phootirak.

Amnesty International has issued a statement of concern that Thai authorities have, in this case, used provisions of the country's Penal Code and the 1962 Ecclesiastical Act to attempt to imprison people solely for the peaceful exercise of the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion. It recommends dropping or withdrawing the charges against Sanorng and the other monks, and fuller respect in Thailand for the right to freedom of religion.

You can help by writing to the Prime Minister and King of Thailand, urging them to drop or withdraw the charges against Sanorng Ubonthorng and the 78 other monks of the Santi Asoke congregation:

• His Royal Highness
King Bhumibol Adulyadej
The Grand Palace
Na Phran Lan Road
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

• Prime Minister
Government House
Nakhorn Pathom Road
Bangkok 10300, Thailand

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EROTIC ECOLOGY

by Stephanie Kaza

The first time I fell deeply in love was in a grove of madrone trees in southern Oregon. I had gone camping on Mount Ashland in the Siskiyou National Forest with a new friend who had begun to capture my heart. We spent a warm summer night together gazing up at the curving silhouettes of these twisting trees. The half moon slipped through their branches to dance on the forest floor, casting a spell on our suggestive minds.

We rolled and tumbled by the sinewy roots, kissing the dark night and silvery moon. We played like fox cubs beneath the generous canopies of the arching muscular trees. Our whispered secrets lifted on the sweet summer night into the thicket of smooth waxy leaves above our heads. I was completely enchanted — but by whom?

Remembering the power of this encounter now, I wonder if I fell more in love with the person or the trees. The love affair with madrones has lasted longer. Each meeting with a madrone rekindles my original passion for them. The leaning branches, the solid red trunk, the thin peeling bark — I cannot keep my hands off these trees. The smooth rippling limbs feel so like human skin — warm, firm, sensuous, evocative. I want to wrap my whole body around the trunk. I want to

know this tree as lover. Is this not an expression of tantric ecological interdependence?

This summer I roamed the hills of coastal California, speaking with trees and writing about trees, giving free reign to my passion for trees. I especially sought out oak trees with large, sturdy drooping branches and short trunks for easy climbing. Over and over, I fell in love with individual gnarled venerables who kindly welcomed me into their branches.

One in particular called to me and my love as we walked the ridge, looking out towards Mount Saint Helena. Come to me, come into my singing arms, find your own true home here. The tree's stout trunk had several easy hand- and footholds; one large branch extended out over the hill so you could walk right up into the tree. I found my spot where the branch met the trunk — perfect for sitting with legs out straight, back supported, eyes in the canopy of ruffled spiny oak leaves. Above me, my sweet friend chose a perching spot for his long body. For an infinite hour, I read tree stories to him, while he tangled in my long hair and distracted me with kisses.

In one inexplicable moment of tongues entwining, all barriers suddenly melted. We could not talk for the awe of it. What happened? Who made that story? I swear it was the oak, rising up to meet us and join in the ecstasy of mutual causality. This not only makes sense to me; it is the only way I can grasp the intensity of this encounter with the awesome. Why should the power of love be reserved only for the human heart? I am willing to investigate with body and soul the possibility that this capacity for love can be met in trees, animals, rivers, and mountains. It just may take a different form than love between human beings. After all, were we not born out of these original lovers? ♦

Stephanie Kaza is finishing a book on trees as friends, lovers, and teachers, entitled The Attentive Heart, to be published by Ballantine Books in May 1993.

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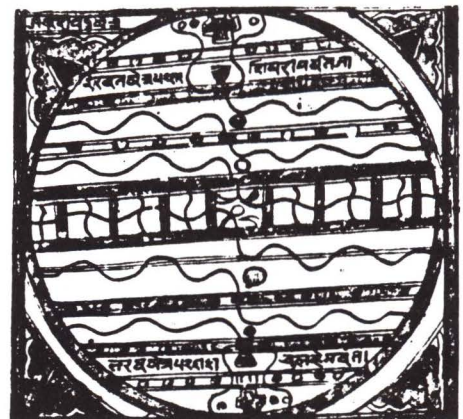


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Field of time and space, tantric painting, 1712 A.D.

Education Column —

MR. MCFAG

by Patrick McMahon

Last spring I found on my classroom desk a cartoon of a man wearing an oversized earring. My pierced ear had apparently not gone unnoticed. The caption read, "Mr. McFag."

"We need to have a talk," I tell my sixth grade class the next day, after a difficult evening with myself. I hold up the cartoon for their inspection.

Giggles and gasps, and knowing rollings of eyes. "Can someone explain this to me?" Their faces compose into cautious blanks. How can I assure them that I'm not playing cop? That there's something larger at stake than my personal dignity?

"OK. You don't want to talk about it. Well I do. I've been hearing whispers and finding notes these last couple of weeks. Apparently someone's getting mixed up about my name. It's McMahon, not McFag." I write my name on the blackboard, underlining the Mahon. "I wonder what you think a fag is?"

Squirmings, more eye rollings. I waited. "A fag is a homosexual, Mr. McMahon," someone finally offered.

"I know that. I guess what I'm asking is how you can tell that I'm a homosexual?" Their responses were precise: I cross my legs like a woman, I use my hands extravagantly when I talk, I walk with my feet turned outward. We all had to laugh. The mind's monsters lost their power as they came into the light.

"Well I'm glad that's all out," I said, relieved. "I want to assure you that even though I do cross my legs, I'm not a homosexual. You've met my wife. What more can I say?" They seem satisfied. Off the hook now, I could afford to sermonize: "And besides, *fag* is not what we call homosexuals. Like *nigger* or *spic* or *honkey*, it's a word that hurts human beings. Like you." Yawns of feigned boredom hide exposed nerves in this multi-ethnic class. Time to get on with it. We returned to the work of the day.

That evening was no less difficult than the previous one. I'd preached sexual tolerance from the pulpit of a simplified heterosexuality, when the truth is that I—like any of us, homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual—am a complexity of male and female.

Mr. McFag wasn't heard of for the rest of the year, but I had a hard time living with my half-truths. The day school was out I put my earring back in place. Now with the summer ending, my dilemma is whether to wear it back to school.

If I had only myself to consider, I'd leave it home, supporting my homosexual brothers and sisters from a safe distance, but avoiding any visible signs of identification with them. But what about the invalidation in

that of my students' intuitions? For they have been on to something about me, for which they had only the category "fag" to explain. More importantly, I'd be passing up the opportunity to model for my students an alternative to their gender categories. As a non-standard man, I'm capable of both firmness and yielding, control and emotion, feminine and masculine. At this age they're struggling to find footing on the shifting ground of their own elusive sexual identity. I owe it especially to my boys who come in drag on Halloween, and to my girl spikers at the volleyball net. I owe it to the two or three in my class who statistically *are* homosexual. By sixth grade their classmates are already noticing something about them, and, projecting their own ambivalences, push them away. In the coming years the pushes will surely turn to shoves and blows, as they run the gauntlet of sexual intolerance that typifies public secondary schools. Some of my children are at risk of becoming the throwaways and suicides that show up in the chilling statistics on teenage suicides, a disproportionate number of whom are homosexual or worried about being homosexual.

My dilemma is settled. I'm wearing my earring back to school. ♦

Patrick McMahon edits Teaching Circle: A Journal of the Larger Educator's Sangha. For more information, contact him at: 2311 Woolsey St. Apt. C, Berkeley, CA 94705.

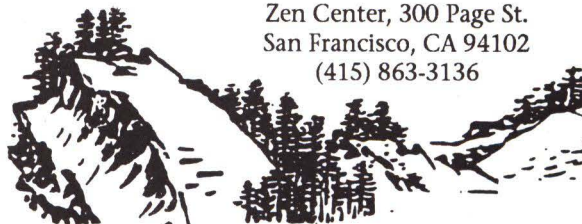
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GIVING: THE FIRST PARAMITA

by Robert Aitken Roshi

The following talk was given on July 6, 1992, at the BPF Institute on Meditation in Action. Every morning at 7:30, after our morning meditation and before our silent breakfast, we came together to hear Roshi speak about one of the Paramitas. These Dharma talks threaded together our six days and our hundred selves, our Buddhism and our activism. Quietly, but loud enough so we could hear him, Roshi told us some very old stories and some brand new ones. This was the first talk in the series. —Ed.

The Six Paramitas, or Perfections, form a program of noble ideals that arose with the Mahayana. As ideals, they are lights on the path. You and I are not lights, however, but human beings. The Buddha himself and Kuan-yin herself may be highly evolved, but they too are human beings. They practice steadily at making the Paramitas their own. With inspiration from their examples, we do the same.

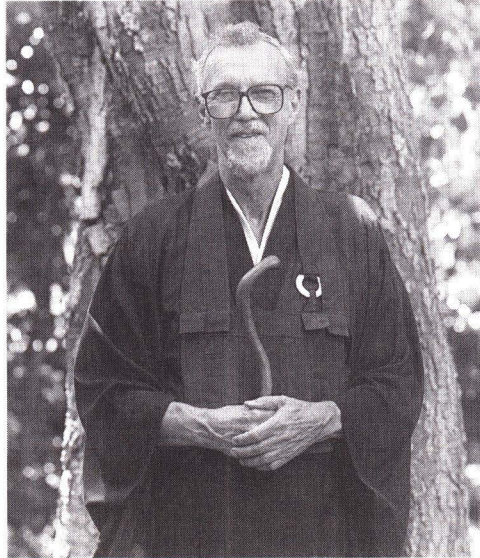
Thus, while the Paramitas are perfections, beware of deifying perfection. Beware of all absolutes. Transmuted with *anuttarasamyak-sambodhi*, the Buddha Shakyamuni is nonetheless still in process. Crossing to the other shore is our work, and nobody can say, "I have accomplished it." Zazen, as Dogen Zenji never tired of saying, is itself enlightenment.¹ This is, in his words, body and mind dropped away — a most noble attainment — and they continue to drop away endlessly.² There are milestones on the path, as the Buddha found under the Bodhi Tree, but they are no more than milestones and are not any kind of consummation. There on her rock by the waterfall, Kuan-yin is constantly getting new ideas. Recalling old times, she thinks, "I supposed I had it then, but I really didn't." Perfection is a process.

The Paramitas derive from the teachings of Classical Buddhism and indeed they do not include anything new. Rather, they are a new combination of old ideals, based on the early three-part Dharma: *shila*, *samadhi* and *prajña* — morality, absorption and wisdom. The first four Paramitas relate to morality: *dana*, giving; *shila*, the moral code; *kshanti*, forbearance; and *virya*, vitality or zeal. The fifth is *dhyana*, focused meditation, which is closely related to *samadhi*. The sixth is *prajña* itself, or wisdom.

Today I will speak of the Dana Paramita, the Perfection of Giving. Its dictionary definition is charity, almsgiving — of goods, money or the teaching, with resultant benefits now and hereafter. Its neglect produces harmful consequences. Thus *dana* is intimately tied in with karma, with cause and effect. Its salutary results are endless and they multiply beyond measure at each point of renewal.

With *dana*, mutual interdependence becomes mutual intersupport. Systems of gift-giving in traditional societies were conscious expressions of intersupport. The potlatch ceremony of Native Americans in the Northwest, in its uncorrupted form, is the return of material possessions to the spirits who provided them. Returning the gift to its source is the basis for dedicating the merit of reciting sutras to Buddhas and Ancestral Teachers, in gratitude for teaching received from all who have gone before.

In Classical Buddhism there are several categories of *dana*. One formulation is dual, including both the pure charity which looks for no reward and the sullied charity whose object is personal benefit. Another formulation is triple: charity with goods, doctrine and services. Other formulations make it clear that *dana* was traditionally considered to be preaching by monks, donations of clothing and medicine to the poor by temples, support of temples and monks by lay people, and gifts to the poor by those lay people who could afford them.



Robert Aitken Roshi

With the development of the Mahayana, the Sangha is no longer centered upon monks and nuns and their temples. *Dana* has become more generally a way of realization, making evident what has been there from the beginning. By any name and in any practice, *dana* is the hallmark of human maturity.

My teacher, Yamada Koun Roshi, used to say, "I wish to become like a great tree, shading all beings." The Dana Paramita was his ideal and I am grateful that he could put it into words so gracefully. Earlier Zen Buddhist expressions of *dana* are also heartening.

A monk asked the T'ang dynasty Zen teacher, Huihai, "What is the gate to Zen practice?" The teacher replied, "The Dana Paramita," and in his further comments, we find that by *dana* he does not mean charity, but relinquishment.³ The self is forgotten and other

beings clearly have their own reason. They are not just out there to serve me. The self is still a center, but it is out-flowing, and the food and housing and clothing and money it requires to function are metabolized as giving. We eat to be able to serve, in other words.

Yet "eating to serve" has a slightly righteous tone. If the self is still a center but is outflowing, what is the stuff that flows out? Is it simply obligation? I hope not. Is it compassion? Yes, but a specific kind of compassion called gratitude.

"Gratitude," the English word, is related to "grace." It is the enjoyment of receiving, expressed in giving. It is a living, vivid mirror, in which giving and receiving form a dynamic practice of interaction. For receiving, too, is a practice. Look at the word *arigato*, Japanese for "thank you." It means literally, "I have difficulty." In other words, "Your kindness makes it hard for me to respond with equal grace." Yet the practice of gift-giving lies at the heart of Japanese culture.

Dana brightens and clarifies the Dharma, and with extended practice it brings natural authority for more brightening and clarifying. You see its power in those who are acknowledged as leaders in traditional societies. In American history, it is the authority of John Quincy Adams, who stepped down from the office of President to serve selflessly in the House of Representatives for the last seventeen years of his long life. In Buddhist history, it is Tou-shuai relinquishing his role of master and returning to practice as a monk.⁴ In relinquishing conventional power, Adams and Tou-chuai found the authority of the timeless. They pass it to us, and with each gift of empowerment the strength of dana in the world is enhanced. The wheel of the Dharma turns accordingly.

Mu-chou, an elder brother of Lin-chi in the assembly of Huang-po, was a monk of great moral authority. In *The Blue Cliff Record*, he appears in an interesting story:

Mu-chou asked a monk, "Where have you just come from?"

The monk gave a shout.

Mu-chou said, "That's a shout on me."

The monk shouted again.

Mu-chou said, "Three shouts, four shouts, what then?"

The monk said nothing.

Mu-chou gave him a blow and said, "You thieving phony!"⁵

At this time, Mu-chou lived quietly in a little hut by a highway, and monks would call on him for instruction. When the monk in this story approached Mu-chou, he was undoubtedly psyched up for the occasion,

ready for the deepest possible experience. It wasn't going to be an ordinary conversation at all. Mu-chou had a great reputation of being severe with students. After all, it was he who broke Yün-men's leg in the course of enlightening him.

So Mu-chou says, "Where have you just come from?"

The monk cries, "Ho!"

That first shout was pretty good. "Where do I come from? Come on!" — the monk seems to be saying. "Give me a break! That's really a smelly question."

"Oh," says Mu-chou gently, "You have shouted me down. You have beaten me at my own game. You are the sage and I am the ordinary fellow." You see dana at play here. By temporizing, Mu-chou gave the monk free play. I can imagine how he fixed his eyes on the monk: Can he step into the opening?

The monk shouted again. What do you make of that second shout? Mu-chou is disappointed and hardens his line just a little, "When you run out of shouts, what happens next?" There's another great chance, monk! I give you this space for a response. What do you say?

But he couldn't say anything. Stuck in the mud! — and Mu-chou gives his last great compassionate effort. *Whack!* "You faker!" There are many other examples of this kind of dana in Zen Buddhism. Lin-chi once shouted at a monk, "You shit-head!" — or words to that effect.⁶

What happened to the monk when Mu-chou hit him and yelled insults at him? Nothing, probably. But it wasn't for want of Mu-chou's effort. In those sacred circumstances, where presumably the monk was prepared for the deepest possible experience, Mu-chou was filling a Bodhisattva role as best he could, though he would have denied it such a label. His great concern for the monk extends to countless beings. Suppose you were that monk, sitting before Mu-chou. How would you respond to his question, "Three shouts, four shouts, what then?" Thus you can receive his dana and pass it on.

Yet Mu-chou did not spend all his time in formal teaching. Between visitors, he occupied himself with making straw sandals of the kind worn by monks on pilgrimage. Such sandals are carefully crafted, but they wear out. So Mu-chou would weave them in various sizes and put them beside the highway. Monks would come along and say, "Oh, look at those nice sandals. I wonder where they came from? Let's see now, here's my size." And they would walk on, with great gratitude. For a long time nobody knew who was making the sandals, until finally Mu-chou was found out and became known as "Sandal Monk."

*My teacher, Yamada Koun Roshi,
used to say, "I wish to become like a
great tree, shading all beings."*

Mu-chou practiced in his hut by the road, crafting sandals and teaching — and we practice in our own circumstances. Dana is simply remembering what we are, avatars of the Buddha, and doing it, perfecting it. There is no need to call it Dana Paramita. You and I are perfecting our out-flowing selves, saving the many beings as we greet one another and encourage one another.

Dogen Zenji said that giving a single phrase or verse of the teaching becomes a good seed in this life and other lives. “It must depend on the will and aspiration,” he wrote. “Being born and dying are both giving. All productive labor is giving. . . . It is not only a matter of physical effort; one must not miss the right opportunity. . . . Even using something oneself is a portion of giving. . . . There is a time when the mind transforms things and there is giving in which things transform the mind.”⁷

The key is Dogen’s observation that will and aspiration are the roots of giving. *Bodhicitta*, the endeavor and hope for Buddhahood, is the fundamental motive. This is most certainly not just endeavor and hope for personal enlightenment. I return so often to the words of Hui-neng about the first of the Four Bodhisattva Vows: “The many beings are numberless; I vow to save them.” This, Hui-neng said, is a matter of saving them in my own mind.⁸ I vow to cultivate an attitude of saving and then to follow through. This is no other than the Perfection of Giving. There is no need to wait for any kind of experience. You and I can practice the dana of trust and respect just as we are, *as if* it were perfected. Shakyamuni and Kuan-yin can do no more.

Questions & Answers

Q: Dana has come up for me here at the Institute because there’s a great deal of work to be done around here. And when I first arrived I pitched in pleasantly, and then as I kept on carrying boxes I began to feel resentment.

A: Be easy with yourself. Give a little dana there. If your dana were complete you’d be enlightened at this moment. Being aware of your resistance is an important part of your practice. There are so many people who go through the world totally unaware of their own lack of gracious spirit. When you are aware that you are resisting you are practicing.

Q: I’m on the BPF fundraising committee, and I’m having a lot of confusion about the difference between giving people an opportunity for dana and soliciting for funds.

A: Well, we are told by the professional fundraiser that the spirit in which to ask for gifts is, “This is one

option for you. This is one way for you to help to turn the wheel.” Not, “We want this money,” but “This is our program. If you like it, then we offer you the opportunity to help out.”

Q: Would you like to be on the Committee? [Laughter]

A: On the other side, it is part of practice to learn where to draw the line in terms of how much to give. If you give it all away, you know, then you can’t come to the Institute. You can’t get good ideas for dana.

Q: There’s a tradition in both Christianity and Buddhism of giving everything away to follow the spirit. Could you talk about dana in that light?

A: Yes. I saw a photograph once of Gandhi’s possessions. They fit into a small showcase, you know. A copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, a pair of eyeglasses, a dollar watch, and such absolute necessities. The Buddhist monk or nun also has such a basic collection of necessities. In the old days I used to say I would have a hard time giving away my typewriter, and now I think I would have a hard time giving away my laptop.

But I’ll tell you a story that was told to us at the Maui Zendo many years ago by a Canadian youth who had just come back from India. In Calcutta he had been robbed while he was asleep, so he had only his shorts. That’s all. No shoes, no wallet, no passport, no nothing. So he went to the British Consulate for help,

because there’s no Canadian Consulate in Calcutta. And they said, “You have to go to the Canadian Embassy in Delhi.” But of course he couldn’t do that, so then they said they’d try to get some papers for him, and he should come back in a few days.

He had absolutely nothing. He wandered around and took shelter under a bridge, and there he met some beggars. And the beggars looked after him for the three or four days that he had to wait in order to get money and papers from the Canadian Embassy in Delhi.

It was a total revelation for him that he didn’t need anything. It was a peak experience for him. But as he told the story, his new wallet was in his pocket, you know, and his new shirt was on his back.

There are certainly times when you die to yourself. There are certainly times when you relinquish everything. But this can be artificially applied. For example, Fu Ta-shih, a contemporary of Bodhidharma and a lecturer to the Emperor, took all his cash on a string and rowed out to the middle of the lake and dropped it in. And people said, “Why didn’t you give it to others?” And he said, “Well, I didn’t want to burden them with that problem.” [Laughter] “And what about your family?” they said, because he had a wife and children. “Well, they have to take care of themselves.”

I used to say I would have a hard time giving away my typewriter, and now I think I would have a hard time giving away my laptop.

Looking at it from the perspective of Western culture, we might have lots of questions about this action. But there are times — such as in a divorce, or on losing a job, or on being evicted — that one goes through a total giving up. And it's a very important experience.

Q: A few years ago in Sri Lanka, they took a huge Buddha statue across a lake to put it on an island. It was worth millions of dollars. Well, it sank, because it was too heavy, and many people drowned because they sank in the boat with the Buddha statue. So I have questions about that.

A: Yes, yes, I share your questions.

Q: I was thinking as you were telling the story about Muchou that what he did — whacking his student and calling him a fake — can be seen as a gift, as dana, only because it happened a long time ago. But if you were telling us that this happened yesterday in an American Buddhist community, I don't think I'd understand it as giving.

A: That's an important lesson in cultural diversity. [Laughter] And you know, the verb that is used in Chinese (as in English) is: *gave* him a whack. And our instruction in studying these koans is that the final harsh words can be interpreted to mean: "You must take another step; please, go on." Really there's something very pure about it.

I've never whacked anybody in the *dokusan* [private interview] room. Oh, occasionally by request. "Give me a tap with that stick," they say. So I give a little tap. But it doesn't work. [Laughter]

Q: Should the attitude be that whatever you get is dana? Even if something terrible happens to you, should you accept it as something that's been given?

A: This is a hard one. Terrible things happen that kill people off. And I suppose that for yourself, personally, you can say "thank you" as the executioner cuts you into little pieces. We are told in Buddhism to receive calamities with gratitude, as gifts. But from the outside, looking at starvation in Africa or the war in Croatia, we can't say, "These are gifts for you folks." So dana is an intimate experience. And it would be my dana, if I could, to alleviate the anguish of these people, and of the forest and the animals and dolphins and so on.

Q: But is there a way I can accept calamity as a teaching?

A: One can accept calamity on a kind of provisional basis: maybe there's something here that will teach me, maybe I can learn from this, maybe this will help me to become a better person, a bodhisattva. One can try to accept it as a practice. I hope I can do that myself.

Q: You said something about giving and trust. Could you elaborate on that?

A: Certainly the spirit of trust is the spirit of dana. You trust others to turn the wheel with you. You trust others to do well. You empower others in this way.

That's it. Thank you very much. ♦

Robert Aitken is the head teacher of the Diamond Sangha in Honolulu, and one of the founders of BPF.

NOTES

1. *Shobogenzo*, "Bendowa." Hee-jin Kim, *Dogen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), p.51.
2. "Genjokoan." Cf. Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), p. 70.
3. Most of the scholarly information in this essay is drawn from Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1932), pp. 165-269.
4. John Blofeld, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Instantaneous Awakening by Hui Hai* (Leicester, England: Buddhist Study Group, 1987), pp. 25-27.
5. Robert Aitken, *The Gateless Barrier: The Wu-men kuan (Mumonkan)* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), p. 279.
6. Cf. Thomas and J.C. Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), p. 66.
7. Ruth Fuller Sasaki, trans., *The Recorded Sayings of Ch'an Master Lin-chi Hui-chao of Chen Prefecture* (Kyoto: The Institute for Zen Studies, 1975), p. 3.
8. Thomas Cleary, *Shobogenzo: Zen Essays by Dogen* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 117-118.



Walking Buddha, Wat Benchamabopit, Bangkok

RELATIONSHIPS AREN'T A THIS OR A THAT

An Interview with Bobby Rhodes

by Lenore Friedman

Bobby Rhodes is a teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen, whose spiritual head is the Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn. Bobby has been widely respected as a spiritual teacher for many years, and she leads retreats all over the country. She is based at the Providence Zen Center in Rhode Island, the central practice place for the Kwan Um School. Lenore Friedman interviewed Bobby eight years ago for her book Meetings with Remarkable Women. The following interview took place in August, 1992.

Lenore Friedman: There's been a significant change in your life since last we met. You were married then, and you're with a woman now.

Bobby Rhodes: My relationship with Mary is just a change for the better in a relationship. I don't see it as being because it's a same-sex relationship. I think I've matured, and now I can get into a healthy relationship. I hate to think I couldn't find a male who's capable of that kind of relationship.

LF: What do you mean you hate to think?

BR: I'm more healthy now, and I think if I looked, I could find men who are capable of being intimate and open with me the way Mary is. It would be sexist of me to think I couldn't. But maybe it's easier to find it with a woman, I don't know.

LF: Are you saying that the gender of your partner is irrelevant?

BR: Yes, to me. In fact I miss men in some ways. I really do.

LF: In what ways?

BR: Well, just sexually, more than anything. But you just find the person you can love. I found that in Mary. I guess I'm reacting to people who make it more of an issue than it needs to be.

LF: Well, maybe it's more of an issue for them than it is for you.

BR: Yes, and I guess when I hear that, I feel they're making some kind of a separation that's harmful.

LF: I understand what you're saying.

BR: I was talking to my ex-husband this afternoon, and we were remembering just how painful some things were for us at the Zen Center, and the type of practice we were trying to do. It was difficult practice. There was a lot of repression of our feelings. We didn't

feel safe to say what we were feeling.

LF: Has it changed?

BR: Yes. I think there's a lot of healthy psychology in the United States that doesn't exist in Korea, so we're benefiting from that.

LF: So you're saying that the general climate was not as receptive to working things through, earlier?

BR: Well, one of the reasons I was so attracted to Mary's energy is that our School's energy was so yang, so masculine, and it continues to be. Now it's becoming more balanced, but I think that I was just urgently in need of feminine energy. I find in Mary a softness and a listening skill that I really needed. I really appreciated the masculine energy, too. It got me going in lots of nice ways, and still does, but it wasn't balanced. And I'm too much that way anyway. I'm strong, and I need the soft edges.

But it's a fearful thing for me, too. I was very homophobic, so it's been wonderful for me to be in a same-sex relationship. It took a lot of courage to look at that side of myself.

LF: So coming out for you was really a big thing —

BR: Oh, yes. My parents are very homophobic.

LF: I remember you come from a military family.

BR: Yes, all my life I heard the words *fag* and *homo* and *sissy*.

LF: So you're probably still processing some of that.

BR: Yes, I still am. It's one of the reasons I hesitated to have an interview with you.

LF: You might have some things

to say that would be useful to people. And you're the only well-known teacher I know of who's come out. That must mean something to people. It's still not easy in this culture to be different. People in the sangha who are different in terms of their sexual orientation might well feel isolated and they might appreciate the mirroring you could do for them.

BR: One of the things I've learned in the last twenty years of being a zen student is just how much pain we cause ourselves with all these labels. We get ourselves into such trouble when we try to define our sexuality. It makes me want to just keep my mouth shut. I really love Mary, and I'm so happy that we're happy. I don't know what else to say.



Bobby Rhodes

LF: Maybe we need another word, or some other words.

BR: It's just love, you know, just intimacy. I don't want to categorize myself as a lesbian. But I'm told that that's a homophobic thing to feel.

LF: Well, there might be some of that in there.

BR: Yes, who knows?

LF: It's not so easy — you said yourself it took a lot of courage — to do what you want to do. This was what you wanted to do and be, whether you want to give it a name or not. It's how you wanted to live.

BR: It's who I wanted to be with.

LF: So you wanted to live with this person, and you wanted it to be fine. But that's not so simple, given the arrangements that we currently have. How does Soen Sa Nim feel about it?

BR: He hasn't said anything to me. He really wanted me to be a nun, and when I didn't do that, he hasn't said anything to me about anything else. These days he's really giving me a lot of space. We haven't talked about it. I wish he was able to ask, "Hey, how're you doing? How's your relationship?" But that's not his forte.

Soen Sa Nim is someone who goes around and teaches what he knows. He has a tremendous amount of energy, but he's not all things for all people. I realized that it was really immature of me to think he could be. So he doesn't ask me how my life's going, but I don't feel like there's a lot of negative judgment. I think he trusts me, and he gets a lot of positive feedback about me from people, so he feels like I'm doing OK. I think he's watching and learning from it.

LF: And how has the response of the sangha helped or hindered?

BR: Well, what's helped is that I haven't felt a lot of judgment. I haven't felt as much support and joy as I would like, like, "Oh Bobby, it's so nice that you're in a good relationship. How's Mary?" Like if I'd gotten married again. If it was a guy I think it would be easier for them to relate to. They'd be asking me, "How's So-and-so?"

But I think I would have been that way too, to be honest with you, if I hadn't been in this relationship with Mary. So I try not to judge them, or to say, "Why are these jerks so homophobic?" Because I know I was homophobic for a long time. About six or seven years ago, I heard of a woman in our sangha who was involved with a woman. She had been married to one of the men in the sangha, and she had left him, and when I heard she was with a woman, I thought, "Oh, God, what kind of a trip is she on?" I'm sure people do that about me. Until they spend more time with me or with Mary, or until I'm more articulate about it, how are they going to learn?

LF: So there's some motivation for you to be articulate about it, to open things up a little?

BR: I will in time. I feel cautious, because I don't think I can be completely clear about it. I feel very

happy, and I think my teaching has improved since I've been in this relationship. I'm getting that feedback. More people come to my retreats. But in a public dharma talk I've never talked about it. I'm waiting for the day when someone says, "Hey, I heard you're in a relationship with a woman. How's that?" Nobody's done that yet, and if they do, I don't know what I'll do.

LF: Let's try it out now. What might you do?

BR: I really don't know. I don't want to have anybody prying into my private life right now. It's still very sensitive. If it comes up I hope I can keep some healthy boundaries, and say, "That's not something I feel comfortable talking about right now." But I might be able to get into some of what I have learned about my sexuality — it would depend on what I was hearing from the questioner. If I was feeling attacked I might get a little defensive at this point in my life. I don't want to come out to people just because I have to.

LF: I totally agree. It has to be in your own time.

BR: My hardest thing was my daughter. This was my hardest, hardest thing.

LF: How old was she?

BR: She was nine. She almost vomited. It just freaked her out. She thought she knew me, and this was something new. And we're so close. I was in therapy at the time I told her. I don't know if I could have done it

I try not to judge people, or to say, "Why are these jerks so homophobic?" Because I know I was homophobic for a long time.

otherwise. My therapist made me put it on the calendar, and I planned the whole weekend around this event. I planned when and how I'd tell her. I told her in the car, on a highway going 60 miles an hour, so she couldn't jump out. That's how scared I was that she'd leave me. It was very painful for both of us, but it was great.

I said, "I thought you liked Mary?" She said, "Yeah, but I don't want to know *that* about her." She had all that homophobia in her, and I don't know where she got it all.

LF: Lots of folks do.

BR: Yes. My brother is gay and has been since way before my daughter was born. And so she's known him as a gay man all her life, and she knows his partner. We've spent a lot of time with them. I said, "I've always told you that that was OK." And she said, "Yeah, but not for my mother."

It's hard when you think of your mother a certain way. But anyway, she loves Mary. We all live together now, and she asks, "When's Mary coming?" They're very close. Their senses of humor seem to mesh.

There's a lot of laughter in the house. And I know my daughter is being nurtured by me being in a good relationship.

Of course there are difficulties. She doesn't want her friends to know, and so we play that little game. Mary and I are supposed to have two different bedrooms, but one has been turned into a meditation room. It doesn't look at all like a bedroom. So today I said, "Oh, maybe we should make this look like a bedroom again, since school's starting."

At the same time, I know it's important to be open and honest about what's happening with your life, whether it's your sexuality or financial status or vocation or whatever. I know it's important not to have to hide it. And to be able to seek support when you need it, to share when you need to do that, and to rejoice in your life when you need to do that. We have to re-examine all of the taboos. People agree that rape is wrong. It hurts and it destroys. But there are other things that have been made wrong in people's minds — and are they really wrong?

I don't mind people knowing that I'm with Mary. It's the labels that bother me. If I got back together with my husband in five years, people would say, "Oh, she's not a lesbian after all."

If you're in a gay relationship you should receive as much support as a heterosexual relationship gets. So it's true that it needs to be spoken about.

LF: Does it need to be spoken about by you?

BR: Well, that's why I agreed to do this interview! But the timing is not particularly easy for me. I feel a little pushed to do it.

LF: Do you feel pushed from other directions besides this one?

BR: Not really. I've been speaking to people who practice with me on an individual basis. But I haven't wanted to make an issue out of it, because I didn't talk about my sexuality when I was married, so why do I need to talk about it now?

LF: Perhaps because the assumption is made that you're straight now, and that's not true. There might be people in your sangha who are feeling isolated, not mirrored.

BR: Yes. But my way's been not to hide it. Everybody in the School who knows me knows about it. Anybody who comes regularly. You know how people are. I haven't been hiding it. People talk. I tell anyone I'm close to. It's just that someone who does a retreat with me once or twice might not know.

LF: But you haven't wanted to be identified as a les-

bian teacher. Is that still true?

BR: I don't mind people knowing that I'm with Mary. It's the labels that bother me. If I got back together with my husband in five years, people would say, "Oh, she's not a lesbian after all. Now she's heterosexual again." But I'm not either one. I never have been. I'm more attracted sexually to men than women, and do I have to explain that to people? When I notice someone on the street who's sexually attractive, it's almost always a man. That's why I was always with men up until now. Then I happened to meet a woman who turned me on, a person I just love and get along with really well, and it's working out for us sexually, too; but my personal experience isn't that of being a lesbian. If I was exclusively attracted to women, then I would say, yes, I'm a lesbian, and I would probably feel more comfortable with the label.

LF: OK, forget about labels. The current truth, forgetting about five years from now, and forgetting about five years ago, is that you're with a woman in every way. You're making a family. I don't know if we could say "married" — that's a social construct — but you're a couple. What would be wrong with being really clear about that?

BR: What do you mean what would be wrong with it?

LF: With being a teacher about whom it's widely known that you are in that kind of situation?

BR: I think it would be helpful for women, and men too, to know that I'm with a woman right now, and how much I love her, and that it's been hard for me, but that it's working out really well.

I might at some future point while I'm giving a talk say, "I'd like to talk about sexuality," and then speak about my experience, and field questions. Before people even ask for it. I talk about diet sometimes, or coffee. It just comes up. I get on a high horse about those things. I talk about yoga and how important it is for us to stretch, so why not bring up sexuality? It's important, too. But because of the way I was raised, it's hard for me to be open.

LF: That's part of what makes it so interesting. Your background is significant. You have actually emerged from a situation where the given was complete homophobia.

What happened to your brother? How did your parents deal with him?

BR: It was awful. My brother went home one weekend and told our parents, and they were awful to him. They made him leave. So then he came to me. I must have been 26 and he must have been 23. And he had never told me before.

LF: How was that for you?

BR: I just wanted to fix him. I said, "Oh, Soen Sa Nim will be able to help you." That was where I was at. I wasn't mean to him, I just thought he needed to be fixed. And that's how I felt about myself. If any homosexual feelings came up, I would just repress them. I

was totally homophobic.

My brother was very shook up. He was homophobic, too. I said, "Maybe we can change you." He said, "Yeah, let's try." So I took him to see Soen Sa Nim. I thought Soen Sa Nim was incredibly open-minded about it. He said, "It's just a karmic thing. But if you do enough mantras you can become heterosexual." He was doing his best. That's what his Korean culture told him. He wasn't mean to my brother at all.

LF: What did your brother do?

BR: He tried the mantra for a while. It helped him in other ways. It made him believe in himself. He did a chanting retreat with us and he really enjoyed it. It's ironic — he just got stronger and more able to go ahead with being who he was.

LF: What's your relationship to your brother now? Are you close to him?

BR: We come and go. We've had some friction about me being with a woman.

LF: You're kidding!

BR: Well, he hasn't been totally supportive. You'd think that he of all people would understand, but that's my whole point. As soon as people label and categorize, they're no longer open to the whole spectrum of what's possible.

LF: So he opens his mind to male gay relationships but not to women and women?

BR: No, that's not it. He has lots of lesbian friends. But not his sister. He's used to me being with my husband.

When people start labeling and categorizing, they lose track of how things are right now. Soen Sa Nim could have asked my brother: "How are you?" He could have asked him to do a mantra because all of us need to strengthen our centers and find out how we're going to help people, how we're going to help ourselves. He could do a mantra for that reason, not because he's sexually attracted to men.

LF: Yes, the dharma brings us just into what is now. And the rest of it is all ideas.

BR: Soen Sa Nim built a great big pagoda at the Zen Center — it's at least 75 feet tall, maybe taller. There was some controversy about it. It was quite expensive and it took a lot of energy to build it. I wouldn't have done that. We don't have to be exactly like our teacher, but we do have to believe in ourselves. The whole point is to believe in yourself and to find out what's important to you. And to manifest it. As long as it doesn't hurt anyone, and you're clear about why you're doing it, then go for it! That's what Soen Sa Nim did, he went for it. He had this thing built. So you have your own pagodas built in your life in the ways you want to.

Doing this interview has been an opener for me. Maybe it will be helpful to some people. There are a lot of people in the closet and there's a lot of homophobia, and there are a lot of things not being said that

need to be. I could get away with not talking about homosexuality, because it doesn't show up like other things. If I was a black teacher, I'd probably have a lot of black students.

LF: That's why not saying anything so easily becomes a lie.

BR: Yeah, it does easily become a lie, so you do need to stand up for it verbally.

LF: So the question for you is only: What form does that take for me? And it sounds as if that's in evolution for you right now.

BR: Yes. First I had to tell the two hardest people: my daughter and my mother. I don't hide it from my job. I don't have to. I have the type of job where it's not a problem for them. And I don't hide it from the Zen Center. My next step is really to support other people, as you said. To come out sometimes when it's going to be helpful.

LF: It's interesting that speaking out in this interview may have speeded up the process that's been going on inside of you anyway.

*When my brother told me he was gay,
I just wanted to fix him. I said, "Oh,
Soen Sa Nim will be able to help you."*

That was where I was at.

BR: It may have. But some people will read this and they'll say, "Oh, she's a dyke," and they won't come to my retreats. It will happen.

LF: You think so?

BR: Oh, I'm afraid it will happen. I know how people are. Some people will say, "Oh, God, I didn't know that." And they'll tell their friends. But that's OK. They can go find a heterosexual teacher.

LF: I suppose the other side of it is that for however many don't come, there are going to be those that do.

BR: Ultimately it will balance itself out. Each of us has to take hold of what our own experiences are, and what our relationships are. Zen practice is always getting us to own this moment.

LF: Is there anything else?

BR: Well, just that relationships aren't a this or a that. It's so much more than sex — why we get into relationships with people. Mary was just the person I could be with in a whole way. How much of it is because she was a woman I have no idea.

LF: Well, that may remain a mystery forever.

BR: We don't even need to know, do we?

LF: No. I love mysteries. ♦

Lenore Friedman is a writer and psychotherapist living in Berkeley, California.

STORY OF A GAY WEDDING

by Jeff Logan-Olivas

This is the story of how two men, one Buddhist and one Catholic, fell in love and got married. I am one of the two main characters. I recount the tale because I believe that the most important thing I can do to promote justice for gay and lesbian people is to celebrate my story as a gay man.

I met Rich in March 1991 at a country/western dance bar here in Denver. I was about to turn 30 and I had decided that one thing I really wanted was to find a permanent partner. Rich and I began dating, intermittently at first, then more frequently as we became increasingly attracted to one another. I really enjoyed his company. He is handsome, bright, sensitive and a great cook. He is deeply spiritual and engaged in right livelihood — a Catholic ex-seminarian and social worker running a program to help single parents return to school. He also freely accommodates my Dharma study and practice.

The guy I dated before Rich worked at a nuclear bomb factory, and most of the gay men I meet are so wounded by Christian homophobia that any hint of religion disgusts them. Rich was a breath of fresh air. We fell in love and moved in together.

To our delight, we found that we made good roommates as well as good lovers. As our relationship grew, the issue of marriage emerged for us. We both place a premium on commitment, and a public acknowledgment of our love seemed a fitting way to affirm our intention to build a life together.

Marriage is not easy for two people of the same sex to contemplate. There are no accepted traditions and none of the social support or legal benefits that are extended to heterosexuals. Thinking about married life also took a revision of my understanding of Dharma practice. I had to redefine myself as a householder practitioner rather than a solitary one. As far as Rich was concerned, he was ready to get married and the idea grew on us rapidly.

Still, I felt that I should consult with a Dharma master before making a life-long commitment to anything, so I arranged an appointment with my most recent teacher, Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche.

I told him that I was planning to marry and that I felt I should seek advice. He asked me why I was afraid of getting married, something I hadn't yet admitted, and proceeded to instruct me on incorporating my relationship into my practice. He impressed me by using gender-neutral terms when referring to my prospective spouse, and since the teaching he gave could be applied to any two mates, regardless of sex, I didn't mention that we are a same-sex couple.

Then near the end of our session, he said something about my "wife." I promptly informed him that I am gay and that my partner is a man. Very humbly, but without missing a beat, he said, "I apologize for assuming your partner is a woman. I shouldn't have done that."

I'm glad I spoke up. Rinpoche was able to speak directly to my own concerns at that point and he skillfully addressed some issues specific to gay couples. It was a very meaningful event for me and his words have helped me in deepening my relationship with Rich. And perhaps I was able to offer a small lesson to the teacher too.

The absence of a prefabricated format for gay weddings was liberating. We

were completely free to exercise our creativity in designing a ceremony that would reflect our unique relationship. At first, I envisioned a very small, private affair with only parents and a few hand-picked friends present. Rich said, "Jeff, I'm Hispanic and Hispanics don't have small, private weddings." He then described his idea of our ceremony: a mammoth, bacchanalian celebration with a live band and hundreds of people singing, dancing and drinking all night. Fortunately, we were able to compromise on something in-between that reflected both Anglo and Hispanic cultures.

We also wanted the service to express our different spiritual traditions. We decided that, instead of one



Jeff and Rich Logan-Olivas

minister, we needed three: a Buddhist, a Catholic, and someone to represent a unifying element.

We began to tell others of our plans. While our relationship was applauded by our lesbian and gay friends, there is also considerable bias in the gay and lesbian community against "aping heterosexual customs." This is an attitude I can understand. For years I believed that weddings are merely a way for straight people to flaunt their sexuality. I'm not as bitter these days.

There were varying degrees of acceptance among the heterosexuals we know. Many heartily congratulated us. Others were ambivalent. A colleague of Rich's couldn't bring herself to acknowledge our wedding, but evidently felt compelled to send an expensive gift anyway. It arrived with a card that didn't mention my existence and artfully dodged the occasion requiring tribute. Such is the power of social obligation.

Next, we had to tell our parents, especially since we were going to request that they give us money. I had informed my own parents about my sexual orientation as a teenager. They took it hard but reached out for support and found it in a group known as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Since then, Mom and Dad have become activists in their own right, and they greeted our wedding plans with joy. They took pleasure in helping with the expenses, and Mom showered us with her motherly advice.

Rich's parents live in rural Colorado. Rich came out to them before he left the seminary three years ago. They are devout Catholics and Republican regulars. I think they must have worked hard to accept their oldest son, and their great love for him is manifested by welcoming me into their lives. They took the news of our planned ceremony stoically. His father did share his concern that we could get arrested for doing this. Rich's grandmother, with whom he had not previously discussed his sexual orientation, was completely unfazed. Her only concern was whether or not a Catholic priest would be performing the service.

Rich comes from a very large, very close family, and he took the opportunity of our upcoming ceremony to write an open letter informing his many relations of his intention to marry a man. He sent it to 35 family members and explicitly requested that they respond. Many didn't respond at all, but I was surprised with how many called or sent letters of support. A few said that, while they love Richard, they cannot accept his orientation or his relationship.

We sent out invitations to everyone in our address books (about 350 people), so the first task was to secure a facility big enough for a large wedding party.

We wanted a "sacred space." We also felt that a Christian church, rather than a temple or a meditation hall, might make some of the family more comfortable. There is only so much that some people can take. The church that my parents and I attended while I was growing up and where I was active until a few years ago — a Congregational church with a progressive reputation — refused to give us space for such a ceremony. The Board of Deacons decided that the church was not "ready" for a gay wedding. So we turned to the yellow pages.

The Catholic churches were off-limits. The pastor at the Anglican church in our neighborhood said their space was for use by church members only, although I doubted the truthfulness of this. The more liberal Congregational churches were willing, but the spaces were not big enough for the ceremony we planned. We settled on the big Unitarian church downtown; however,

the minister made it clear that she wanted to be part of the service. She seemed like a nice person and, at this point, we had become very flexible. She was open to including Buddhist and Catholic elements and agreed to share the stage with other clergy.

We also sent out an engagement announcement to the newspapers. Only the gay media ran it, but we started getting a lot of crank calls. Then someone sent us an anonymous letter begging us to refrain from this sinful behavior and enclosed anti-gay religious tracts. We began to wonder if we might have protesters at the church on the wedding day.

We then went to register our china and flatware patterns at a local retail chain. The computerized bridal registry wouldn't accept a record with two grooms and no bride. It would accept one groom and no bride (go figure), so two records were created, one for each of us. The shock of the sales staff as we requested inclusion in the registry was memorable, as were the reactions of clerks at the jewelry stores where we shopped for matching rings.

The day before the wedding, Rich and I went to City Hall to see about getting a marriage license. We knew beforehand that we would probably be turned away, but we wanted to let someone official know that gay men have committed relationships too. We didn't expect the run-around we got. No one knew what to do with us except the city attorney who was called in to deal with our request for a written rejection notice. He proceeded to insult us in front of the clerks, refusing to talk to us directly. He didn't give us the written notice we requested and wouldn't even give us his name.

Indignantly, we marched up to the mayor's office to

We went to register our china and flatware patterns at a local retail chain, but the computerized bridal registry wouldn't accept a record with two grooms and no bride.

bitch about the shabby treatment we had received. We were civil but firm. The mayor was not in, but a lot of people in business suits hemmed and hawed and wrung their hands about our complaint. Eventually, another city attorney was sent out to talk to us. This guy had an earring and a feminine demeanor. He sympathetically expressed his regret about our mistreatment and about how we couldn't get a license, which is all we really expected anyway.

Finally the wedding day arrived. The weather was perfect and the ceremony itself was beautiful. A drag queen friend of ours designed the decor, so you know it was fabulous. The grooms, fathers and male attendants wore traditional black tuxedos, with Rich's party in aqua bow ties and cummerbunds and mine in lilac. The mothers and female attendants were in coordinated formal dresses. We did lilac and aqua balloons instead of flowers, and the reception hall was strewn with ribbons and sparkles.

The vows were conducted by the Unitarian minister and witnessed by the 250 guests present. We were pronounced "life partners." The Buddhist portion was led by Dr. Judith Simmer-Brown, who served as my student advisor while I studied Dharma at the Naropa Institute in Boulder. It was written by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, my root guru, and involved making offerings to the six paramitas before a Buddhist altar.

The Hispano-Catholic ceremony was directed by a Franciscan priest living with AIDS. He has gotten fairly radical since his diagnosis, but requested his last name not be printed in the program for fear of retaliation by Denver's homophobic archbishop. We knelt and exchanged Buddhist and Christian rosaries while a guitarist sang a traditional Spanish wedding song and our attendants and families came forward to give their blessing. Tears flowed freely as our two grandmothers laid hands on us and blessed the union.

Afterwards, I noticed a subtle but profound change

in how our guests related to us as a couple, especially those who had been ambivalent. Our relationship was made real to them, and they expressed a deep and genuine respect for what we had done. In fact, the wedding was incidental. Our relationship was not created by the ceremony and continues much as it had before we even conceived the idea. The difference is in how we are perceived by those around us. It was the most potent gay political event I have ever been part of, and it was never intended to be so. It was merely the expression of our love for one another shared with the people we know.

I have been involved in the lesbian and gay civil rights movement for over a decade, and I am often shocked by the inflamed emotions and ideological polarization that accompany legislative and electoral brawls. Dharma practice has taught me that anger is the enemy, but some lesbian and gay politicians say we must get in their faces and scream until we get our due.

The middle way for me is to live openly and share myself with others, insisting that my life and my relationship be taken seriously. This is a tall order. The security of the closet is very seductive. A middle way requires that I be at peace with who I am. It necessitates rigorous honesty. It demands that I actively reveal my true nature to friends, colleagues, family, sangha, and teachers. Isn't that part of what Dharma practice is all about anyway?

And, for all those lesbian and gay activists who are building lives together with a significant other, I would also recommend a public marriage, not for political purposes, but as an affirmation of a real relationship. It offers a marvelous opportunity to be visible and is powerful witness to our love and our lives, without even having to raise one's voice. ♦

Jeff Logan-Olivas lives in Denver. He is in a Master's Degree program at the University of Colorado Medical School, and is a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

William Clark,
*The Origin of
Salt Water*



IDENTITY SUFFERING

by Bob Gunn

I am fortunate to be a part of a sangha that has a very strong lesbian/gay presence — Zen Mountain Monastery.

Nonetheless, the question of whether, when, and in what ways to raise specifically gay issues, most especially those relating to my identity as a gay man, remains murky. The problem might be put this way: to the extent that I raise questions, demand a hearing, or suggest a conference for issues that are specifically gay, I raise the specter of separation that runs counter to our Buddhist emphasis on oneness. On the other hand, if I fail to identify myself as gay, and do not raise issues that are intrinsically bound up with my being gay, then I become invisible once again, and feel, *de facto*, back in the closet.

I believe that this apparent problem stems from a failure to fully appreciate the peculiar kind of suffering that comes with being lesbian or gay. It is peculiar because it is quite possible to experience it without showing any external signs of suffering. I would like to call it "identity suffering." One suffers because of who one is, yet this suffering may be completely invisible, unless it is given voice, or one has become gay-identified and experienced some level of overt violation. Most other minorities are more obvious to the outside world. One's race, gender, and socio-economic status are much more apparent than one's sexual orientation. Therefore, if a gay person has not experienced direct, frontal attack, she or he may not feel justified in calling the internal experience a form of suffering. But the many times of failing to speak, to be spontaneous in expressing affection or sexual interest, the internalization of hatred, judgment, disdain, the pervasive shame for merely having feelings, the learned quiescence — these are deadening and deadly to the human spirit.

In such a context, to fault us for wanting to name ourselves as gay/lesbian demonstrates a lack of understanding of the internal gay experience, and abuses the Buddhist idea of oneness.

I could defend the importance of coming out by pointing to the external signs of gay oppression, an oppression which is still insufficiently appreciated by the straight world. But my point is both more modest and more essential. It is that there is a form of *dukkha* [suffering] intrinsic to being gay, and that the essence of this particular form of *dukkha* is that the very victims of it may not feel entitled to compassion for themselves.

Until any of us — gay, straight, male, female, Black, White, Native American, disabled, etc. — identify our own experience of suffering, we will be limited in our ability to be compassionate toward others. It is in the identification of our own suffering — which most of us

spend our lives avoiding and denying — that we learn how we are tied universally to the rest of the human race. Far from setting us apart from others, the realization of our own suffering is the point of entry into the human family.

Denial of our pain is, I believe, the primary basis for separatist attitudes in the gay community. Not admitting our own suffering, we deny our connection to the rest of the human race.

And this is what my Zen training has taught me so far: that I and the rest of humankind are joined by our mutual and varied experiences of suffering. This understanding is a priceless gift, and one that remained an abstraction for me until I acknowledged my own suffering, and saw myself as both needing and deserving compassion. ♦

Bob Gunn is a psychotherapist and writer, and a Doshinji student at Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, New York.

NO ABIDING SELF

by Miriam Queen

At the heart of the Buddhist belief system is the tenet that there is no abiding self. The self is continually going through a process of change, of death, of renewal. Through countless hours of sitting on our cushions, we can observe our thoughts appearing and disappearing. Sometimes they lose their intensity and we are left to rest quietly in our breath. So our meditation gives us a direct experience of no permanent self by showing us the emptiness of our thoughts and feelings.

Yet some of us, namely bisexuals, arrived at the temple gate predisposed to the creed of no fixed identity. For many people, sexual identity is one of the grounding factors in life. Careers may change, and partners may rise and fall, but an identification with a certain gender role and sexual preference is a given, even for the homosexual who discovers his or her sexual preference gradually. There's still a before-coming-out "self," and a post-coming-out "self." But for the bisexual there's no secure ground to plant one's feet on, or as Betsy Rose, a Buddhist herself, sings out in reference to her own sexuality, "The tides are always shifting." So Buddhism is for us an affirmation of a mind-body state that has been misunderstood and condemned by both straight and gay cultures, and has caused us inner conflict. The Buddhist understanding allows us to come to rest on a nameless changing self.

In my male lover's arms, I feel his tight buttocks, his hardness that wants to be inside of me. Waiting, I welcome him. We move together as one body in a wave, to break him/me apart in the roar of a rushing river. At rest I play with the twirls of graying hair on his chest. I'm comforted by his arms holding my breasts,

knowing I carry him to repose.

In my female lover's arms I find rest and nurturance. I've known her breasts since my infancy, and they are reflections of myself. We merge; we know each other's ancient sorrows and matriarchal powers. I possess her mouth, her breath, her desiring for me. I'm the actor, the potent force, the one initiating the melting fusion.

Nothing is solid. On and off my cushion the dreams shift and change: of possessing and being possessed, of lacy shawls and wide leather belts, of being your butch, your femme, your androgynous friend. I imagine my past lives as emperor, concubine, and hermaphrodite.

Who is this being who melts in arms of grace and strength, who prefers both the softness of cheek and the brushing of whiskers, who knows mother and father inside her loins? Many indigenous cultures see androgyny as the mark of the shaman, the healer, and the spirit traveler.

On my cushion, universal energy flows into my body, down my breath channel, to my hara, down into my vulva. This energy is without form, yet taking on one form after another, as this body journeys in a self which is as fluid as the moontides. ♦

Miriam Queen is a BPF member and has been practicing at the Berkeley Zen Center for the past 13 years.



Judy Seikyu Harris, *Bisexuality*

ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER?

by David Schneider

In 1984, the Kahawai Collective — a group working with Aitken Roshi in Hawaii — published an issue of their journal, also called *Kahawai*, which focused on issues of gay/lesbian Buddhist practice. At the time, I was acting as Head Monk of the Hartford Street Zen Center, founded by Issan Dorsey, a gay priest from San Francisco Zen Center. It had begun as the Gay Buddhist Club (informally known as the Posture Queens), but Issan had invited me and other straight people to participate there. So I offered to write a piece for *Kahawai*, about being straight in a predominantly gay sangha.

I sent it off, and heard favorable comments from my editors, and so forgot about it for a while. Then they called, about a typo. A typo?

“Well, actually it’s not exactly a typo. It’s more like a whole word wrong.”

“Which word?”

“You remember where you were saying you were ‘a heterosexual, openly, avidly, probably obviously so?’”

“Uh huh—”

“Well, I don’t exactly know how to say this, but somehow it got in there wrong, and now it says ‘homosexual,’ openly and so on. And, see, the problem

is, we’ve sent out some already to our mailing list.” Then she asked me what I thought we should do.

I told her that if the journals had gone out third class (which they had) then a first-class postcard, mailed soon, might reach readers about the same time. Carefully, I made clear that it didn’t really matter what anyone thought about me, but that the thrust of the piece — the art of the thing — depended on the contrast of me being straight, and them being gay. We left it, I thought, with a card going out to the effect of “Erratum: Page 6, line 24, the third word should read ‘heterosexual.’”

They took it somehow more formally, and more personally. The postcard that actually went out reproduced my full sentence twice: incorrect version first “I myself am a homosexual . . .” then the changed version “I myself am a heterosexual, openly, avidly, etc.” Then finally the little yellow postcard offered profuse apologies to me and to readers for any “inconvenience.”

I learned about this much later.

I learned about it, in fact, as I came into my apartment building one evening just behind my upstairs neighbor and friend, Tony. “Congratulations, David!” he said. He paused with his key in the door. “We got a postcard about you yesterday. Says you’re a heterosexual! I was reading the mail, and I called down the hall to Darlene — I said, ‘Honey, we got a postcard today says David Schneider is a heterosexual.’” ♦

David Schneider is a writer living in San Francisco. He is currently completing a book about Issan Dorsey.

ON FORGIVENESS

by Gavin Harrison

Following is an excerpt from Gavin Harrison's forthcoming book, In the Lap of the Buddha: AIDS, Abuse, and the Awakening of the Heart. The story below is taken from the chapter on forgiveness, where it appears in the context of an in-depth discussion and guided meditation about forgiveness.

Forgiveness can be an important healing force in our lives. But in beginning to consider this question of forgiveness, it is vital to emphasize that I am in no way on any level condoning events that are abusive. How can we say yes to torture, yes to abuse, yes to murder, yes to rape? That would be unthinkable. Rather, forgiveness is a strength and a power and a maturity of heart that can bring profound healing on every level.

My parents were born and grew up in South Africa, both of poor families. When they were married, it was with the mutual understanding that they probably would never have children. So it was a great surprise for them when exactly nine months after they were married, I arrived!

They said to me many times that they were absolutely determined that I would never want for any of the things that they had been deprived of in their youth. When I was young they sent me to an all-boys' boarding school three hundred miles away. For most of the seven years I was there, I was sexually and physically abused by older boys and by one of the masters.

There have been enormous lessons of forgiveness in my life, related to my parents for sending me to that school, and to the older boys and the master for what they did to me there. I now know that much of what has been unworkable in my life has to do with the shadow of those years of abuse. It was during a long meditation retreat that veils lifted, and for the first time I saw objectively the truth of those years. What had happened to me at school was profoundly wrong — I had not known this before.

I felt again the loneliness, the overwhelming friendlessness, and all the terror and shame of that time. It was really difficult. I experienced rage, fear, and a sense of betrayal, all of a magnitude I had never considered possible. These recollections continued for many months.

During this time, a letter arrived from my mother in South Africa. She wrote to me that she didn't understand why I had given up my career as a financial consultant, nor why I was doing intensive meditation practice. She and my father were quite bewildered. She added that, nonetheless, I could be absolutely sure that they loved me and would be there for me in every way possible.

Her loving words cut through my internal storm like a lightning bolt. Reading my mother's letter, I had my first pure experience of forgiveness. It felt wonderfully warm, a great relief. Then my mind came right in and said, "Hmm, now I've forgiven my parents, I can go back to business as usual." I felt quite pleased with myself really.

And of course, the sense of completion that I had in that moment was only relative: I had a great deal more healing to do after that. In fact, the deeper lesson that I learned from my mother's letter was that forgiveness is a process rather than a one-time event. The intention to forgive is of primary importance. It is not always possible for our hearts to forgive everything all at once, but with good intention, much is possible over time.

When the long meditation retreat ended, I decided to return to South Africa. Staying with my parents, I told them everything that had happened at the boarding school. They had no idea I'd been abused, and it was really difficult for them. They both cried deeply. It was wonderful to allow them to share my pain: a barrier that had been between us disappeared. I'd taken refuge in honest communication more deeply than ever before.

Next I went to my old boarding school and met with the headmaster and others who had been there in my years at the school. He leaned back in his chair, pointed to photographs behind him, and said, "Oh, and this is the hockey team and this is the rugby team. Our rugby team is at the top of the league this year..."

I said to him, "Stop. I have come a long way for this moment. I really don't care at all about the sports teams. All I ask of you is that you listen wholeheartedly to what I have to say." And for the next hour I told them everything that had happened. I said that he need have no concern about the accuracy of what I was telling him. I told him about the meditation practice. I said to him that in the process of meditation it is possible to sometimes go back in history to periods that were very difficult, and experience them free of the old fear that had forced us to shut down in protection of ourselves. I told him that my recollection of what had happened to me at the boarding school was clearer to me than the books on his table.

The headmaster and teachers were very uncomfortable with what I told them. They asked me, "Why won't you tell us who did these things to you? Who were the masters? Who were the boys? We shall follow up." I said, "I am not here to blame. I am not here to point fingers. Where were you twenty-five years ago. I've come here now for three reasons. The first reason is to unburden myself. The second is to speak my

truth, as I was unable to do all those years ago. The third is my hope that this will never happen again at the school."

When I left the school I felt deeply happy, unburdened, and much lighter.

As a result of this confrontation, I learned the immeasurable value of simply getting the truth out into the open. It matters far less whether the people involved are present: only that what happened be revealed.

It has been nine years since the abuse memories resurfaced. The emotions stemming from that period of my life are no longer as intense, but my dreams are still populated by characters from those times. I tell myself that this is the way it needs to be for me right now. It is vital to have a long-enduring mind, to approach one's emotional healing with patience.

Some days there is no calm and peace, no patience, nor forgiveness either, but I remind myself again and again that there are no "shoulds" in the healing process; we do not have to reach perfection on schedule.

When I returned to North America, I assembled a great pile of literature about sexual abuse and mailed it off to my old boarding school. Childhood sexual abuse is not discussed as openly in South Africa as it is in the United States, and I wanted to support them in dealing with the issue.

The school has never acknowledged receiving that literature, nor did they contact me again about my visit. Months later I received a copy of the school magazine. There was news, again, of the wonderful victories of the rugby team, but not a word about my visit.

At first I felt hurt and angry, but rather quickly I recalled my own sensations of relief and empowerment at having spoken the truth to those people. Re-grounded, I clearly understood that forgiveness is an act of self-love. It disengages us from somebody else's nightmare. Any effects on the other person or people involved are secondary. Forgiveness is a powerful choice to free ourselves from the repercussions of the past.

Remember when I thought I had forgiven my mother? Recently she came from South Africa to visit me. My father had died shortly before. One afternoon while she was here, I was able to share feelings with her from a very young place, one I'd thought was lost to me. I cried and was very angry. She was shattered, and several times reached out, asking me to stop. She said, "Please forgive me; I am so sorry." I said to her, "This is my time. Please listen," and I continued until I had said everything, and every tear had fallen.

When I had finished and it was her turn to speak, she told me truths of her childhood and her life that I had

not known before. She had never shared these truths with anybody! This seventy-year-old woman had not shared the facts of her very difficult childhood with my father or with any of her friends. When she finished her story, I was deeply touched by her anguish. I appreciated in a whole new way how well she had mothered me. When I reached out to her and we held each other, it was with a feeling of forgiveness and love that went far beyond anything that I had known before.

This was a further lesson: Whenever possible, it is important to open to the pain of those who have hurt us, whether they have done so deliberately or inadvertently.

On a more recent retreat, new and deeper memories of sexual assault surfaced, from the earliest years of my infancy. There have been feelings, strong ones, associated with these new memories of abuse, but there is also a great deal of joy and relinquishment. In fact, the most pervading sensations have been of gratitude and relief. I feel relieved to have the information. And I feel profound gratitude to the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, and to the meditation practice. They taught me to be willing to allow my unfolding to happen in its own true way.

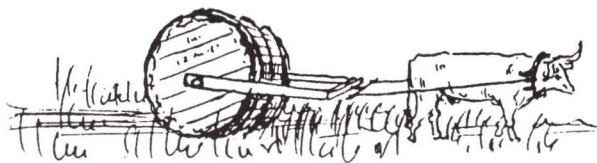
As Chogyam Trungpa said, "If you search for the awakened heart, if you put your hand through your rib cage and feel for it, there is nothing there except tenderness. You feel sore, you feel soft, and if you open your eyes to the rest of the world, you feel a tremendous sadness. Ultimately this kind of sadness does not come because you have been mistreated, because someone has insulted you, or because you feel impoverished. Rather, this experience of sadness is unconditioned. It occurs because your heart is completely exposed. There is no skin and there is no tissue covering it. It is pure raw meat. Even if a tiny mosquito lands on it, you feel so touched. Your experience is open and tender and very personal. And this open fearlessness comes from letting the world touch your heart." ♦

Gavin Harrison is a vipassana teacher who lives in Amherst, Massachusetts. He is gay, HIV+, and is involved in anti-apartheid politics, as well as gay and AIDS civil rights work. His teaching focuses on dealing with life-threatening and chronic health problems.

My mother was shattered, and several times reached out, asking me to stop.

She said, "Please forgive me; I am so sorry." I said to her, "This is my time.

Please listen."



BREAK MY HEART

by Gregg Cassin

My coming-out process, like many people's, was filled with guilt, pain, and fear. I came to California as a young Catholic, dragging with me from the East Coast as much homophobic and religious guilt as you can imagine. Fortunately, I soon met an ex-Jesuit seminarian who worked with me and my guilt.

He said, "You know, this hero of yours, Jesus, identified himself as the Truth and the Life. Being the truth, telling the truth — Truth itself was so important that that's how he identified himself. Now your job is not to be like Jesus, but to be your truth, to be fully who you are, every bit of you, including your gayness."

This was the spiritual turning point in my life. I learned that every aspect of me was important. That who I am, including my gayness, was not only "acceptable" — it was essential. Nothing could be excluded . . . I was essential. And the place of pain in me was transformed into a place of compassion.

We tend to think the world is full of people who are "doing it right." They are happy, with perfect lives, perfect families, perfect health, perfect careers, and so on. Maybe it's true for everyone . . . except us. We live — many of us, both gay and non-gay — feeling wrong, guilty, and separate. We are missing something. The rest of the world is happy and we are in pain. We live our lives alone, as failures separated by our imperfection.

We keep ourselves feeling separate and alone in our suffering. I speak at schools about being HIV+, and about the powerful effect this condition has had on my life and growth as a person. Sometimes I go in thinking I have cornered the market on pain by being HIV+. What I find is that instead of this being the place where I am isolated, my pain and vulnerability is the place we join. Everyone, no matter what age, has their own private pain and darkness. And all of us, in the deepest place in our hearts, desire to have that pain seen, touched and healed, to receive the gift of that pain, to receive its teaching. Our place of brokenness becomes the joiner, the connector. At the end of those talks I am usually encircled by a group of tearful students, each with their pain — a parent's death, the student's own bulimia, a brother's drug addiction — each grateful for a moment that allows their broken hearts to join.

I have come to believe that our job here is to allow our hearts to be broken: through pain, love, having dreams smashed; through allowing everything we think we are to be stripped away. This is where our true freedom lies — this brokenness is where the light comes through.

The question of suffering and death is very important for me as an HIV+ gay man. I was grief-stricken when a friend died from breast cancer. I visited a spiri-

tual teacher and spoke of the incredible openings that occur in me at these times. In meditation I had reflected on the many deaths of friends and lovers, I said, and on the power of death — not only these deaths, but the many small deaths we face in our daily lives.

The message I received was this: It is the dying that is bringing you new life. Die, Gregg, die daily. Die to everything you think you are or need to be — your body, your fear, your disease, all — die to it all. Let your ego be smashed.

Our suffering is the womb of compassion.

A funny relationship we have with death. I'm practicing seeing death as birth. They are the same, yet no one mourns or resists the pain of the birth process, because birth results in a beautiful child. I want my eyes to see death as birth, to see that each death rips open my heart as birth opens the mother's body, to bear fruit, to give life. I want death to be my birth: each death, if I let it, brings new life, new joy, new freedom. Like a woman giving birth, I am changed with each death. I'm never the same. I am new. I am a mother. ♦

Gregg Cassin is the founder and facilitator of The Healing Circle, in San Francisco, a spiritual support group whose practice is the opening of one's heart to forgiveness and compassion. The Circle is Gregg's response to the challenge HIV/AIDS has brought to all our lives.

Gregg also wishes to express his thanks to Jack Kornfield who helped him see that he wasn't just broken — he was letting the light shine through.

The Healing Circle, 60 Brady St. (off of Market near Van Ness). Thursdays, 8 PM. Free parking. Donations accepted! The Healing Circle is sponsoring a weekend retreat in Sonoma this October. Please call for information: 415/863-2334.

For many environmentalists, backpackers, and others who seek to live in harmony with the Earth, the final taboo is homosexuality. Countless times I have observed their openness and compassion for all forms of human nature — both male and female in a diversity of cultural practices — except for homosexuality. "Homosexuality is unnatural" is the most common reason given. However, if they were to observe nature, they would see homosexual behavior in a wide variety of life forms.

But I have been led to an inner center through my disappointments with the external world. When society continually bombards you with messages that you are not a good person because you're gay or lesbian, but you somehow know inside that they're wrong and you're okay, you naturally turn inward to feel, hear, see, and taste the confirming truth of Oneness.

When all is said and done, it turns out that the universe is on our side — whether we're gay, lesbian, or not.

— Gene Okita, Honolulu, Hawaii

NO BOUNDARY, INTIMATE HEART

by Shannon Hickey

Jerry Falwell helped to bring me out of the closet and into the zendo — for that, I will always be deeply grateful to him.

My political, spiritual and sexual awakenings all began in the summer of 1984, when the Moral Majority held its national conference in San Francisco, a week before the Democratic National Convention. I was an undergraduate at U.C. Berkeley and a political reporter for the *Daily Californian*, Berkeley's independent student newspaper. That summer I was assigned to cover the dozens of protest demonstrations that attended Ronald Reagan's re-election bid.

I wanted to cover the Moral Majority conference because I had been a fundamentalist, born-again Christian in high school. I'd been evicted from my church because I'd asked too many questions and resisted the authoritarian leadership. But I understood what made fundamentalists tick, and thought I could write about them in a more sensitive and balanced manner than some of my knee-jerk anti-Falwell colleagues.

The Moral Majority had barricaded itself into a Union Square hotel behind an astounding array of artillery. The place swarmed with riot-gearred foot police, mounted police, hotel security guards with metal detectors, a SWAT team and a bomb squad.

Thus defended, dozens of well-dressed white people proclaimed their love for God — and God's for them — and denounced liberals, feminists and gays. Such "deviants" deserved pity and prayers, they said, if not incarceration.

On the cover of one pamphlet distributed at the conference, a little blonde girl in shorts and ponytails huddled in a corner, screaming. A muscular, hairy arm hovered over her head, wielding an ax. The title blared: "MURDER, VIOLENCE AND HOMOSEXUALITY."

Gay people are "unusually prone to violence," the tract declared. Homosexuality is an "addiction" that "ought to be suppressed with deliberate speed."

I had been a raging homophobe myself. During my Christian days, I'd been taught homosexuality was an "abomination." But my attitude began to change as I developed close friendships with several gay men. I didn't know any lesbians — until I met Janet, a fellow *Daily Cal* reporter who covered the Moral Majority conference with me and co-wrote the article about it. We worked well together and became close friends.

I insisted to myself and to her that I was straight, although I'd been troubled by persistent crushes on women. The idea of actually kissing a woman terrified me.

At the same time, the Moral Majority's ignorance

and bigotry disgusted me.

Many protesters outside the hotel seemed just as certain of their moral righteousness as the fundamentalists they denounced, and spewed just as much hatred. Some taunted police and conference participants; some screamed "go to hell, Falwell" and looked ready to hang him from the nearest lamppost, given a chance.

And the police, acting in the name of law, order and the Moral Majority's First Amendment rights, seemed bent on busting protesters' heads. Without warning, officers on foot, horseback and motorcycles charged anyone who stepped off the sidewalk. A woman in a yellow "Medic" T-shirt was spattered with her own blood — she told me she'd been trying to help two women, whom police had trapped between parked cars and were clubbing from behind. The medic said that as she tried to get the officers' badge numbers, "suddenly I felt a crack on the back of my head." A mounted officer had opened a three-inch gash with a truncheon.

It was war: people on every side contributed to the emotional and physical violence. I couldn't take any side; I retreated to a hotel bathroom and wept.

I had tentatively begun exploring Buddhism that year, and the following weekend I joined a one-day sitting at Berkeley Zen Center, led by Dainin Katagiri-roshi.

I went to Katagiri-roshi in tears, unable to make sense of the violence I'd witnessed. Gently he observed that people become angry and violent when they feel threatened. The Moral Majority felt threatened by liberals, feminists and gays; the police felt threatened by a large, angry crowd of protesters; the crowd felt threatened by the Moral Majority's prejudice and by police uniforms, weapons and force.

Katagiri-roshi described a demonstration he'd attended, where people yelled and screamed for peace, but seemed to have no idea what peace really meant. To create peace we must be peaceful, he said; we must respond to anger and violence with compassion; we must "light one candle at a time."

A few weeks later I decided to spend the winter at Green Gulch Farm, a Zen community near San Francisco, to explore what Katagiri-roshi had told me. Three days before I went, Janet spent the night with me, and suddenly I had another huge set of questions and feelings to ponder.

I was terrified of the label "lesbian," though I felt a profound peace and contentment in Janet's arms. Because I sat a lot of zazen at Green Gulch and only saw Janet on weekends, I had plenty of time and space to do my freaking out. I needed that, because I struggled mightily with my tangle of emotions.

I asked my friend Sallie, a crisis counselor and a les-

bian, to visit and help me sort through my confusion and fears. Minutes before she arrived, I fell and tore the ligaments in my ankle. But I was so desperate to talk to her that I refused to see a doctor until after we were done. So I lay in the dirt where I'd fallen, my foot propped in a bowl of ice, and Sallie sat beside me on an overturned bucket.

"Love doesn't know gender," she told me; "it's wonderful just to be intimate with another person." I didn't have to chain myself to a label for the rest of my life, she said. I could look at it as an exciting exploration, a way of opening doors, rather than closing them. Thus reassured, I allowed myself to be taken to a hospital. Janet and I continued as lovers for almost three years. After having worked out various conflicts, we now have a warm friendship.

During that winter at Green Gulch I also continued grappling with my questions about politics, religion and violence. I experienced an epiphany one afternoon, near the end of an all-day sitting. In my mind appeared a riot-gearred police officer, whom I'd encountered outside the Moral Majority conference. His face was stony and hostile; he gripped his club in both hands and threatened to strike me if I stepped off the curb. He seemed the antithesis of me, of everything I believed was right and good. Then, for an instant, my conceptions about the man cracked open and I no longer saw him as a distinct "other," separate from me. I saw that he and I and Jerry Falwell and the angry demonstrators and the zen students sitting silently around me were interwoven in an infinite web of cause and effect. I would not be sitting in that zendo that afternoon, with my particular collection of thoughts and feelings, if I had not encountered each of those "others" in precisely the ways I had. "I" and the "others" were not separate at all; we existed in relation to one another and were deeply interdependent.

Over the years since then, that moment of understanding has helped me to make peace not just with "other" people, but with the warring factions inside my own body. The conflicts I witnessed at the Moral Majority conference mirrored my own internal conflicts. At the conference, everywhere I turned I had looked at a faction and told myself, "I'm not like that, or that, or that." Internally, I had been looking at parts of myself I could not accept—the lesbian, the homophobe, the Christian, the Buddhist—and telling myself "I'm not that."

Katagiri said that to create peace, we must first expand our understanding to include those we see as "other." Politically, this means not perpetuating an "Us

vs. Them" mentality, and not hating those who do. Personally, it means making peace with myself by accepting all of my sexual, political and spiritual aspects.

Over time, I've seen how the homophobic Christian and the lesbian Buddhist in me fit together. When I was young, Christianity and heterosexuality were my only models for expressing spirituality and sexuality. I don't regret my experiences, painful though some were; they are important parts of my life. But as I got older, my sense of possibility expanded. Buddha's teachings about suffering resonate more closely with my own experience than Christian concepts of sin and salvation, which I had been asked to accept on faith. Loving and being intimate with women I find more satisfying than my traditional heterosexual role. So I stopped trying to squeeze myself into molds that didn't fit me and made choices that felt more congruent with my own deepest heart.

I'm now thoroughly "out of the closet" and am active in gay professional and political organizations. For me, the term "lesbian" describes so much more than my sexual orientation toward women — it reflects my political orientation toward feminism and my affiliation with a subculture that loves women in a multitude of ways, and

that generally values equality, inclusiveness, self-reliance and emotional support. "Buddhist" means my commitment to exploring how I create or relieve suffering for myself or others, how my conduct affects others and theirs affects me. My "lesbian," "feminist" and "Buddhist" approaches to life do not imply a rejection of men or heterosexuality or Christianity, but an embrace of women, of Buddha/Dharma/Sangha, of a vision of society free of misogyny and other hatreds.

My intimate relationships with women have also provided some of my deepest opportunities for spiritual practice, for seeing and learning to drop the habits of mind that hinder intimacy. They've required a sometimes-painful honesty — with myself and my partners. They've forced me to take responsibility for tending my well-being, instead of blaming my suffering on someone or something "out there."

The Buddhist name I received in 1988 means "no boundary, intimate heart." It's a constant reminder of interdependence and the need to make peace by including and integrating all the "selves" and "others" who appear at first to be so alien and unacceptable.

Nine bows to you, Falwell-Bodhisattva. ♦

Shannon Hickey is a writer, editor and writing instructor who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is a founding director of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

I wanted to cover the Moral Majority conference because I had been a fundamentalist, born-again Christian in high school.

COMING OUT: Illusions of Separateness

by Dan Blue

Recently I attended a memorial service for a friend who worked in the AIDS field and who himself died of the disease. John's family planned and largely conducted the ceremony, and — as they plainly adored their brother and son — everything was done with respect and care. As the rites wore on, however, I began to feel uncomfortable. Not once among the eulogies and remembrances was it mentioned that John was gay.

Afterwards when time was allowed for friends to speak, a woman rose and described John's involvement with the gay community and the roles he played there. I now heard the word I had been waiting for, but I felt almost as uneasy. At some level her speech sounded like the laying of a claim, the appropriation of John's life for "our" side, a flag planted on his grave.

My uneasiness at the service reflected a deeper ambivalence over coming out. Partly this stems from internalized homophobia. I grew up in this culture; I absorbed the standard prejudices about being gay. Some part of me still wants to deny that I am one of "those people," and it will probably always be wrenching for me to make the necessary self-disclosure. I also find the dichotomy "gay/straight" misleading and false, an unfortunate legacy from nineteenth-century theorists.

More recently this uncertainty has been reinforced by Buddhist practice. We all know there is no self. Who then am I when I'm gay? Doesn't this self-enrollment in a group promote exclusionary and polarizing attitudes ("us" vs. "them"), much as it did at John's memorial? Just writing about it, I feel my hackles rise. Certainly when I disclose, my listener becomes "the other," and I either swell with self-righteous outrage, or hunker down to await the homophobic thunderbolt. Neither response speaks well for my detachment or sense of solidarity and compassion.

As it happens, I have come out to many people over the years, most of them non-Buddhists, and the majority have been only too happy to confirm my self-doubts. "Why tell me something so personal?" they say. "What makes you think I want to know?" Homosexuality has gone from "the love that dare not speak its name" to "the love that won't shut up," and I have to ask myself: Why do I feel compelled to speak?

If I had to give a single answer, I would respond, "Because I feel I'm in a false position. To be silent is to lie." I have the sense that most people want to believe I'm straight and will assume so unless I inform them. Many consider being gay shameful, and they think

they're doing me a courtesy. The flip side, of course, is that if I'm silent, I acquiesce, affirming gay as bad. This, for me, is a lie; so as gracefully as I can I correct them.

The most puzzling part of the response I get from people is the assumption that sexuality is personal. If that is the case, why are there laws in every state forbidding homosexuals to marry? In many we are not even allowed to adopt or serve as foster parents. We are also barred from the military (not to mention the Boy Scouts), and we find ourselves besieged by groups who would limit us further, forbidding us employment in a variety of fields and defending efforts to restrict us in housing. There are states (Georgia most notoriously) where to engage in homosexual acts could land me in jail. Apparently our sexuality is a very public matter indeed. Coming out is not a personal but a political act. We publicly put our existence on the line.

Of course, we lesbians and gays can and do operate in all these states and institutions, but we get no credit because by law we're not supposed to be there. Apparently many Americans think that 10% of the population (the standard estimate of our numbers) somehow disappears into the hair salons (gay males at least; I don't know where lesbians are supposed to disappear to), which means they don't have to account for us. That we are everywhere, that we are parents, children, soldiers, teachers, street people, salespeople and priests seems to enter no one's mind and won't unless the sons, daughters, soldiers, priests so identify themselves and correct the illusion.

This returns me to my earlier dilemma. We are everywhere. We are mainstream America. Though efforts are at work to define a gay sensibility, individually we are products of and largely indistinguishable from the cultural milieu of straights. It is this very normalcy (aided by considerable denial) which enables us to be invisible. We aren't different, until we announce this one little secret; then the exclusionary machinery slams into place, and we learn that in the eyes of others at least we are very different indeed and likely to be made to pay.

But why? What social function does this repression — and all of the hatred — serve? Perhaps the very inadmissibility of gayness is its point.

One theory sees homophobia as an instrument used to blackmail straights. Strong men blanch when their masculinity is questioned, and they can become obligingly docile to avoid it. When, by this theory, the media link "the wimp factor" with George Bush, they're really saying, "Kick ass, George, or we'll call

you queer." To be called "queer" is such a fearsome insult (and here sexism rears its head, for to be called queer is to be labeled "woman"), that many men knuckle under and do the macho thing (mask their feelings, go to war), regardless of what they believe personally. This has nothing to do with us gays. We don't even have to exist. The designated targets are insecure, and therefore pliable, straight males.

Of course homophobia has many causes, many functions; but if this theory has any truth, we lesbians and gays do us all a service by braving the insults and so defusing their explosiveness. Every time I say I'm gay, the word loses a little of its potency. I can relax. It's not so bad.

The onus now shifts to the person I've confessed to. He or she now has to face whether they find the word so horrible. This of course is a major reason "nobody wants to know." It puts them on the spot. Issues they've never had to face lumber ominously into view.

Ultimately we both are trapped. "Gayness" is a social construct, a catchword for a theory of sexuality which supposes that "some are/some aren't" and has little to do with either of us. I am not gay; I just happen to be a man who loves men. I didn't invent this dichotomy of "us" against "them," any more than did my straight friends who theoretically are on the other side. Perhaps together we can use the Buddhist doctrine of no-self to undermine its social and intellectual undertow. Gay/Straight supposes a unity of mind (not to mention of body), which reflection and insight can reveal as spurious. No words apply ultimately to the subtleties of sexual leanings and certainly no words so coarse as these.

Meanwhile, we're stuck with what we have. If I say I'm gay, I'm affirming a theoretical absurdity. But if I'm silent, the ruling paradigm (straight, white, male) speaks in my place, affirming that same absurdity in a way more galling to my sense of truth. I say, "I'm gay," as a defensive move in a game: to block the contrary move of people who will assume I'm straight. Both moves are lies, but the lies are of different orders.

I have come a long way from my friend's services, but the excursion may serve as context. At John's memorial I had little sense of consolation or relief. The man I knew had been kidnapped and replaced with an asexual facsimile who tacitly would pass for straight. I'm sure his family acted as best they knew how. They hadn't known their son as gay, so they didn't foreground his sexuality. I, on the other hand, grimly aware of the implicit claims of silence, vowed to myself, "I must not let my funeral be planned by straights." This was bitterness, attachment, rage. It was also an accurate recognition of the system in which I live. Identity may be illusory, but if I don't assert one, others will do it for me. John's was usurped on his grave. ♦

Dan Blue is a fledgling Buddhist who currently sits with Harbor Sangha in San Francisco. He is interested in minority struggles of all kinds.

HOMOS, HETS AND BUDDHS

by Joan Ward

I

Being queer and Buddhist works. I eased into both identities simultaneously. Lucky for me, for my friends and family. I was old enough to not be in their faces about the righteousness of my conversions.

It took me two years to come out to myself. It took me ten years to sit in a chair instead of forcing my body into zafu contortions.

II

I have a good friend who is a Real Lesbian. She's been a lesbian forever, even when it was dangerous. Next to her, I am a flimsy lesbian.

I don't know anyone who is a Real Buddhist. All my Buddhist friends are hopelessly flexible and many are part something else — part Jewish, part Christian, part earth worshippers.

As for me, I consider myself a fake. Neither Real Lesbian nor Real Buddhist, but please don't tell anyone. We'll call it a harmless secret, nothing to be ashamed of, not at all like being a fake feminist, I tell myself, ready to convert back at a moment's notice to the patriarchy.

I'm too relaxed about these identities I conveniently use to be certain of life-long conversion. What if my lover died — would I turn to men? What if I met the Buddha on the road — would I kill her?

III

I age and lose the sharpness of mind, body, and definitions. In my twenties, I demanded certainty to counteract confusion. Now, in mid-life, my definitions are in disarray once again. Is this yet another identity crisis? Or could it be freedom? ♦

Joan Ward is a BPF member currently living in Marin County, California. She is interested in co-housing, and in definitions.

STAYING ALIVE

*Keep breathing.
Don't buy a gun.*

—Cate Gable

WHO'S LONELIER THAN A GAY TEENAGER?

by Daniel Boutemy Fernandez

In July of 1992 I attended the BPF Summer Institute on Engaged Buddhism, and participated in the gay men's group. Eight of us met together every afternoon for a week. For most of us in this group, it was our first experience of being visible as gay men in a larger and very supportive, predominantly heterosexual context. It was a welcome opportunity to explore the relationship between our homosexuality and our spiritual lives, and between ourselves and the sangha as a whole. Along with our social visibility, new aspects of our identities were able to emerge. I myself discovered a sense of wholeness and personal integration that continues to be empowering.

Much of the unfolding story was of pain, as we brought to light a common pattern of abuse we had experienced growing up. Our woundedness bound us together with increasing intimacy as we shared our stories and discovered how our particular pain made us accessible to the message of the dharma. We found in ourselves a wealth of spiritual resources that makes this connection natural for us. We came to feel that out of our understanding as gay men we can make an important contribution to the larger sangha. In this article I'd like to share some of the thoughts and insights that came out of that small group.

With surprise and increasing anger one of the painful conclusions we came to was that the homosexual child in our culture is almost always an abused child.

Our society does not normally think of children as being gay. Parents, teachers and pastors routinely treat all children as budding heterosexuals and create socialization programs for children on that assumption. Yet most gays and lesbians are aware of their sexuality by the time they are teenagers, and many (like myself) have memories of homosexual affect going back to infancy. Rare is the adult who recognizes the signs; rarer still is the adult who can offer a benign response. Most parents react with pressure for gender-conforming behavior; some go as far as physical abuse. A few, like my own mother, take a hands-off approach — "leave the kid alone, don't put any trips on him." This is a fairly enlightened attitude, but it does nothing to protect the child from the massive psychosocial damage he is about to experience in school and society.

Is there anyone who has any ideas about how to raise such a child? Or if we are hesitant to make determinations about the direction of a child's psychosexual development, is there a way to protect the child's freedom to develop naturally, free of pressure and the fear of abuse?

One member of the group recalled being fourteen

years old and wandering through New York's Central Park, desperately hoping some older man would pick him up. He did so not just to take care of his sexual needs, but so that he could spend time with someone who would understand him and love him as he really was, who would give him the fathering he couldn't get at home, who would be the model he could not find in his teachers.

For all of us in the group, the lack of social acceptance was at least as painful as the unavailability of sexual experience. As for myself, from the age of 13 to 18 I was deeply depressed and often suicidal. This constant sadness did not lift until I was free to leave home at 18 and find gay society.

It is not surprising then that a gay youth will often take up with an older man who fills the role of friend, father, and often lover as well. Many people, both straight and queer, feel uncomfortable with this blending of parenting roles and sexuality, and it is in fact a contested issue these days in the gay/lesbian/bi community. But until our society changes its attitudes toward teen sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular, this pattern will remain one of the principal solutions to the grief and loneliness most gay teenagers live with.

We need to beware of a dangerous heterosexist assumption: that developmental needs are the same for homosexual as for heterosexual children. I am unaware of any serious research that addresses the question of what is normative for a child who is developing as a gay person.

Adolescence is a time when young people are struggling to find their social and sexual identity, seeking their reflections in the eyes of their peers. Unless a gay teenager has a circle of accepting friends (which is unlikely, and at best very small), he must purchase friendship with the coin of dishonesty, all the while believing that if his friends knew the truth he would be hated. Many of us therefore grow up with a double self-hatred, consisting of the terrible things we were taught to believe about ourselves (what choice is there? where are the queer-positive models in history books, pop songs, television and movies?), and the self-loathing that comes from living a lie. The social isolation is profound. The person hidden behind the constructed persona is invisible to peers, family and teachers. And when we are really successful, we are invisible even to ourselves.

The fatigue of chronic depression during our youthful years is enough to make anyone feel old before his time, and so much internalized hateful imagery leaves many of us feeling ugly and awkward as adults, even

when we clearly are not.

How does a boy know he has "become a man"? The phrase itself seems saturated with straight men's sexuality. The message that we gay men get from our fathers and male society as a whole is that we have failed to become true men.

Having suffered from a lack of good parenting ourselves (and I am referring to the collective adult responsibility for parenting), we in the queer community are becoming increasingly aware of our role as parents. We do have children, all of us. Who else is going to take care of all the queer kids who arrive daily in all our major urban centers? Many are runaways, whose parents have rejected them. Many end up on the streets, selling their ass to survive. And even those who don't are AIDS bait, even the ones from "nice" middle-class homes. They may have learned about the value of higher education, but they probably didn't learn about sex-positive STD prevention, because our society refuses to acknowledge teenagers' sexuality. It seems we love our ideologies more than our kids — but that's nothing new, we've been sending them to die in wars since forever.

Our group had a vision of a kind of lesbian/gay big sisters and brothers organization. We also talked about group homes for gay kids, gay foster parenting for gay kids, and more funding for queer youth social centers. More spaces need to be provided where these kids can meet caring role models, listening elders, and their own peers. We are a minority born outside our own community, isolated from birth, raised by the "enemy," among whom we must survive by our own wits, often believing we are alone. We need the clinical and therapeutic advocates from our own community to counsel kids in the school system and help them enter into their own peer community.

So far I have dwelt only on the cost of our difference, but lesbian and gay young people need to be made aware of the peculiar gifts that life has entrusted to them. At a young age most queer kids develop an unusual degree of psychological insight. The person and the persona are distinguished precociously. The lack of social "mirrors" often leaves a gay person without a clear sense of identity. The gay teenager learns to change like a chameleon in changing circumstances. This was recognized at once in the gay men's group as a link between our gayness and our Buddhism. I have never met a gay Buddhist who did not feel naturally comfortable with the teaching of no-self. We also agreed that it is far easier to deconstruct an intentionally architected self-concept than one you internalized on faith from society. This has made us skillful actors —

we've been doing it all our lives. The combination of fluid persona and sense of no-self also leaves us very open to religious experience and the language of altered states.

We learned at an early age to develop our communication skills for self-defense. (Was it a coincidence that every man in our group spoke at least two languages, and some three or four?) Our fear of being ugly has made us sensitive to beauty; as a community, we have always been known for our concern for aesthetics. Our experience of isolation has made friendship of primary importance to us, and that is how we build our families. And we do have family values of our own to teach: What else lies behind our extraordinary support, organizing and solidarity around the AIDS crisis?

Acting, precocious social and self-awareness, communications skills, fascination with religious experience, aesthetic sensitivity and community orientation: Is it any wonder we have been so disproportionately represented

in music, literature and art? Or that we have packed the ranks of priests and priestesses, monks and nuns, shamans and bards for so many centuries and in so many cultures?

We must work for the day when queer kids will not only have the parenting and social resources they desperately need, but will also learn pride in their heritage and awareness of their creative and spiritual resources. The current waste of human potential is tragic, not only in young lives and in suffering, but in creative resources lost to society as a whole, as our energy is sapped by the struggle for survival and healing.

The gay and lesbian community has a unique contribution to make to the emerging discourse on social difference — we, who are so unacceptably different from you and yet found amongst all of you, despite race or nation.

Our men's group continues to meet. Our commitment rests on the discovery of a group mind in which each one of us is more than we could have been alone. Together we are finding the acceptance, the healing, and the vision that has been so hard to come by in the society at large.

Daniel Boutemy Fernandez has been doing vipassana practice for twenty years. He is currently wanting to relocate to San Francisco, and is looking for housing and employment.

[Readers might like to look up an excellent and relevant article in the East Bay Express, in June 1992, on "Gay Teenagers." -Ed.]

We do have children, all of us. Who else is going to take care of all the queer kids who arrive daily in all our major urban centers?

DEAR SISTERS AND BROTHERS

by Cary Warner

Lesbian and Buddhist are the indivisible ground of my being, with which I enjoy this precious human form, grasp at the world, let go of the world. I've been out as long as I've been a lesbian, and that has been crucial to who I am, and has decisively affected my choices about work, friends, places to live.

The good news I have to report is that I have not had serious problems practicing Zen in America as an out lesbian. I have been fortunate in my teachers, especially my two masters, Dainin Katagiri Roshi and Tozen Akiyama Sensei, and I am deeply grateful for the openness and trust they have shown me. I have felt fortunate in my sanghas as well, most notably my principal practice sanghas, the Minnesota and Milwaukee Zen Centers. They have accepted me rather well, which loosely translates to being offered the gamut of Zen center jobs, from *ino* [zendo manager] to dishwasher and vice president — I have served my sanghas like everyone else.

There have also been times when I have been isolated by incomprehension, as when there was barely a ripple of response from my straight world when I was devastated by the death of the gay man who was at the heart of my life, my most dearly beloved friend of twenty years. It wasn't meanness; my situation just didn't fit their categories of friendship, and they didn't question their assumptions. It makes me wonder how the millions of gays and lesbians who are compelled by circumstance to remain hidden can bear the walls of silence.

At times it has been quite uncomfortable to be surrounded by straight people. The eyes that don't meet mine, the person who avoids me — I have no way of knowing whether it's due to my abundant personal failings or my being a lesbian. Generally, only the sangha members I am friendly with are open enough to say things like, "Cary, one of the things I like about you is that you're not one of those flag-wavers." That remark made me want to unfurl a *Dykes Unite!* banner and sound the trumpets. Or, "Cary, my marriage is such a mess, and there aren't any good role models for successful relationships around here." Since this woman was well acquainted with Joni, my partner of over two decades, and is around us enough to know that we love each other deeply, and she was in fact at that moment in my house where she couldn't forget my intimate coupledness, I looked at her a little bug-eyed and asked, "What about us, Joni and me?" "Oh, that's different." And that was that. Yes, it is different, but mightn't it be worthwhile to find out in what ways? Would my being a

lesbian make it harder for a heterosexual to relate to me as a teacher? If so, isn't it strange that I should accept a teacher both heterosexual and male?

So that's some of the bad news, that implicit homophobic attitudes are probably rampant. I know I have attitudes, too — racial, class and cultural biases, and that mindful awareness of them is my responsibility. I can't let go of them otherwise. None of us can.

Even people who are supportive of gays and lesbians often think we have nearly full civil rights, while many others think we are on the verge of having far too much special protection. Still others, of course, just think we are immoral and repulsive. Actually, the civil rights of gays and lesbians are probably more severely circumscribed than those of any other non-incarcerated group in this country except non-citizen immigrants. In most places it's illegal to be me, while it's legal to take away my job, my apartment, and maybe my children because of my sexuality. We gays and lesbians have more social and economic opportunity than do people of color, but mostly because we can pass more successfully. Living in the closet, it's called.

Our fragile and limited civil legitimacy can be wiped out at any time. Even now, in two of the few states where we have been granted freedom from harassment and harm, Oregon and Colorado, there are counter-initiatives on the ballot to rescind those hard-won statutes — not only to repeal their gay rights laws, but to forbid any possibility of ever granting us civil protection. We remain a likely target should our U.S. society become so stressed that it seeks a scapegoat.

I am concerned that the U.S. sangha seems unaware of its assumptions and biases, unaware of the prejudiced attitudes visited on all the underrepresented minorities and on women, unaware of the limited perspective one has as a part of the majority.

Being a lesbian has also been a great opportunity for me. It is a two-edged sword, slashing one way and strewing difficulties in my path, and the other way providing great openings for me to wake up. I am very aware of the gift provided me, although I don't always live up to it. This gift is the opportunity to be conscious: my situation pushes me to look at my world, at my actions, at your actions; it needles me to stay aware of oppression, of all of our oppressions; it asks me to honor the body, my body and yours, and not to divorce it from the mind. Denied some social supports, I am also not constrained by certain social assumptions and roles, and am thus allowed to invent my life and my love more freely.

So let us seek diversity and support each others' voices, that we may all be enriched. ♦

Cary Warner is a BPF member who practices in the Soto Zen tradition in the Midwest.

MINDFUL STRUGGLE IN OREGON

by Kuya Minogue

"The State Department of Higher Education and the public schools shall assist in setting a standard for Oregon's youth that recognizes homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism, and masochism as abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse and that these behaviors are to be discouraged and avoided."

— Proposed Amendment to the Oregon Constitution

The Oregon Citizen's Alliance, a right-wing fundamentalist group, has succeeded in placing on the November ballot the above initiative which would change the constitution of Oregon to make it legal to discriminate against gays and lesbians in employment, education, housing and other basic human rights. When a measure proposing similar changes in Springfield Oregon's city charter was passed last spring, I felt compelled to take my zafu out of the zendo and place it on the steps of Springfield City Hall. As a member of the Religious Response Network, an interfaith group formed to oppose the use of religious doctrine to oppress minorities, I participated in a day-long vigil to mourn the passing of this measure.

Two of us climbed the concrete stairs in the predawn light and spread our black zabutons. We bowed to our zafus, turned around and bowed to the stairs below us. We sat crosslegged, straight-backed, eyes barely opened. After about ten minutes, another figure bounded up the stairs — face filled with tears. "I've been crying all night. I'm so glad to have somewhere to go." She calmed down and sat silently with us. Slowly others arrived: a Unitarian minister, a Presbyterian pastor, a Catholic nun, a rabbi.

After speaking as "an engaged lesbian Buddhist" at my first press conference, I marvelled at how fully I had come out — not only as a lesbian, but as a Buddhist. In 1987 I had been refused lodging by the female priest who ran a priory of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (Shasta Abbey). She had said that because I was a lesbian it would be improper for me to spend the night alone on the floor of the zendo. I was enraged, but ultimately suppressed my doubts, thinking that I was creating suffering by being attached to my political views. After all, didn't Dogen say that we must completely relinquish our opinions?

I eventually ended my affiliation with the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, and my partner and I began to train at the Dharma Rain Zen Center in Portland, Oregon. The first time we signed in for a retreat, one of the resident priests, Gyokuko-sensei, told us that she

always offers married couples a choice between sleeping together or apart since some couples like to train together and others like to train alone. We felt grateful that we had been accepted as a lesbian couple in a Zen sangha. Since that time both my partner and I have been ordained as Lay Disciples of Kyogen-sensei, Abbot of the Dharma Rain Zen Center. We feel a deeper belonging there than we have ever felt in any predominantly heterosexual community.

Both Kyogen and Gyokuko have encouraged me to continue my involvement with groups opposing the OCA. While the Dharma Rain Zen Center does not have an engaged Buddhist focus, it seems clear that fighting the OCA falls into the endless task of saving all sentient beings. By joining a Buddhist voice to other religious voices which speak out against persecution, by holding work retreats to collate packets and stuff envelopes, or by participating in the design of interfaith ceremonies, I am able to put my mindfulness training to work for a cause that affects us all.

As the struggle against the OCA becomes statewide, another religious coalition group called People of Faith Against Bigotry is forming. Religious leaders from many faith traditions all over the state are working together to present a unified voice against persecution of gays and lesbians. I am now actively involved in attempting to encourage Oregon Buddhists to participate in this work.

I no longer marvel at my progress in coming out as an "engaged lesbian Buddhist." There isn't time for that. This political/spiritual work has made me forget myself in some small way. It is teaching me to recognize what needs to be done and to do it as mindfully as I can. There is so much to be done. ♦

Kuya Minogue is a resident of the Eugene Zendo and a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. If you want to join her in her struggle against the OCA, she can be reached at (503) 345-0361 or by writing: 3480 Potter Street, Eugene, Oregon 97405.

For further information about People of Faith Against Bigotry, or about supporting the efforts to defeat this constitutional amendment and the Oregon Citizens' Alliance, write Lily Roselyn, P.O. Box 14241, Portland, OR 97214.

IMAGINE

by Al Chase

The following piece is much condensed from a coming-out statement that Al read aloud to his sangha during a sharing circle in January of this year. A copy of the full statement is available on request. Not only did the sangha's support make it possible for Al to take this courageous step, but, according to reports from his fellow sangha members, his doing so opened up the space for other people to share ways in which they also felt bound and silenced by societal expectations around gender and sexuality. This is surely a wonderful example of the meaning of sangha.

In the world of my childhood, the presumption of heterosexuality was universal and absolute. Of course I would have girlfriends, dance with the girls, and all that. But in fact, I began to have very special feelings for a few boys who, I hoped, would become my special friends. I never felt those feelings for girls.

During my adolescence, it gradually became clear to me that my special feelings were opposite from those of everyone else I knew, and everyone else I knew of. I was different, terrifyingly different; it had to do with . . . SEX. I wasn't about to tell anybody, and so I kept my truth, and my terror, hidden.

I kept up an unremitting guard. I chose my words with extreme care. I avoided playfulness, and alcohol, and drugs — any situation that might lead to spontaneous expression.

I avoided gay men at all costs. I didn't want to be identified with them, and I didn't want to be like them. The snatches of derogatory information I had been exposed to assured me that gay men were too disgusting to know. For lack of exposure to real gay men, I maintained my terrible notions of who they were.

I tried my very best to have a successful relationship with a woman, to create a workable life for myself that would fit society's norms. I tried my very best to ignore my real feelings. I was devastated when, in my mid-thirties, my efforts at heterosexual relationship finally ended in clear failure: I couldn't pull it off to lead a normal life. I was alone with my fear.

I drove myself compulsively to excel. I put huge amounts of energy into trying to compensate for being such a terrible person. It never worked. I could never do anything well enough to feel good about myself for more than a fleeting while.

Starting on one particular day, any number of objects — thick trees at the side of the road, bridge abutments, the corner of a brick building, even the support posts in the zendo — daily presented themselves to me as opportunities to kill myself.

I'm not sure just how close I came, or how I was able to change. Our teacher's support was crucial. A few very good friends helped. You, the sangha, helped without knowing what you were helping with. Sitting may have helped, though at the time sitting felt like just the dues I had to pay to get to see the teacher.

Finally, last March, I went to a weekend workshop in San Francisco, knowing that most of the men there would be gay. I spoke with gay men for the first time in my life. I found they were people I respected and liked. On the last afternoon of the workshop, I reached out hesitantly to hold hands in a loving way with another man whom I hoped might become a special friend.

Stephan became a very good friend. His acceptance of me for exactly who I am — all of me — was credible to me in a way that no one else's acceptance had been. Eight months after I met him, early in the morning of a day when I had planned to go visit him, Stephan died of AIDS.

So here I am. At 43, I feel like I'm finally beginning my life. I'm beginning to feel as though I have a right to exist in this world as who I am. I'm beginning to believe that I'm a good person. At last.

In fact, I can see now that I was a good person all along, that it's society's judgment that isn't good. With that, I've discovered in myself a rage that I never knew was there. That rage is justified. I want to learn how to use it for the common good, in a way that doesn't hurt me or anyone else.

For those of you who have children, please imagine what a difference it might make if they knew for sure, right now, that they can be whoever they are, that you would love them just as much if they turned out to be gay. Please say those things to them outright, rather than leaving it to assumption. Surrounded as we are by homophobia and the expectation of heterosexuality, leaving it to assumption doesn't work.

Imagine what it would be like if there were no negative judgment around sexual orientation. A change of heart that could free the world of that judgment would free the world of who knows how many other judgments. Imagine each one of us being able to come out as just who we are, to shake off our fetters and take up our lives, easily, with no fear. Imagine knowing that each one of us could be known right to our very core and still be loved. It's a dream I have. ♦

Al Chase recently moved to San Francisco, where he is experiencing upheaval, discovery and unfolding as he explores the new territory of living as a gay man.

VOICES

Following are some excerpts from the many manuscripts sent to us on the subject of gay/lesbian/ bisexual Buddhism. We greatly regret not having the space to print more of them in full. — Ed

There was a fierce wind at Fire Island that day. The seas were heavy and the surf had cut a sharp trench where it broke against the beach. Nevertheless, it seemed more fitting to pour Robin's remains into the sea than onto the sand. I took off my clothes, carried the box to the water's edge, and slid unsteadily into the surf. I began pouring out what had been Robin into the water. Grit blew back into my eyes and mouth and covered my naked body. A breaker covered me completely, and under water I clawed the rest of the ashes out of the box and let it slip from my hands. In the next wave I washed "him" from my hair and eyes and rinsed "him" out of my mouth. . . .

As of this writing, all of my friends of long standing — over two dozen — have died of AIDS except for three, two of whom are terminal.

I believe that if I had not been gay and had not had to face this epidemic that I would not have heard the dharma. The contrast between the decay and fear caused by the illness on the one hand and the vitality of the response of gay people on the other provides a powerful illustration of the Buddha's teachings. The dharma has come to me through the medium of gay life and the AIDS epidemic.

My Buddhist "faith" is not an unquestioning belief in something, but the resolve to go on with the business of living in a place without maps, with other members of the gay and lesbian community.

— Jack Carroll, New York City

☪ ☪ ☪

I began practicing Zen in 1976 and did not hide that I was lesbian. The following year, I moved into a Zen center on the East Coast, and was devastated to learn third-hand that the Zen master did not approve, that he believed that energy between lovers was supposed to come from "opposite poles," and that energy from the "same poles" was "incorrect." This sounded like some folk belief to me, but I did eventually try to be straight for a year. On a visit to my lesbian friends in California, I saw how much I had become a follower, so much so that I was willing to pretend that I could "decide" not to be lesbian. I left the Zen center and returned to San Francisco, immersing myself in the gay culture where my gayness was not invalidated.

Eight years later, I began practicing again. I was in a solid, deep relationship with the woman I vowed to

spend my life with (we're in our tenth year together), and I was finishing law school. I had much to be grateful for, yet I felt strongly that something was missing. Ironically, the only Zen group here in Tallahassee was affiliated with the head temple I had fled in 1978.

I never have tried to repair the rift I experienced between the Zen master and me, although I'm still hurt that he said what he did. However, I have observed that he — as well as the new teachers in the sangha — is now quite open to gay people, so that even if he retains his former idea, he doesn't let it get in his way. Occasionally, in dharma talks, I say something that indicates I'm gay, like referring to my spouse as "she," to remind myself and my sangha that there's nothing to hide. There are some other lesbians in the sangha here, and I appreciate their presence. My son plays with the children of other sangha members, and my family is never treated as anything other than a true family.

— Ellen Gwynn, Tallahassee, Florida

☪ ☪ ☪

Born white, male and upper middle class, life has been easy. But referred to as homosexual and treated as Other merely because of what I do for sex (despite the fact that I'm different for so many other reasons than simply what I do with my genitals), I glimpse what oppression might feel like for women and children and people of color. . . .

Practicing safe sex brings home the concept of universal responsibility. Every time I use a condom, I'm wearing it for our community — not just the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender community, but the whole planet.

— Mark Matthews, San Francisco, California

☪ ☪ ☪

My father was a violent man who reserved the unkindest epithet in his verbal arsenal for men he hated most: *cocksuckers*. That's what I learned from day one. Yet to me as a gay man, that word signifies an act of tender beauty and love. Can I have the clarity and heart to value this loving act without a trace of unworthiness or shame? The Buddha calls me to do so. We've all got our Dharma work cut out for us here.

— Eric Kolvig, vipassana teacher, Leverett, Massachusetts

☪ ☪ ☪

I was led to Buddhism through my search for an answer to the intense pain I was experiencing. At times I was so depressed I felt suicidal. I had internalized my inability to have heterosexual relationships as a personal failure. In searching for answers I became politically active as a Marxist and later as a feminist. I also trained

with a Medicine Prayer Woman for a couple of years. While I felt much more grounded through these activities, I was still unable to understand the deep pain I continued to experience.

Then a friend suggested I go to a meditation retreat given by Ruth Denison in Southern California. I balked: I could hardly sit still for five minutes. How could I meditate for five days? But my friend offered to pay for me, so I went. To say those first few days were hell is an understatement. Yet against all odds a connection happened. It was the first time I heard someone talk about a spiritual practice in which suffering was fully acknowledged. I had previously felt quite alienated by spiritual practices, because so many of them spoke about love and ignored the pain I was experiencing. Here was a practice that offered a way to work with my suffering, not through repression, but through honoring all parts of myself.

— *Arinna Weisman, vipassana teacher, Florence, Mass.*



I've advocated meditation as a way of coping with the HIV virus. I think it works; it's a factor in my sustained good health. I've been positive for eight years that I know of. I'm a little wary of talking T-cells and meditation lest my message be mistaken. Sitting practice is not a panacea. But it buoys me to remember I am not this body, nor thoughts, feelings, sensations, or emotions. In such a list, where then is gay?

— *Geoffrey Landis, Tesuque, New Mexico*



She knew she was one thing. Innately one thing. She knew she was a lesbian. Then she met a man who was a Buddhist, and he told her that he thought she was an "innate Buddhist." That surprised her a lot because she had been working at it, but she kept thinking it wasn't natural to her. She told the man she was an innate lesbian. The only thing she really was, was a lesbian, she said.

She began to say it around. Proclaim it, in fact. It wasn't always a safe thing to do, but it certainly was exhilarating. Some people didn't know what to do about it. Some people walked away. Some people changed the subject. Some people turned their eyes inside out. Sometimes she was afraid. Sometimes she laughed. She grew bolder and eventually overcame the necessity for courage. Until that was accomplished, however, the effort was obvious and not pretty.

With maturity, she became truly nonchalant. Wore levis and cowboy boots to work. Refused to salute the flag. Refused to salute the boss. In time, because of various circumstances, she began not to practice lesbianism, but she supported those who did. She was respected mostly because she kept promises, and she was honored as someone of historical interest because

she had survived the 1950s as a lesbian in America.

One day she came upon the Buddha. In a dry wash in Mexico. Or was it on a lake in California? Anyway, it didn't matter. When at last she met the Buddha, she discovered that she too was a lesbian and it wasn't necessary to kill her.

— *Pat Pomerleau, Santa Rosa, California*



The tradition of Zen encourages monastic celibacy or the heterosexual married state. So I turned to the tantric tradition because of its use of explicitly erotic imagery. Unfortunately, all the imagery involved is heterosexual and strongly patriarchal. But I liked the understanding that one could use erotic energy as part of the spiritual practice. Sexuality did not need to be overcome, but rather used in a way that would benefit all sentient existence. Could I, as a gay man, use sexuality in such a manner?

The bodhisattva Tara made a vow to always manifest the dharma from the body of a woman. It occurred to me that a bodhisattva could vow to always manifest the dharma from the body of a gay man, and that such a vow would have just as much legitimacy. I asked myself how I as a gay man and a Zen teacher could use this form to present the teaching of infinite compassion, and I came up with what I call the Vows of Tundra Wind. The first and most essential vow is:

"I will always take rebirth in the body of a gay man."

— *Tundra Wind, Monte Rio, California*



The Dharma practitioners listened long and patiently as the Rinpoche explained a particularly complex Tantra. Part of it required us to visualize ourselves in union with a female partner, and, while circulating the sexual energy in the form of light, to be sure that we withheld our sperm. About half the practitioners were women, and one had the courage to ask how all this related to her, since she did not, clearly, have any difficulty retaining her sperm. "Just reverse the symbolism," advised the Rinpoche.

This recommendation was unclear and unhelpful, but it was presumably the best that the teacher could offer. A monk accustomed to instructing other monks, it was probably a new question for him. American Buddhism has to take account of a variety of new lifestyles. Not only must it take seriously women, it must also accommodate gays.

My impression is that women are having some success in being accepted as "normal" in American Buddhism, but that gays are, to a large extent, no more than tolerated. Toleration is certainly better than persecution, but it is not quite acceptance, and even acceptance still bears the scent of second-class citizenship.

Can we, then, stand on the shoulders of our Stonewall brothers and sisters and go beyond tolerance and acceptance, and ask what positive contribution modern American gays can make to the Dharma?

Traditional Buddhist spirituality is dominated by male, heterosexual imagery, emphasizing the difference between the practitioner and the goal, upholding a dichotomy between active and passive roles, and supporting a symbolism of domination and control.

But, as Buddhists, it is open to us to say that the traditional imagery is, in any case, no more than a skillful means (*upaya*) and if it does not help us towards liberation we can discard it. If we then rebuild Buddhist spirituality using gay and lesbian imagery, we might have something like this: the similarity of the practitioner and the goal would be emphasized over their differences; active and passive roles would become fluid and eventually collapse into a metaphor of partnership; and the symbolism of domination and control would be replaced by one of friendship which, when brought into actual sexual relationships, would be seen in terms of free relationship and ecstasy.

— Roger Corless teaches at Duke University, and is the author of *The Vision of Buddhism and other books and articles*. His paper, "Beyond Acceptance: The Possibility of a Gay Male Spirituality within Mainstream Religions," will be presented at the *Gay Men's Issues in Religion Group of the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco Hilton, November 21-24, 1992*.



RESOURCES

A meditation retreat for lesbians will be led by Arinna Weisman at Dhamma Dena in Joshua Tree, California, the weekend of November 13-15. The cost will be \$120, including accommodations and vegetarian meals.

For further details and registration contact Jim Hopper: (213) 665-7686. Register early as space is limited.

Arinna Weisman and Eric Kolvig will lead a **one-day retreat for lesbians and gay men** on November 21, at Spirit Rock Center, Fairfax, CA. (415) 367-9520. They will lead another **retreat for lesbians and gay men** from April 16-18, 1993, in Deerfield, MA. (413) 367-9520.

Eric Kolvig and Robert Hall will lead a **12-day retreat for gay men**, May 29-June 9, 1993, Santa Fe, NM. (505) 988-5293.

The **Gay Buddhist Fraternity**, a San Francisco Bay Area group, is a gay male Buddhist organization which meets to meditate, and to study all forms of Buddhism. We hope to encourage mutual support within the gay community. We welcome beginners to Buddhism or meditation.

To contact us, write to: Gay Buddhist Fraternity, P.O.

Box 1788, Sausalito, CA 94966. Include your telephone number so that we can call you back.

Gay and Lesbian Buddhist Group, P.O. Box 29750, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

The group's purpose is to enable persons interested in Buddhism to meet and share this interest, and to introduce non-Buddhists to the teachings and practices of Buddhism in general and Zen in particular.

We meet on the second Sunday and the fourth Saturday of each month for meditation, discussion and socializing. Contact Norman McClelland at (213) 461-5042, or The Dharma Center at (213) 664-8146.

See page 27 for information on **The Healing Circle**.

The **Buddhist Study Group of PA/NJ** was formed to serve the spiritual needs of lesbian and gay Buddhists in the greater Philadelphia area. However, we welcome anyone with a sincere interest in Buddhist teaching, regardless of sexual orientation.

We publish a newsletter, "The Buddha Dharma." Members are encouraged to submit material for publication.

For more information, please write to the Buddhist Study Group of PA/NJ, P.O. Box #7094, Princeton, NJ 08543-7094, or call (908) 806-8023.

During the June 1992 retreat at **Plum Village**, Thich Nhat Hanh's community in Southern France, gays and lesbians formed an international network, **GLOBAL** (Gay and Lesbian Organization of Buddhist Activists for Liberation) Sangha, in support of increased inclusivity and acceptance in our home Buddhist communities. We drafted the following statement:

"Being mindful of those among the community who cannot be visible because of the risk of losing children, jobs, or community support, some lesbian, gay, and bisexual sangha members take the following vow:

We vow to practice the courage to be visible, not only to free ourselves and our children from homophobia, but also to free all our sisters and brothers from the fear and suffering caused by homophobia and heterosexism.

We ask the sangha to help us by being mindful that all loving relationships are worthy of community recognition and support."

We are interested in your ideas, poems, artwork, articles, etc. about your experiences as lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in Buddhist practice, for possible inclusion in *The Mindfulness Bell*. Send contributions to Marianne Dresser, P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707. Tel. (510) 527-3751.

The Fall 1991 issue of *Mountain Record*, has an excellent section called "Out of the Closet — Zen Practice and Sexual Minorities," by members of the Zen Mountain Monastery sangha. Contact: Box 156 MR, South Plank Rd., Mt. Tremper, NY 12457. (914) 688-2228.

Some Engaged Buddhists at the BPF Summer Institute, July 1992



Clockwise from lower left: Norris Lyle and Henry Wai with Sulak Sivaraksa; Marian Spotswood and Susan Garfield; Mo Malvern and Davis Teselle; members of gay men's small group — Al Chase, Alan Oliver, Greg Eichler, John Berlow, Rafael Diaz; Seats of Peace at Concord Naval Weapons Station; small group meeting. Photos by Donald Rothberg, Alan Senauke, and Random Acts.

TYLENOL PRAYER BEADS

by Jarvis Masters

It was past midnight. The prison night watchman was making his routine body count down the tier when I awakened from a late evening snooze with plans to get up and spend the rest of the night doing my dharma practice.

I paced the length of my cell for awhile, all eight feet of it, preparing myself with a prayer: "Illustrious Tara, please be aware of me. Remove my obstacles and quickly grant my excellent aspirations." Suddenly I was struck with an idea for a way to make my own praying *mala* [a Buddhist rosary]. This would finally help me recite my Tara prayers. I could use the beads to keep track of the repetitions.

I spun around my cell, looking frantically for what I would need.

Since the very first day of learning my Buddhist mantra, I'd always wanted a *mala* to help me with my practice. My teacher, Lama Chagdud Tulku, and other practitioners who came to San Quentin to visit me, had offered to bring me a *mala*, but prison authorities had denied them permission.

I supplied myself with a pair of prison issue jeans, a *Sports Illustrated* and a bottle of Tylenol, and I sat down at the front of my cell and quietly began.

I needed thread. I picked and pulled at the seams of the jeans until I got hold of a good piece of thread that I could pull out. I unraveled more than I meant to. "Uh-oh!" A gaping hole widened down the leg. "I'll just get another pair somehow," I resolved, and put the thread aside.

I opened the *Sports Illustrated* to the middle page and took out one of the staples. I straightened it out and began sharpening it on the rough, concrete floor beside me. I had to be very quiet. If the night watchman heard these strange scratching sounds, the whole cell-block might have to be searched in a panic. Scraping usually means a weapon is being sharpened.

For almost an hour I ground the tiny staple on the floor, until it was as sharp as a sewing needle.

Now I opened the bottle of Tylenol and began the slow process of poking a tiny hole in the center of each tablet. There were 100 of them. I had to be as careful as a surgeon. First I plucked at the surface of the Tylenol and then I used a screwing motion until I made a hole all the way through. Taking the thread from my jeans, I passed it through each "bead" as I made it.

All through the night I sat cross-legged, plucking holes in Tylenols and threading them together. It was extremely tedious. My fingers began to get sore. I felt foolish. "What in the world am I doing?" I asked myself. My eyes blurred with exhaustion. But I kept

going, determined to finish.

Five and a half hours later I held my first *mala* necklace made from trouser thread and Tylenols. I was elated. But when I got up to stretch, my head throbbed, I had an awful headache. I stood silently at the bars of my cell, taking comfort in looking out a window in the opposite wall. A beautiful morning light was peeking in. "I wouldn't mind a Tylenol or two," I thought, "to stop this pounding in my head." I looked down at my hands, "Damn! I don't have any. They're all on this *mala*."

For a split second I thought the unthinkable; my head was hurting that much. Then I started laughing. I realized that after spending all this time making my Tylenol *mala*, all I needed to do was to sit my butt back down with it and take a few moments — no Tylenols — to be with the dharma of practice. ♦

Jarvis Masters is a frequent contributor to Turning Wheel. He writes from Death Row at San Quentin Prison, and can be contacted at: C-35169, Tamal, CA 94974

Closer to the Truth

Several months ago I tuned in to a television talk show. The panelists included lesbian couples who had chosen to have a baby. Their children appeared with them on the program. One woman had two teenage children by a previous heterosexual marriage. I was impressed by how the children and their mothers responded to the concerns of the audience, such as: What will happen when two mothers show up at PTA meetings? What will the other kids say? And of course the Bible was mentioned.

Had it been possible to call in to this talk show, I would have said, "I am a 60-year-old heterosexual woman and I am homophobic. I don't know how one can grow up in this society and not be. With all that, I want to say how grateful I am to these women who have the courage to tell us what really matters. That it is all about love. All the concerns, projected scenarios and biblical injunctions have no power in the face of love. It is so clear that these women love each other and love their children. What more important message could there be in a society suffering so from the lack of love?"

There was a deeper realization for me as I saw that what had been mirrored back to me for years were unresolved issues about my own sexuality. I had not allowed myself to open fully to its power and its promise. And it occurs to me that the denial I have lived in is also inherent in our society. Why else would homosexuality be such an issue? I see now that a change of attitude is possible for me, that as I allow myself to fully experience whatever feelings I have resisted, there will be change. What, I cannot say, but I know it will bring me closer to the truth and therefore closer to love.

— Fran Levin, Nyack, New York

Beneath a Single Moon

Shambhala, 1991, \$20

Reviewed by Keith Abbott

To engage in a review of this anthology is a bit daunting. Not because of the poetry, but because of the prose surrounding it. The editors, Kent Johnson and Craig Paulenich, provide a capable preface to the history of Buddhist verse and thought in America. Their researches are followed by Gary Snyder's thorough overview of the anthology, coupled with assertions about the relationship between meditation and poetry. In addition, some poets' selections are prefaced by their remarks on Buddhism and their craft. Consequently, the poems come amply swathed in personal, religious, historical and philosophical commentary. Of the prose, I particularly enjoyed Anne Waldman's multi-faceted essay on the place of women in Buddhist practice.

But for me, this much theory tends to dry up emotional responses. Few people leave a movie or a play and call up a friend and say: darling, you havta go see X. It's got a great explanation! And as I trolled through these prose commentaries, the thought came: well, hell, what isn't Buddhist? Like Bishop Berkeley's philosophic system, once you step into it, you're stuck there forever — theoretically. Kick a rock and you're out.

And speaking of stubbed toes, my favorite Buddhist poet has always been Philip Whalen. For me his poetry embodies the element of wild surprise. When I received the anthology, I immediately turned to his section to see what poems the editors selected. Whalen's poetry enacts complex and startling takes on Buddhist thought in relation to the nitty gritty of culture. Jazz, opera, physics, street talk, and anything else immediate can be at play in his poems. So, for example,

*a shock out of the eye-corner
Dome & cornices of Sherith Israel
blue sky & fog streaks
(reminiscences of Corot, Piranesi)
to mean themselves
Adam & Eve & Pinch-Me*

Local architecture, art history, Bible studies and an impudent childhood game all collide in one moment, synthesized into a stylish and playful slow pan that has no particular center but the native savagery of the senses. Which doesn't lack for philosophy because when Adam and Eve leave, who's left? Ouch! The Pinch-Me present.

Leslie Scalapino's work radiates this quality, too — a moving mosaic of language and intense perception. Her close attention to sensory details seems to have a contradictory distancing effect. For example, here are sex and death:

And out tangled in the yellow grass, on it. The woman

wading. There's a corpse in the grass the buzzards sapping it whirling. It's far gone. in the light air.

*it can't be that in the long yellow grass
the hams stretch out and running down the slope in the yellow grass. arms twirling flapping being in the grass.*

There are weeds. It's dawn. Encounters sensitive man. as in trunk of seal laying on her, rearing — their coming. the light air is coming up. entwined thrashing around. He puts it in her again.

Now while reading this, most Buddhists aren't going to be moved to contemplate the five precepts. However, the inconsistent punctuation and capitalization and the fragmentary grammar move us toward a realization that the more concentration one brings to any second, the more ego and logical narrative break down

A pleasure of anthology reading is a new discovery. There were many in this collection. To name a few: I was delighted with Barbara Meier's socially engaged "Sonnets From The War Zones: Nicaragua;" Jim Harrison's remarkable poem about the interpenetration of mind and environment, "Walking;" and Nathaniel Tarn's precise, yet loose, graph of meditation entitled "Retreat Toward Spring."

Beneath a Single Moon gives convincing testimony that the Buddhist tradition in America has become rich and diverse. Shambhala and the editors are to be congratulated for its publication. ♦

Keith Abbot is a writer and practitioner of Tai Chi, calligraphy, and photographic imaginations. He teaches prose workshops at the Naropa Institute.

***Earth in the Balance:
Ecology and the Human Spirit***
by Al Gore

Houghton Mifflin Co., \$22.95

Reviewed by Roger Walsh

While there is growing appreciation of the fact that we face an ecological crisis, very few people appreciate its scope and urgency, the extent to which far reaching changes in our thinking, lifestyles, society and economics will be necessary to correct it, and the extent to which our global problems are actually symptoms, symptoms of our individual and collective psychological and spiritual distortions. Most emphasis is usually on political, economic and military responses, and I therefore opened this book by a United States senator expecting a political book focused on objective political solutions, and not very far reaching ones at that.

I was wrong. This book is written by a deeply concerned and well-informed individual. The author shares his personal pain over the issues and his frustrations in trying to draw attention to them. He provides an out-

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Cultivate a Grove to Shade the Many Beings

This was Aitken Roshi's way of describing the work we were about during BPF's second Meditation in Action Institute. A hundred of us improvised (maybe jerryrigged is a better word) a week-long practice community in July at Oakland's Holy Redeemer Center, sitting, walking, eating, talking, inquiring together. Before breakfast we had meditation and studied the Bodhisattva's Six Perfections with Aitken Roshi. Joanna Macy, Stephanie Kaza, and Donald Rothberg offered morning sessions where we looked at ourselves in relation to our communities and the larger realm of all beings. All week we were urged on by the examples of Pracha Hutauwatr and Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand, who were reunited here during Sulak's continuing exile from Thailand.

Psychologist and trainer Larry Sheridan led us through a painstaking process to form small groups based on common interest and burning need. And who was taking pains, Larry or the rest of us? At moments in the week I had my fill of process, and yearned for some old-fashioned authority. I don't think I was alone in this. It's an old habit, well learned. But even if I tuned out for a while, I kept coming back to the group around me, finding feeling and safety there, and even a bit of reason.

The spirit of our collective work lingers long after the event. Several of the small groups continue to meet, exploring the possibilities of engaged Buddhist community and the shared experiences of gay Buddhist practice. At this writing, people are getting together with Larry Sheridan for more work in group process. From week to week people call the office with ideas and questions, or to say good-bye on their way to work with INEB in Thailand. I hope the Institute community can stay in touch and build strong friendships in this world of impermanence.

I'd like to take a little space here to thank some of

the people who made the Institute happen: Institute co-chairs Ken Otter and Donald Rothberg; committee members George Lane, Judy Gilbert, Andy Cooper, Maylie Scott, and Nanda Curren; our teachers Robert Aitken, Pracha Hutauwatr, Joanna Macy, and Sulak Sivaraksa; patient trainer Larry Sheridan, BPF staff Veronica Froelich and Will Waters; Margaret Howe, Sandy Hunter, and Stephanie Kaza; Nina Wise; the Vimalakirti Sutra puppets; cooks extraordinaire John Birdsall and Pamela Kamatani; the staff of Holy Redeemer Center; and all of this summer's Meditators in Action.

Can't See the Forest For the Trees

Meanwhile, the daily work of BPF expands with each new friend and connection. Sulak Sivaraksa was here for several weeks after the Institute, creating his usual whirlwind of activity. Venerable Bimal Tishya from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh is arriving soon for a speaking tour organized by BPF. The BPF National Meeting comes up in Vermont in early October. There are funds to raise, pleas to answer, urgent concerns to address.

At home my two-year-old daughter Silvie is learning to talk and having a hard time adjusting to mornings in childcare. My wife Laurie is incredibly busy. We're all frazzled by the end of the day and still we try to balance our formal zazen practice with the rigors of work and family life. Then there are the necessary pleasures of making music, seeing friends, or just going away for a few days. It seems like much too much. How do you manage your life? I'd truly like to hear about it.

I try to remember to breathe, to find my feet, to stay physically and mentally flexible — these are core practices. Yet there must also be a Bodhisattvic way to regulate our lives and our workplaces to complement our awareness. What is a Buddhist work style? One person says to practice mindfulness in all activities; another reminds me of the Zen admonition to practice as if one's head were on fire, to do each activity completely. Last night at a BPF board meeting, someone said the question of Buddhist work style might make a good focus for an upcoming issue of *Turning Wheel*. But I'd rather not wait months or years to open up this question. I might be lost in the deep woods by then. Each day I'd like to cultivate a grove to shade the many beings, and cultivation usually involves plain hard work. Any suggestions? ♦

— Alan Senauke

Review of Al Gore's book, continued

line of the nature of the problems and how we created them, and notes their psychological and spiritual roots as well as the contributing problems in our social systems. He notes the necessity for psychological, spiritual, social, economic, lifestyle and value changes and also offers courageous political solutions.

This is an important book by a person who, as vice president, might be in a position to help us all contribute to the necessary changes he has described so well. ♦

Roger Walsh teaches in the Department of Psychiatry, University of California Medical School, in Irvine, California.

CHAPTER NEWS

Some of the events mentioned below were happening as we went to press, so please excuse the paucity of details. We'll tell you in the next issue how they went.

The Washington D.C. Chapter is reconstituting itself, drawing from local Buddhist communities. They held an organizational meeting on Saturday, Sept. 26 at the Buddhist Congregational Church in DC, with a program including meditation, discussion of possible activities and structure, and a potluck lunch.

Kuya Minogue of the Eugene Zendo writes that there will be a half-day Social Action Retreat for all **Oregon BPF** members on Sunday, October 18. Later that week, on October 21, friends in Oregon will participate in a statewide interfaith meditation and prayer vigil. For information on these and other activities, call Kuya at 503/345-0361.

Durham, North Carolina BPF held a day of mindfulness celebrating Interdependence Day on July 4.

The newsletter from *Ordinary Dharma*, home of the **Los Angeles Chapter**, includes word that BPF contact person Christopher Reed received Dharmacarya transmission from Thich Nhat Hanh this summer at Plum Village in France. We congratulate our friend and

Dharma teacher Christopher as he receives the lamp transmission in the Tiep Hien Order of Interbeing.

The Vermont Chapter has a new issue of their newsletter out. We look forward to joining them at BPF's National Members' Meeting, October 9-11, which will take place with the gracious hospitality of the Vermont Zen Center in Shelburne, VT.

The San Francisco Chapter has been meeting since June at San Francisco Zen Center. They have been meeting three times a month on the second, third, and fourth Fridays for study, action, and general meetings, respectively. Members are particularly interested in exploring the situation of homelessness in the Bay Area. For further information, call Nonnie Welch at 415/664-3729.

Various Chapters and friends have been lending a hand in organizing the tour of Venerable Bimal Tishya, a monk from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, who lives in exile in Calcutta. Thanks to the Boston, Vermont, New York, Washington, San Francisco, and East Bay Chapters, the Karuna Center, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and many other individuals and organizations. ♦

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

Announcements

F.O.R. JOB OPENING. The Fellowship of Reconciliation seeks a department coordinator for fundraising and membership/development strategy. Person will interpret the work and philosophy of the FOR to members and supporters through direct mail, personal solicitation, etc. Demonstrated ability in fundraising, familiarity with direct mail and planned giving programs required. Salary 25K-29K plus benefits. Please send resume and write for job description and application to: Dolores Gunter, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960; tel. 914/358-4601. Applications due Nov. 15; begin work Jan. 4, 1993.

DHAMMAPADAS NEEDED FOR PRISON. Please help supply Buddhist books and materials - including one or more copies of the Dhammapada - for an ecumenical sitting group in a prison in Salem,

Oregon. Send donations to: Brian Utesch, #8459145, 3405 Deer Park Drive S.E., Salem, OR 97301-9385.

HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN find a refuge and resource in the Women's Daytime Drop-In Center in Berkeley. Now the center needs volunteers to help staff the house as well as volunteers with carpentry/ painting skills to make minor repairs. For more information, please call Thelma Bryant at 510/524-2468.

THE THEATRE OF THE HOMELESS is a small group of homeless, formerly homeless and never-homeless members of the S.F. Bay Area community whose purpose is to diminish the stereotypes of homelessness and to engage everyone in solutions. The Theatre uses a reader's theatre format which tells real stories of homeless people, mostly narrated by the people who have lived them. The Theatre of the Homeless would like to

come and perform for any group you are associated with that would be appropriate. 75-100 people preferred. Please contact Ellen Flamen at 2103 Menalto Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025; tel. 415/328-5624

THE CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE in Minneapolis, one of only three such havens in the world, seeks donations for its outpatient clinic, which helps to heal the physical and psychological damage of the survivors of politically motivated torture. The purpose of torture is to sever relationships, and the Center works on slowly restoring them. When torture is exposed, the victims' distrust for community life begins to lift. Please help sustain this precious resource. Send inquiries or tax-deductible donations to: The Center for Victims of Torture, 717 East River Rd., Minneapolis, MN 55455; tel. 612/626-1400.

GOING TO THAILAND? You can take desperately needed medical supplies — including such basics as clean syringes — to be passed on to Burmese refugees. The Int'l Lesbian & Gay Human Rights Commission (see "Readings") has purchased many such items that need to be hand-carried to Bangkok. Please call Alan at the BPF National Office if you can help: 510/525-8596.

TOILETRY ITEMS NEEDED.

The Berkeley Ecumenical Chaplaincy to the Homeless seeks donations of little soaps, containers of shampoo, disposable razors, toothbrushes and deodorants — the kind you find in hotel rooms. Donations of any size or amount are welcomed. They can be dropped off (10-5 weekdays) or mailed to 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704; tel. 510/548-0551.

Coming Events

THE INTERRACIAL BUDDHIST COUNCIL,

an affiliate of BPF, is presenting a weekend workshop at Green Gulch Farm, January 8-10, 1993, on "Overcoming the Barriers to Compassion: Unlearning Racism." The workshop will be led by Yeshi Sherover Neumann and Sala Steinbach. For more information about the workshop or about the IBC, please send name, address and phone number to Interracial Buddhist Council, PO Box 909, Woodacre, CA 94973.

SRI LANKA-SOUTH INDIA INTERFAITH PILGRIMAGE.

Nipponzan Myohoji, the Buddhist group which has built Peace Pagodas in Leverett, MA and elsewhere, is sponsoring an "Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life" from the sacred peak of Sri-pada in Sri Lanka to Madras, India. The pilgrimage seeks a way for neighboring groups divided by fear and strife to live together harmoniously. All are welcome who will commit to the discipline of nonviolence and who will persevere through whatever difficulties may arise. The pilgrimage is planned for Feb. 25-April 14, 1993. Contributions are also welcome. Contact Nipponzan Myohoji, Peace Pagoda, Leverett, MA 01054; tel. 413/367-2202, fax 413/367-9369.

BUDDHIST ECOLOGICAL CONFERENCE.

The "International Conference on Ecological Responsibility: A Dialogue with Buddhism," bringing together scholars, practitioners and activists in the field of ecology and spiritual understanding, will be held in New Delhi March 4-6, 1993. The conference, sponsored by Tibet House, India, includes lectures on Buddhism and ecological activism, appropriate technology and Buddhist economics. The keynote address will be delivered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. For a brochure and registration form, contact Tibet House, 1 Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110003, India.

NAMKHAI NORBU RINPOCHE,

recognized Master of Dzogchen from both Tibetan Buddhist and Bon Po shamanic traditions, will lead a weekend retreat in Santa Fe, New Mexico, October 30, 31 and November 1, 1992. Registration fee is \$125. For registration and information, call Donna at 505/986-1494 or Cynthia at 505/982-3846.

TIBETAN CULTURAL TRIP.

Prof. Robert Thurman will lead part of a 19-day tour through India, including Ladakh, which will attend the Dalai Lama's formal inauguration of Drikung Kagyu Institute. Nov. 4-20, 1992. Proceeds from the trip help sponsor a documentary film project on the survival of exile Tibetan culture, to be filmed during the trip itself. Contact Mountain Travel•Sobek at 800/227-2384 or 510/527-8100.

Classifieds

EDITING, proofreading, and writing services are available from Laurie Senauke, editor of SF Zen Center's *Windbell* and the new Greens' cookbook. Specializing in Buddhist materials, but interested in the wide world. References on request. Please contact Laurie Senauke, 1933 1/2 Russell St., Berkeley, CA 94703; 510/845-2215.

ARE YOU TIRED of rushing around? *Kokopelli Notes* is about developing lifestyle changes that support your spiritual values. Walk, bike and bus for a greener planet. FREE BROCHURE about the quarterly magazine devoted to the self-propelled

life. Sample \$3. *Kokopelli Notes*, Dept. BPF, P.O. Box 8186, Asheville, NC 28814. 704/683-4844.

INVESTOR(S) NEEDED FOR MEDITATION CENTER

in an urban spiritual community focused on sharing and developing the contemplative arts. \$120,000 secured by \$181,000 real estate. Ivor Shuholm, PO Box 842, Bend, OR 97709. 503/382-9381.

4+ ACRES NEAR BUDDHIST PEACE PAGODA,

located on Rattlesnake Gutter Road, Leverett, MA. 660+ feet of frontage; can be subdivided. \$3.5 million FIRM. Fax 413/253-7906.

THE INFLATABLE ZAFU is

actually an inflatable beachball inside a fine-quality zafu cover. Lightweight-Convenient-Guaranteed. Colors: Plum, Burgundy, Navy, Royal, Green, Black. Cost: \$21 postpaid. *Products for the meditative lifestyle.* Free brochure. CAROLINA MORNING DESIGNS, Dept. BPFN, P.O. Box 2832, Asheville, NC 28802. 704/683-1843.

THE MEDITATION TEMPLES OF THAILAND:

A Guide. Comprehensive 105-page illustrated guide to meditation centers and monasteries throughout Thailand, plus appendix on Laos. Contains information on visas, travel, health, meditation teachers, language and ordination procedures. \$11 postpaid. Wayfarer Books, PO Box 5927-B, Concord, CA 94524.

LEGAL PROFESSIONALS' RIGHT LIVELIHOOD GROUP

is a group of attorneys, paralegals, and private investigators who meet once a month to discuss the challenges of integrating spiritual practice with the stress and moral ambiguity of legal practice. For information call: Theresa Owens (W) 415/788-6600; (H) 415/564-7432.

BUDDHIST BED & BREAKFAST

located on a tropical flower farm on the garden isle of Kauai. Off the beaten path but only 10 minutes from the nearest beach. Very reasonable. P.O. Box 937, Kapaa, HI 96746. 808/822-1018.

THE CONCHUS TIMES is the newsletter of the Dead Buddhists of America, for those appreciating both

Grateful Dead and Buddhist cultures. Special Election Issue now available, featuring info on the new Karmapa and Kalu Rinpoche tulkus, California's first Guru Rinpoche statue, the Dalai Lama's latest Kalachakra, Mickey Hart's Percussion Therapy, the Buddhist/Native American connection, the (real) Dharma Bums, etc. \$5 donation/year, payable to: Ken Sun-Downer, Box 769, Idyllwild, CA 92549.

GRATITUDE

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship Board gratefully acknowledges generous contributions above and beyond membership between June 26 and September 24, 1992:

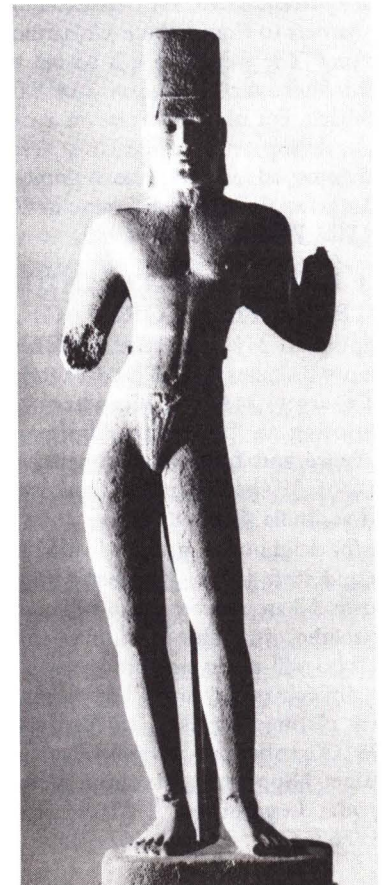
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For donations above and beyond the call of fundraising:

Robert Aitken ♦ Bill Anderson ♦ Dennis Clagett ♦ Jerry Doan ♦ Margaret Howe ♦ Bruce Krawisz ♦ Pat Rea ♦ Ken Simon ♦ Lydia Tracy ♦

♦ Thank you! ♦



FOR SALE FROM BPF:

⊗ Tapes from the 1992 BPF Institute for the Practice of Engaged Buddhism: \$125 for complete set in binder. \$10-\$18 for individual tapes: contact BPF for details.

⊗ T-shirts (blue or white) with black BPF logo: \$12. Specify S, M, L, or XL and desired color. (Supply variable.)

⊗ BPF buttons, with our logo: \$1.

⊗ Thich Nhat Hanh tapes: "The Practice of Peace" talk in Berkeley, April 1991. Two-tape set \$14.

⊗ Sulak Sivaraksa talk: "Buddhism with a small 'b,'" Spring 1992: \$14.

⊗ Tapes from the 1991 BPF Institute for the Practice of Engaged Buddhism: \$90 for complete set. \$12 for individual tapes: contact BPF office for order form.

⊗ Thich Nhat Hanh letterpress broadside, beautifully designed, 6" x 12"; text taken from *Peace Is Every Step*. Suitable for framing. \$3 for first one; \$1 for each additional.



Postage included in all prices.

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- ❖ To bring a Buddhist perspective to contemporary peace, environmental, and social action movements;
- ❖ To encourage the practice of nonviolence based on the rich resources of traditional Buddhist teachings;
- ❖ To offer avenues for dialogue and exchange among the diverse American and world sanghas.

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