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in the woods, in a tunnel, on Death Row*

*Tetsugen Glassman's street monastery*

*Musings of a transient homebody*

*Giving shelter*

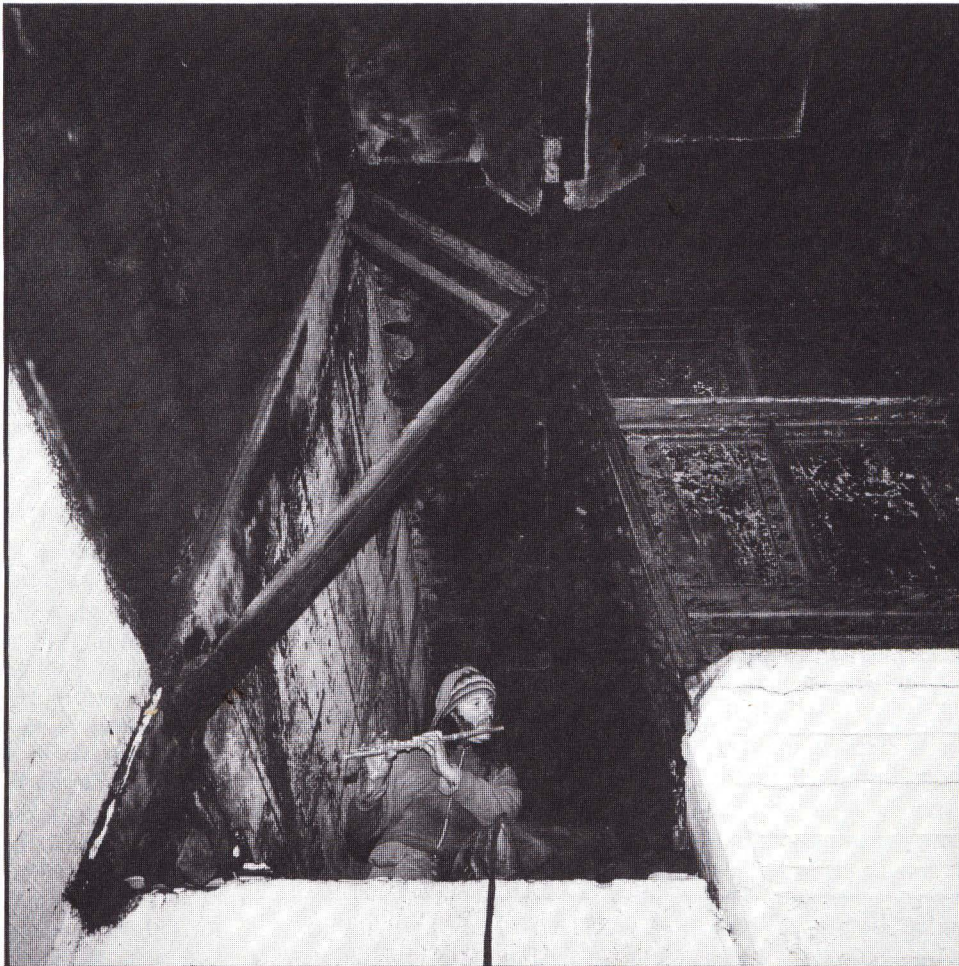
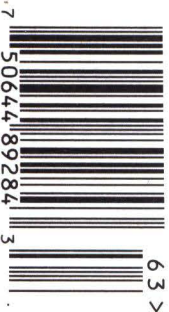
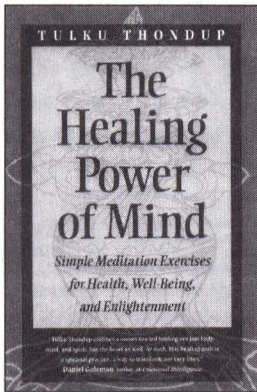


Photo by Margaret Morton



# Shambhala

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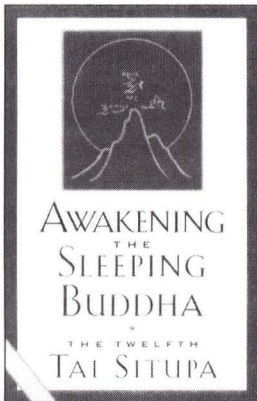


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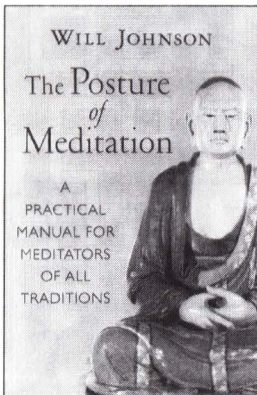


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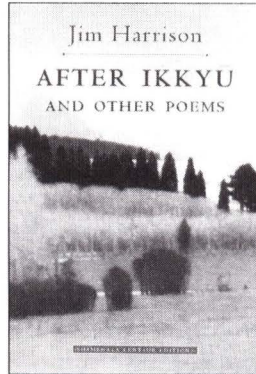


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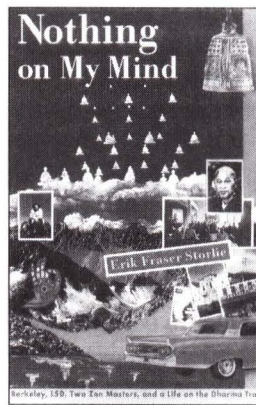
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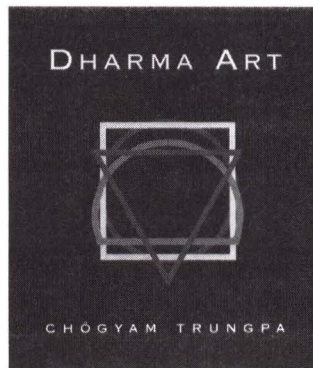


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# LETTERS

## *Disney in Haiti?*

I was concerned by the part of Susan Moon's last editorial that dealt with Haiti.

The Disney Corporation does not manufacture pajamas in Haiti. Rather, Disney licenses certain companies to use characters such as Pocahontas on their products. It is the licensees who are allegedly paying seven cents for pajamas which retail for \$12. But of course this is a false comparison because it ignores all the other costs of designing, manufacturing, shipping, storing, and marketing the pajamas.

What our Haitian friends want us to do is pressure Disney to cancel the licenses of manufacturers who violate Haitian laws relating to minimum wages, working conditions, etc. At first glance, this seems very reasonable; but I'm a little concerned about asking an American company to be responsible for the enforcement of Haitian laws. Is that not the responsibility of the Haitian government? And what if the attempt to enforce the law rigorously results in the transfer of the pajama manufacturer to another country, and thus to the loss of jobs in Haiti? I cannot say that this would happen in this particular case, but it's something to consider. It may be that this is why the Haitian government is not enforcing its own laws.

—Gordon Tyndall, Oakland, California

## *Spot On!*

Your ideas relative to community-based action are spot on (*What You Can Do on the International Level*, Summer 1996). My wife, Paula, and I offer a program, "Tibet in Exile," to local civic and service clubs, church guilds and study groups, schools, etc.; and to date we have presented 59 programs to an accumulated audience of nearly 1,800 people. This, along with the occasional relevant newspaper article and letter to the editor, helps keep our community informed on matters related to the Tibetan cause. Continue to encourage others to engage in this relatively easy, personal, and very effective mechanism for local involvement. It most certainly pays dividends.

—Frank Jamison, Kalamazoo, Michigan

## *More to Sexual Misconduct*

My father ran an ecumenical Christian singing group for young people for over a decade. I grew up traveling around the Midwest on a tour bus with about fifty other teenagers, singing about brotherly love and social justice, and hawking our homemade record albums. Practices were long, frequent, and always combined with group prayer. My father was revered in our local community, and the group prospered.

Sadly, my father was also a man tortured by sexual addictions and secret, chronic debts. These are not unusual problems for a working man to have, but, when covered over with a self-made, larger-than-life public image of piety and devotion, they can do great harm to believers. For years after his death I suffered terribly as I tried in vain to reconcile my memories of my father's damaging private behaviors with his legendary public image as a stainless Christian leader.

Years of therapy helped me manage my rage and sorrow, but did little to help me understand why our Christian God would send such a duplicitous representative. I became attracted to Buddhism in my late thirties because this project of trying to separate good from evil and understand it, vis-a-vis my actual experience, was making me quite ill. After thinking, saying, and feeling almost everything under the sun about my messy life, there it still was—in all its lurid self-contradiction, in spite of me. Christianity seemed to demand that I form some Christian opinions about it, and quickly.

Buddhism invited me just to sit still and breathe.

I am grateful to my suffering because it brought me to Buddhist practice, because it has been my greatest and most demanding teacher, and because it has functioned for me as a doorway to compassion for myself and others. I am grateful to Buddhism because it has given me the tools to see that I have everything I need, right now, inside me. It has shown me that I do not need to pass judgment on my experience or lop off upsetting parts of myself, and that I do not need to exhaust myself and others by struggling with unhelpful opinions about God.

At 43, I have been ostracized by the church and shunned by my original family for telling the truth and turning to meditation instead of submitting to external authority. This is very painful, naturally, but also a great opportunity to look and listen deeply.

I was surprised to read so many judgmental, angry letters intellectualizing about sexually abusive Buddhist teachers and their 'victims.' I know how distressing harassment can be, but this is not the most helpful approach. The Dalai Lama has said that anyone can be a teacher, even a thief or scoundrel. I have found this perspective profoundly healing.

—Pamela Roberson, Mishawaka, Indiana

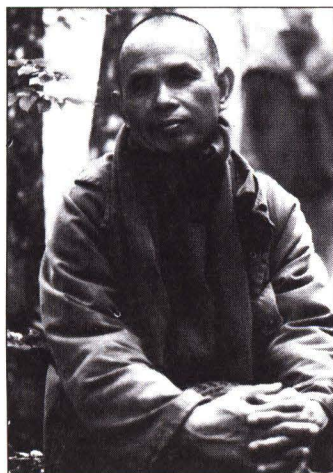
Thank you for printing the variety of letters regarding the essays on sexual misconduct in the Spring 1996 issue. Several of them expressed well how aghast and disappointed I felt with your victim-blaming, excuse-making, confusion-regarding-compassion, and general denial.

May these letters help us all develop more wisdom. Please reflect on what you write and how it may be *your* feelings, but neither Buddhist nor wise.

—Kali Kaliche, Williams, Arizona

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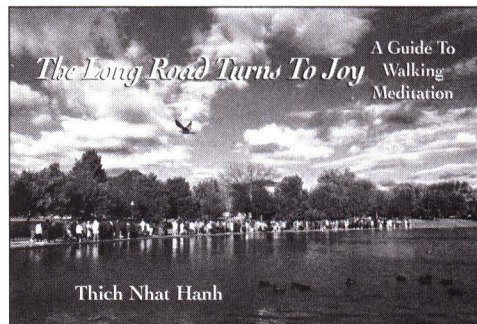
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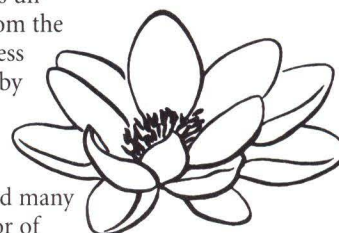
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# READINGS

## *World Court Finds Nuclear Weapons Illegal*

On July 8, 1996, Judge Mohammed Bedjaoui of Algeria, President of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, announced to a packed courtroom the court's landmark ruling on the legality of nuclear weapons. The court declared that "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict."

The court stressed that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." (The court, however, remained undecided about "whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defense, in which the very survival of a state would be at stake.")

The World Court Project is an inspiring example of what citizens can do to change the course of history. The idea of bringing the nuclear arms issue to the court was formed by a few people in someone's kitchen in New Zealand in the mid-1980s. They formed a group called the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, and the efforts of this group ultimately led to the court's recent decision.

The ruling, which was described by the court as consultative and not binding, was largely ignored by the mass media in the United States. But the implications of this decision by the highest legal authority are huge.

The use of at least 99 percent of the U.S. nuclear weapons would be defined as illegal. This means most of the existing weapons are useless. It is clear that the court's ruling has invalidated any justification for further development, as well as deployment of nuclear bombs, which Judge Bedjaoui called "the ultimate evil." —*Kazuaki Tanahashi*

## *Peace Walk in Cambodia*

Maha Ghosananda and his peace walkers—500-700 strong from Cambodia, the United States, Australia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, and Japan, led by Buddhist monks and nuns—sent the message of the fifth annual Dhammayietra (peace walk) throughout Cambodia and the world.

This year's Dhammayietra was a three week pilgrimage for the forests, nonviolence and reconciliation. The walkers, some carrying parasols to protect themselves from the hot May sun, made a 225-mile loop in the southwest part of Cambodia, beginning and ending in Phnom Penh.

The first Dhammayietra was organized in 1991, and many walkers reconnected with relatives they had not seen for several years. Subsequent walks went through

some of the heaviest areas of fighting. The third walk in 1994 was caught in a crossfire between Khmer Rouge and government troops, and two walkers were killed. This year's walk avoided the turbulent Northwest region.

Along the way, Maha Ghosananda spoke to villagers about the five precepts of Buddhism.

"Refrain from stealing, refrain from killing, refrain from cheating and telling lies, refrain from adultery, and refrain from intoxicants."

"To bring about peace, you must be charitable. You have to make charity to keep the five precepts."

As the Dhammayietra demonstrates, the practice of nonviolence is not passive, but requires persistence and courage. Kim Leng, one of the organizers of the march and an ordained Buddhist nun, says, "To be peace makers in this society, we must face our own fears. We must not let the fear of violence prevent us from going on."

The warm reception shown by villagers to the pilgrims along the way is a reflection of the deep desire of the Cambodian people for peace and reconciliation.

## *Bosnian Refugees*

There are still refugee camps in Serbia and Croatia, and refugees are in a state of anxiety, wondering whether they will be allowed to stay where they are or sent to resettle somewhere in Bosnia. Refugees in Germany and other countries are losing their refugee status because they can theoretically go back to Bosnia now, but many are unable to return to their own homes or towns, either because they are from areas that have been ethnically cleansed or because their homes have been destroyed.

One woman from Sarajevo, who spent the war years as a refugee in Belgrade working with Women in Black, recently returned to Sarajevo. Her house had been destroyed, so she and her children and husband moved in with her mother in a two-room apartment. Her belongings were scattered far and wide with several

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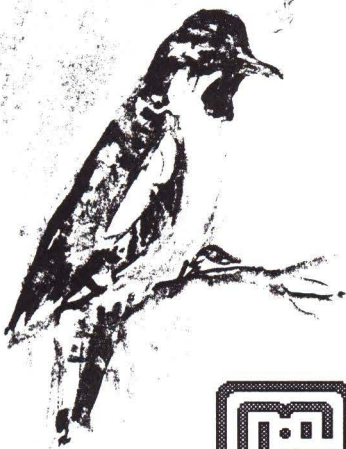
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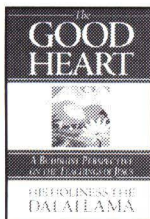
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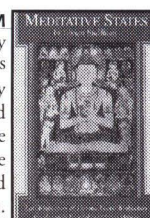
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friends and relatives, and she couldn't get them back. She found there was tension between the people who had stayed in Sarajevo during the war, on the one hand, and those returning from Western Europe with money and things they had bought, on the other. Foreign organizations in Sarajevo were hiring some locals, but there were great inequities in salaries: a driver for an international organization was earning more than a doctor at the Sarajevo hospital. Many of the people who *stayed* in Sarajevo are unemployed, so there is no work for those who are going back.

In August 1995, 200,000 people were forced to leave the Krajina, in Croatia, in 48 hours. Many have come to Serbia, and local and international organizations have established services to help them. Oxfam has funded a house for single women from the Krajina. We visited the house in May and found the women very depressed and worried about their futures. We saw some of the women again in August. They are beginning to find ways of generating an income by growing vegetables, raising chickens, making jams and jellies, and doing handcrafts, and their morale has improved. Crabgrass is beginning to sell potholders made by these women, and to collect embroidery thread for them.

Please send contributions of embroidery thread to Crabgrass, 3181 Mission St., #30, San Francisco, CA 94110. —*Tova Green*

### Tibet

In June, Chinese government authorities admitted for the first time that they have custody of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, acknowledged by the Dalai Lama as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. China's Ambassador to the U.N., Wu Jianmin, stated that the seven-year-old child was put under the "protection of the government" at his parent's request. The child's whereabouts were not disclosed.

Repression intensifies in the wake of the controversy over the Panchen Lama succession, and the ban in early May on possession of photographs of the Dalai Lama. Students at middle schools in Lhasa were also told that wearing *sung-du* was forbidden. These red cords worn around the wrist or neck by Tibetan Buddhists are blessed by a lama and are believed to confer protection. To enforce the ban, the Chinese authorities beat dozens of monks and nuns in Lhasa, and fired on monks at Gamden Monastery.

Granting of MFN status by the U.S. in the face of China's intensifying religious persecution of the Tibetans indicates our government's willingness to ignore a trade partner's record of human rights violations when economic relations are at stake.

BPF continues to endorse a Boycott for Human Rights in Tibet and China. Protest the actions of the Chinese government in Tibet and elsewhere, as well as in China itself, by not purchasing Chinese goods.

### In Memoriam: Frankie Parker, 1955-1996

Jusan Frankie Parker, a Buddhist prisoner in Arkansas, was executed by lethal injection on August 8, 1996, after two stays of execution.

Frankie was on death row for murdering the parents of his former wife, in 1984. Seven years ago, while in solitary confinement, he asked for a Bible. A guard threw him a copy of the *Dhammapada* instead, as a joke, with the unexpected result that Frankie converted to Buddhism and transformed himself from a violent and intractable prisoner to a peaceful, spiritual man. He took refuge with Lama Tharchin Rinpoche in 1995, and he received the Bodhisattva precepts from Kevin Kobutsu Malone this past May. He inspired international efforts to save his life, including appeals from the Dalai Lama and Richard Gere (and many BPF members).

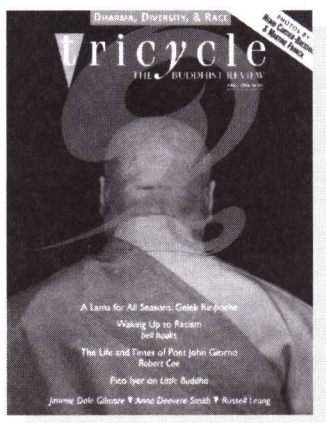
Kobutsu devoted himself fully to the attempt to save Frankie's life in the last months. He flew from New York to Arkansas to be with Frankie in May, when he was first scheduled to die, but that execution was delayed at the last minute. It was then that Frankie received the Bodhisattva precepts. Kobutsu again flew to Arkansas in August, and was with Frankie when he died.

In an interview last April, Frankie told Little Rock Buddhist Jean Crume, "I used to think, 'Boy! As soon as I reach enlightenment I'm going to teach!' Then I realized that that day was too far away, so I'd better try to do something now. People see me practicing Tai Chi in the yard. They see me at peace with the world and they see me always smiling. That, my friend, is how you spread the dharma—smile, be happy. Buddhism is not a religion or philosophy. It is example. It is a method of liberation."

Of Frankie's death, a member of the Little Rock sangha writes, "Frankie died with great equanimity and lived a teaching for all who are facing death. He spent his last day saying goodbye to friends and family, receiving calls from his teachers...and writing a final statement of a wish for compassion for our world. Then when they came for him he began to chant his refuge vows, bowed (even though shackled completely) to his altar, walked serenely to the door, bowed three times to Kobutsu, and entered the death chamber. There he peacefully lay on the gurney and the Director of the Department of Corrections held a picture of the Buddha, and he said his last words, the refuge vows. Then, with the Buddha as his last thing to see, he shut his eyes. Three minutes after the injection he died."

In a letter to Kobutsu, Frankie once wrote, "Death is not the end...Everything we do or say or is said and done to us is karma. What I have coming in May [the original execution date] is simply a result of what I have done...I would like to say to all the people incarcerated in this country, 'Seek enlightenment.' Seek—In seeking you will find the Buddha residing in your own heart." ❖

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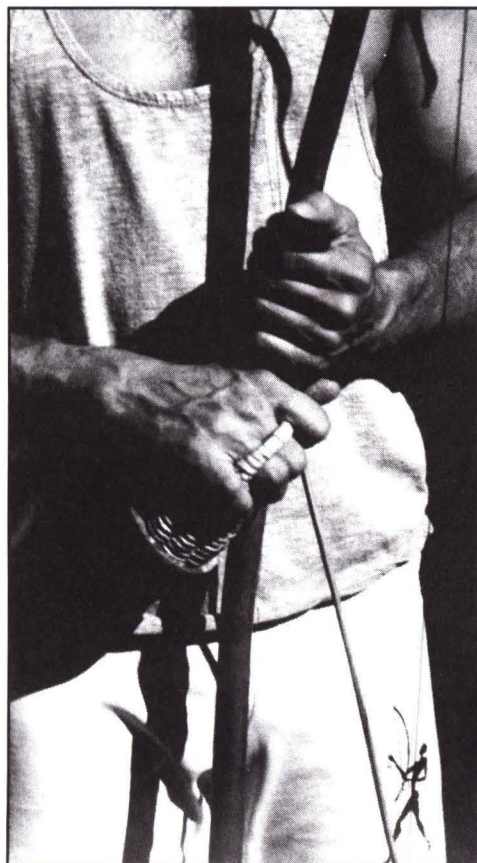


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# TIES THAT LOOSEN, TIES THAT BIND

by Patrick McMahon

*This is Patrick McMahon's last family practice column. For over five years the continuity of his voice, first on education, then on family practice, has been a valuable contribution to TW. His constant willingness to look into himself, to question authority, to speak up for students, children, bachelors, frogs, and his ability to surprise us into awareness with unexpected images will be very much missed. A long-time member of the Ring of Bone sangha and a student of Nelson Foster's, he has recently moved from the Bay Area to San Juan Ridge, California, where he lives in walking distance of the zendo. We wish him well, and we trust that the loss of his column does not mean the permanent loss of his voice in our pages. —Ed.*

Having my own child is a watershed I haven't crossed. As I near my fiftieth year and the odds of becoming a father diminish, I fear I've sacrificed too much for the liberty of the unencumbered life. What seemed free now appears empty, and the prospect of growing old alone is bleak. My path as a single, child-free person is fast narrowing, relative to the broad way of the father, the husband, the "family man."

But...but...I argue with myself—haven't I made out reasonably well, balancing the freedom of the homeless life with the obligations of home? Over the years of moving in and out of various family circles, I seem to have grown into an arrangement agreeable to all parties. I supply my family friends with an extra hand and heart around the home, and they fortify my bachelor fare. Knowing I'm never far from comfort, I'm able to travel with a minimum of baggage.

If I need a Buddhist frame to justify my path, it's that of the wandering Zen monk *Un-Sui*, or Clouds-and-Water. I imagine myself in the tradition of single people like myself, who've ambled the planet from ancient times, staying with families along the way, as they journey to temples and teachers, helping out and being helped, but always moving on. My role of itinerant family friend has this weightlessness of clouds, this formlessness of water.

But as I grow older the clouds-and-water way seems to be running dry, the lightness becoming lightweight, the formlessness vague and non-committal. The fantasy of non-attachment is worn out and my life seems so much dust blowing around.

Recently, as I was saying good-bye to my friends Kurt and Marty, and their four-year-old daughter Cora, my dilemma came to a head. I'd been staying with them for a few months, as I do from time to time.

While I'm with them, they are my very own family, no two ways about it. While away I occasionally think of them, but the tether is loose, the ties don't bind. Whether I've moved on to a work stint, or a meditation retreat, or another family, that's where I find my home for the moment.

As I prepared to take my leave, Marty took me aside to say, "I'm not sure you realize how much Cora loves you. She misses you when you're gone, and wants to know when you're coming back. While you're away this time you might think about writing her a note."

I was startled to hear that Cora had formed an attachment with me beyond the here and now. But why should I be so surprised? We're a large part of each other's lives, even if only intermittently. *Of course* she would miss me. How could I have been so blind?

Since then I've reviewed my own childhood, and realized that my earliest memory was of waving good-bye to a father who never came back. The next day, it seems, my mother introduced me to my "new father." One day my grandmother was feeding me oatmeal cookies. The next day she had "passed away." I recalled the moves that regularly interrupted the continuity of my schooling. I remembered the pain of saying good-bye to old friends, and the agony of trying to make new ones, over and over. I've grown up doubting that attachments endure beyond the present, that ties in fact do bind. No wonder I've longed for lasting relationships and yet been unable to hope for them.

I think of the Ch'an master who was asked if the enlightened person is free of cause and effect. "Yes," he declared arrogantly, and was reborn for 500 lifetimes as a fox. His initial ignorance had been due, I suspect, not so much to a flaw of understanding as to a failure of courage.

I see myself in his story. I see that seeking an easy come/easy go relationship to families binds me, paradoxically, to narrow views of myself, as monk, uncle, or non-parent; that if I could just surrender to the ties that bind, I'd open up to expectation and disappointment, affection and disaffection, joy and grief. I glimpse the limitless world of whole-heartedness, where one fate is lashed to that of all, the homed with the homeless, the parent with the non-parent, the adult with the child, the human species with all species: one big watershed.

Far from home, then, in a motel coffee shop, I bought a postcard for Cora, showing three girls dancing on the seashore. She'll find herself in it, I have no doubt, and she'll spell me out in the marks I make on the back of the card. This knot of connection, this crossing of karmas, is the tie that binds us to joy, as well as the tie that loosens the guard against pain. It's no less than the tie that frees one to love and be loved, to miss and be missed. ❖

# PRINCE SHOTOKU

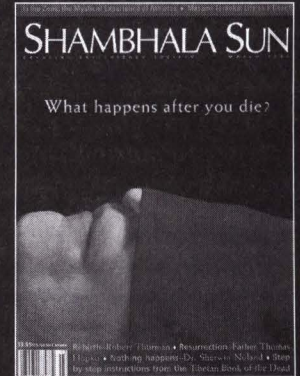
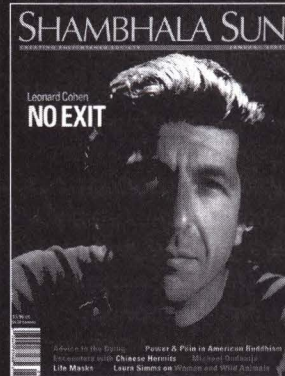
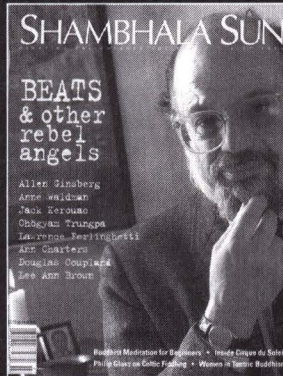
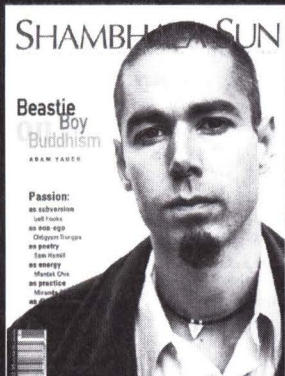
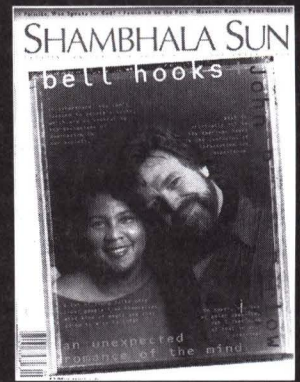
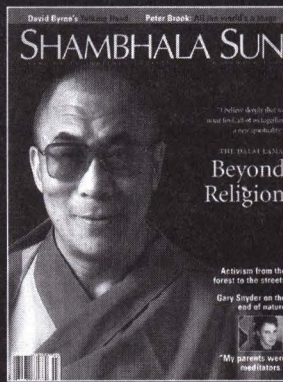
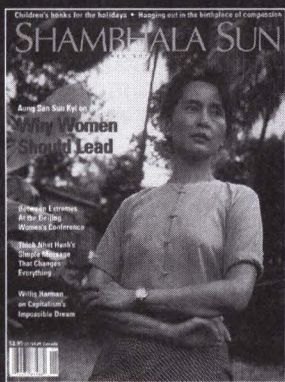
by Diane Patenaude Ames

The man who was known in life as Prince Umayado Toyotomimi but who has ever afterwards been called Prince Shotoku ("Prince Celestial Virtue") was born in 574 A.D. into a Japan which was still on the barbaric frontier of civilized Asia. The emperor lived in a sort of log cabin on stilts, with crude plank floors over which the gorgeous carpets that he imported from the mainland were presumably thrown. Few if any of the people at his so-called court had yet discovered the foreign pastimes of drinking tea or writing poems about falling blossoms. In fact, very few of the people there could read or write at all, partly because no system had yet been devised to write the Japanese language. In the countryside, sword-wielding clan leaders, most of whom worshipped trees and rocks, held the peasants in serfdom or outright slavery. They also tore up the countryside fighting each other. All in all, it was a brutally hierarchical society.

Throughout the sixth century, Buddhist scholar-monks from the Korean kingdom of Paekche had been introducing such things as written language, Chinese medicine, and Buddhism to the imperial court. But Japanese conservatives resisted all this, leading, finally, to civil war. The advocates of civilization won, eventually

installing Prince Shotoku (574-622), who had been tutored all his life by Korean monks, as regent. The prince quieted clan warfare, introduced a whole range of foreign technology from water reservoirs to papermaking, and in general civilized Japan. But above all, he is remembered for his Buddhist scholarship and sanctity, epitomized by his most famous statement, "The world is false and illusory; only the Buddha is true and real."

He is also remembered for showing a degree of compassion toward the common people that amazed his contemporaries. Shitenno-ji, the first of the many Buddhist temples he constructed, had on its grounds both the first home for the destitute and the first charity hospital in the country. There Chinese medicines were given to all who asked for them, and, to the astonishment of aristocrats, sick peasants were cared for "as if they were masters and lords"—as if, in other words, they were human beings, a very threatening idea in this or any other slaveholding society. In seventh-century Japan, where the sick were considered ritually impure and socio-economic arrangements dehumanized the poor, the idea of establishing a charity hospital was downright mind-boggling. But Prince Shotoku, who insisted in his writings that Buddhist practice must be accompanied by actions that benefit one's fellow creatures, transcended these cultural prejudices to become known as the founder of Japanese charity as well as the founder of Japanese Buddhism. ❖



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# HOME-RETURNING

by Stephanie Kaza

In the Soto Zen tradition, priest ordination is a solemn event, with serious vows to serve all sentient beings. At a crux point in the ceremony, the priest-to-be declares his or her willingness to live the homeless life. The drama of the vow is highlighted by formal goodbyes to parents. The homeless one now becomes the wandering monk, begging on alms rounds, dependent on others for food. This ceremony is about detachment, letting go of worldly goods. It represents a commitment to practice deeply in whatever circumstances arise. The pull of this call is not unfamiliar to those drawn toward the meditative path. But what, we might ask, does home-leaving mean in relation to environmental practice?

I see a couple of things that might undermine good earth work. First, that very detachment could mean you don't live anywhere really, that no place is home. If no place is home, then what piece of earth do you take care of in support of your life? The other extreme—that all places are home for the avowed priest—is too glib, I think, and maybe not really possible. To call a place home means to know something about who else lives there and how the place changes from season to season. It takes some time to understand the patterns of creek flow and leaf passing that establish the character of a particular place. Even after five years in Vermont, I am just beginning to know the landscape topography and the shape of the rivers.

Many people think of home primarily as social domain with little attention to the broader environmental context. Home is seen as hearth or temple, as gathering place for friends and family. A "homemaker" practicing in this limited sense would take care of his or her immediate house and yard. But who takes care of the larger home—the watershed, the atmosphere, the oceans, and soil? From this larger home flows all existence, Buddhists included. This Big Home has been called Dharma Gaia. Dharma is home of the original teaching, the truth of the earth's existence. Gaia is the living planetary system itself—mountains, stardust, oceans, great trees—influences on many different scales that shape our human lives. This, I think, is the original call, the source of the path of practice we are drawn to. How can we find a way to respond to this call in the sense of Big Home, Big Teaching?

Perhaps we need a home-returning ceremony—for everyone, not just priests. We could celebrate together and help each other practice being at home, loving our home, giving thanks for that which supports our lives. It would be a ceremony about arriving rather than leaving—arriving at one's first home, the source of breath

and body. It could be held each season or each moon cycle or even each sunrise. In regular rhythm, in the company of friends, this would be a chance to arrive again and again at the particular unfolding of place and time where you are. Home-returning is perhaps the heart of Buddhist environmental practice, a chance to invite the lovingkindness of all that sustains life to come home in us. This is Big Mindfulness, paying attention to the whole works. Here by the big black oak, the tumbling creek and the great empty sky call us to return to Dharma Gaia, Big Home, original teaching. ❖

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# NOWHERE TO RUN

## *Portraits of life on the street*

by Tony Patchell

*Tony Patchell is a psychotherapist who works with the Homeless Program at the Tom Waddell Clinic in San Francisco. The clinic, part of the Department of Public Health, serves people who live on the margins of society: homeless, drug users, alcoholics, poor people with AIDS. As a case manager, Tony serves his clients in many ways: from obtaining housing and health care, to buying shoes and bus tickets, to summoning the coroner, if it comes to that. "Our program is designed to work with folks other people cannot or will not work with; we're the bottom line."*

*Tony is a Zen student affiliated with San Francisco Zen Center. "The relationship between this work and practice is something I always think about. In a way, it's simple: there's a terrible amount of suffering, I'm involved in it. I don't have to look for the connection, it slaps me in the face every minute. If someone were to say, Oh, you're such a bodhisattva, I would feel a little odd. I'm not more or less than any of my work partners, or the people with whom we work. It's all of a piece. There are numerous bodhisattvas around who never heard of Buddhism. They may go, 'Huh, Zen? What's that?' But in fact, that's what they are."*

*The accounts that follow are excerpts from the personal/work journal Tony has kept since 1992. The names of Tony's clients have been changed.*

### **Wednesday, January 22**

It's very, very cold outside. Homeless folks are wet, miserable, all problems intensified by the bad weather. St. Anthony's is rather quiet, but the temporary shelter in the old KGO building is bedlam. The women's low-ceilinged room is jammed full. Lots of young loud black people are teasing an old white lady who finally screams and picks up a metal folding chair and slings it like a frisbee across the room. It slams against the wall with a loud crash. The young folks laugh and jump up and down and clap their hands. Those who were asleep wake up with a start, eyes tired and wide. They look around and roll back up in their blankets on the floor along the walls, trying to escape the confusion. Four black queens are camping it up at a table in the middle of the room, whirling about, dancing, talking dirty, shoving their faux tits at the men along one wall who are in line waiting for medical services, and generally enjoying themselves.

Mary Mays shows me her exam room. It's down a short narrow hall. She has to shove the door open with her shoulder. The room is actually a closet, maybe 6'

by 8'. Mary uses a plank set across two metal chairs for an exam table, to do pelvises, etc. She works out of her backpack. The line out the door is one long train of coughs and sniffles. I see Priscilla in the line. She is depressed, using crack. She smells like old piss which means she is not taking care of her diabetes, as usual.

### **Wednesday, January 29**

Woke up this AM with the unwanted thought that Anita has killed herself or managed to get herself murdered. I feel light-bodied and irritated. I sit and stare at the walls, take an hour to get up the nerve to go to Anita's hotel. I finally get up and go to the Tenderloin. Anita answers her door all cheerful. So much for my fabled intuition. More like burn-out, I guess. Anita will forever be a problem for someone. She's pushing 40 and is a third-generation prostitute. She grew up on the lower East Side, NYC. When she was three years old, her mother set her on fire. Child Protective Services later returned her to her mom.

Once when Anita was six years old, social workers stopped by to check up

on things and found her locked in a small bathroom sitting on the floor playing with a doll. There was a dead junkie crammed into the bathtub and another corpse sitting on the toilet with a spike still stuck in his arm. When eleven years old, Anita was sold into prostitution. Five years later she was rescued by a sixteen-year-old boy and they ran off and got married. A few months later, in the middle of the night while they were asleep, a bunch of Colombians broke into their room, held her husband down and castrated him before stabbing him to death. They held Anita down and made her watch and then they stabbed her thirteen times and left her for dead. This was retribution for a perceived dope rip-off.

### **Wednesday, February 12**

Went with Marian to San Jose to a locked psych facility to visit Barbara Anderson. We first met Barbara at the temporary shelter last November. The other women called her "Stinky" and cleared a path wherever she went. Barbara is a 42-year-old white woman. When we found her she was so dirty she looked like a coal miner. Dirt, black and shiny, covered her face and arms. She went around barefoot with a rag hanging off her. When she had her period, she just let the blood run. It would mix with the street dirt on her legs and feet, cake up into sticky black patches that would flake and peel and give off the odor of rotten meat. She did this

*It could happen to anybody.*

*Down, down, out you go  
into the street, easy pickings  
for the vultures.*

on purpose to keep the predators away. Every isolated homeless woman is at any moment vulnerable to assault, rape, homicide, whatever. Barbara's mode of self-defense was to be so filthy that even the most depraved creeps and pigs would go out of their way to avoid her. At one time she had been a successful writer and had been married to a big-time attorney in Arizona. Out of nowhere she had some sort of psychotic break and it's been downhill ever since. Now she is locked up, probably for the rest of her life. It could happen to anybody. Blindsided and betrayed by your own brain, down, down, out you go into the street, easy pickings for the vultures.

Barbara spends most of her time in her room with the door open. Staff and other patients like her. She is no trouble, shares her roll-your-own cigarettes, and remains preoccupied with her internal world, which, she tells me, is full of "darkness, blood-screams, slivers of glass piercing my eyeballs, apocalypse fire, bodies in the street, rumbling from deep in the earth." Barbara has an East Coast private school accent. Every syllable is clearly enunciated while she keeps her teeth clenched together, like Sigourney Weaver or Jane Fonda. Her eyes are pale gray and she looks right through you when she's talking. I keep thinking that in some other time and place, Barbara would have been a poet, a saint, a magic woman.

#### Thursday, February 13

HIV team meeting. All the team members are weary. All the deaths getting to people. One client, dying of AIDS, has suddenly been whisked off to small-town Missouri by his two Christian sisters. They do not care about his body, his life, his medical care, his relationships. They want him to repent, to save his evil homosexual soul. They came literally in the dark of the night and sneaked him out of town. Barry saw a young man today who had been repeatedly raped by his stepfather during his teen years. Dad also fucked a lot of the neighborhood boys. Dad has recently died of AIDS, but not before he spread it around, infecting his stepson and many others. Saw another client, Martin Wayne, who was attacked on Broadway Saturday night by a bunch of out-of-town suburban teenagers looking for fun. They hit him from behind, kicked him in the throat, face, sides, and lower back. His body is covered with big puffy contusions. He can't eat, and his kidneys are damaged. Carl Smith was also assaulted by a panhandler who flipped when Carl did not give him a quarter. He punched Carl's teeth out, cracked a number of ribs. Carl is freaked, moved out of the Tenderloin today. The small pleasures of his life are gone for awhile. He is once again on the move.

#### Monday, February 24

Start my week, as usual, at the Ambassador Hotel. My first chore is to break up a lover's quarrel between Linda

Kerrigan and Daniel Sanchez. I can hear them screaming at one another as I climb the stairs. I bang on their door and walk right in. Linda is backed up in a corner with a kitchen knife extended out. Daniel is trying to hit her with a can of peas. Linda has a big bump on her head, a swollen wrist, and deep-purple, finger-sized contusions around her throat. Daniel has one black eye swollen shut and fingernail gouges down his left cheek. The room smells like dirty socks and garbage. They have been drinking vodka and smoking crack all weekend. I begin my sophisticated couples' counseling by screaming, "What the fuck are you doing? Put that goddam stuff down. Empty your hands."

They both do so with obvious relief and then each accuses the other of starting it all. Daniel is a full-blood Apache. He has killed at least five men. He says, "I never killed a white woman before, but there's always a goddam first time." Daniel is shirtless and covered with jailhouse tattoos. He has a full-size .45 Colt automatic tattooed under his left arm. Daniel has a hernia. The muscle wall below his navel is ripped and a grapefruit size lump of intestines protrude out, held intact only by his skin. He tells me angrily that Linda had kicked him in that precise spot. I pick up the knife and the can of peas and put them on the windowsill. I sit Linda and Daniel down on their bed and get them to swear on the graves of their respective mothers not to harm each other until we find another place for Linda to stay.

#### Tuesday, June 9

Thomas Stillman, the Radio Man, comes into the clinic with his own peculiar brand of unpleasantness. The implanted radios are going full blast, sending him constant messages about the conspiracies against him. Old hippie-looking dude with an easy-going country smile. I find out that he did seven years in the pen in Washington state for fucking his seven-year-old daughter, the numbers being a sort of coincidental *quid pro quo*. I think they should have locked up the poor, crazy motherfucker for life. "She really wanted it," he tells me, "I know she did." I find out later that he once hit another child so hard upside the head that he killed her,



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and did little or no time for it. Today he is making sure I know that he is closely associated with Jesse James. I tend to believe it. I cannot help but imagine the hell he lives in and, even worse, the suffering he has put on others. It does not surprise me, however, that he is running around loose. Your parking meter runs out of time—count on swift reprisal by the government in the form of at least a ticket. Rape and kill a child, do some time, plead crazy, which you certainly are, and you're eligible for free legal assistance, disability benefits, and state subsidized health care. Am I bitter and confused? Am I moving to the right? The idea of just not thinking things through is, at times, very, very attractive. Thomas will, I know, get his benefits. His desire is to move to the desert to get away from the radio waves.

### *Monday, July 13*

Hot, muggy day. I talk to Alvah Roberts, who looks like he survived the Civil War. Former Texas oilfield roustabout. Grizzled, gray, sharp blue eyes, in a wheelchair, legless from the hips down. A good portion of the end of his nose has been bitten off, otherwise he has no complaints. "This here is may-hem," he says, while pointing to his nose. "In the legal sense, that is. Damage to a bodily part or some such shit. You ever hear the lawyer story about that?" I had not, so he tells me. "This lawyer calls a witness on behalf of his client who is on trial for biting a guy's ear off. The lawyer quizzed the witness before going into court and the guy told him he definitely did not see the accused chew the victim's ear off. So now the lawyer puts him on the stand and confidently asks, 'Sir, did you see my client bite that man's ear off?' He points to the victim. 'No, I did not,' says the witness. 'But I did see him spit it out.'"

### *Wednesday, July 15*

I walk down 6th Street from Market to Howard with Marian. It is bright, smoggy, the street is noisy with traffic. The sidewalks are crammed with crackheads, speed freaks, drunks, crazies, and cripples. Mostly blacks and Latinos. The energy is intense and there is a sharp, free-wheeling hostility swirling around in the air and no one is in a good mood. The piss smell in the alleys and doorways is so thick that I keep thinking that I see the fumes. I am vigorously baited by a mean, drunk black man because I will not give him a dollar. He starts screaming that I am a racist honky motherfucker and he's going to goddam take his motherfucking dollar right out of my motherfucking pocket. He starts to draw a crowd. I look around. Everybody is drunk and fucked-up on drugs and I am getting angrier by the second. Fuck that old son-of-a-bitch. Fuck his drunk, dumb-ass friends too. Marian grabs my arm and pulls me on down the sidewalk. Her

face is drawn and tight. She is very snappy. "If you want to oblige these assholes, do so when I'm not around." When we are a few feet away, everybody loses interest. I am embarrassed. I feel really stupid to get caught up like that. Get stomped or killed on a whim.

Maybe things are just generally turning meaner. There are lots of racial overtones. Everybody has their mind made up. There is less and less room for maneuvering. I find myself angry at all the meanness in the world. And sometimes I am just plain exasperated, and I do not feel like being fucked with.

### *Friday, October 6*

Today, Mary Mays tells me that Alvah Roberts, who gave me his peculiar legal definition of mayhem some months back, was found dead in the ER parking lot last week. Alvah was a double amputee. Both legs cut off right below his pelvis. He had gone to the ER to get the maggots flushed out of his stumps, and on the way out, between a couple of cars, he had a heart attack and toppled out of his wheelchair to die alone and unseen.

### *Wednesday, November 4*

Paul W's paranoia is on the loose again. He pages me at 10 AM. Negative command hallucinations, a chorus of loud, raucous, derogatory voices urging him to kill. After a certain point in the process, the voices seem to come directly from innocent passers-by on the street. They start calling him names and then dare him to do something about it. He becomes more

confused, more frightened, and loses the distinction between inner and outer worlds. Many years ago he killed a man at the urging of the voices and did seventeen years in the joint for it. He is terrified that this will happen again and he does his very best to prevent it. I have never known anyone to work so hard at staying sane. I can't help but think of him as some sort of unique saint, one with integrity and the clearest intention, for he knows that by staying sane he will not kill people or cause suffering.

### *Thursday, December 3*

The work day starts with Ozmo, Richard, Christine and I having a cup of coffee upstairs at Pastel's, the coffee shop at the juncture of Polk, Fell and Market. While discussing our cases we look out the window on the Fell Street side and watch a thin white woman in her late '30's, blond, tan beret, a darkly stained light blue turtleneck sweater, Levis, black knee-length coat, wander through the three lanes of fast-moving traffic. As she gets closer and meanders under our window, we see that she is covered with blood. Christine and I go downstairs and out into the street to see what's up. Her name, she tells us, is "Marianne DeRoulat." She

*My score for getting  
beaten women away  
from their asshole  
partners this year:  
Zip to ten.*

spells it out in a flat, nasty tone. I think of her as Blanche DuBois with a mean streak. She is a mess; someone gave her a thorough beating. Her nose is obviously broken, mashed flat, bloody and sideways into her face. There is a wide, crusty laceration across the bridge. Her lower lip is split open and there is a tennis ball sized lump on the hinge of her right jaw. She has been crying and her mascara has run down her face in smeared black lines. She is holding a soggy wad of paper towels in one hand and a half-eaten burrito in the other. *Frijoles* are dripping out one end onto her sweater and the tortilla is also soaked with blood. A half pint of vodka is sticking out of her coat pocket. Her speech is slurred but easy to understand.

"This is out of character for me," she says. "I will not go to the Ivy Street Clinic. I will not go to the hospital. I will not go to detox." She wanders away. I and a few other bystanders follow her and try to convince her to get treatment.

We pass an office building where a number of people are standing around smoking cigarettes. Two yuppies, white guys, are leaning against the wall. She pulls a butt out of the standing ashtray by the door and saunters up to them, all the while leaving a small trail of blood splatters, and asks them politely for a light. The two men, astoundingly, go on with their conversation as if she were not there. She, a thin, bloody wraith, moves closer to them, right into their faces. Her posture is threatening, and she leans forward from her ankles with her knees rigidly locked. She waves her bloody burrito around and asks, once again, for a light. This time the men respond. One guy shrinks, presses himself against the wall. He cringes, arms crossed against his chest, hands flapping from his wrists. His eyes are wide and his mouth is tight and down-turned. He is clearly in a panic and I am surprised to find that his pain touches me almost as much as hers. The other guy gets it together and quickly lights her cigarette, to which she replies softly and with great sarcasm, "Thank you very much."

#### *Friday, January 22*

I have a talk with Richard Houston, a 35-year-old black man who is in recovery and has AIDS. He looks a lot healthier than he is. He is on disability and spends *most of his time at home. He is a friendly and kind person* and he has pulled himself together over the last couple of years. He has been strongly committed to his lover, Marvin. They have lived together for the last 14

months. Two days before Christmas, Marvin asked Richard if he could borrow his heavy winter coat to wear to work. Richard says yes. That evening, Marvin is late coming home. Richard gets more and more worried. he calls the doorman's number at Marvin's office building. Yes, he left right after work and went straight from the door to an airport shuttle van. Richard is by this time frantic and confused. What is going on? Did Marvin leave town? Is he in trouble?

On Monday, the 28th, Richard goes to the bank and finds that Marvin had cleaned out their joint accounts leaving Richard completely broke and owing on the rent and all their bills. That night Marvin calls from Washington, D.C. He would not tell Richard why he left but pleads for forgiveness, in fact, demands it so they can prove "their unconditional love for one another." Also, could Richard send him a "few dollars" after the first? Richard is blown away.

It's been a month and no more has been heard from Marvin. Richard slumps in the chair beside my desk and stares at the wall. Neither of us say anything for a while.

Finally Richard says, "My T-cells have dropped from 30 to 5 this month. How can this happen? Do you think it is because I feel so alone?"

#### *Tuesday, February 22*

The nurse from Urgent Care calls me and asks if I can come see a woman who is hysterical after being beaten by her boyfriend who just brought her into the clinic. He's hanging out by the front door having a cigarette.



Thus I meet Cindy Jackson, 44-year-old white woman, overweight, frizzy blond hair, black, stained raincoat. She is crying, has been drinking, and is mostly incoherent. I ask Cindy if she wants her boyfriend arrested. Oh yes, she says, yes, yes. Gary and Eli, the cops on evening shift, are present and more than ready to oblige by busting the son-of-a-bitch and they promptly go outside and do so. It's very rare for a battering victim to actually consent to an arrest. My own score for getting beaten women away from their asshole partners in the past year? Zip to ten.

Cindy's story comes out in little vague pieces. She continues to cry and she keeps banging her head against the tile wall of the exam room. Six months in town from Boulder, Colorado. Hooked up with this guy, an Indian from Montana named Newton, and he has regularly beat her ever since, this last week being *particularly nasty. Broken nose, left eye black and swollen shut, kicked down six flights of stairs, sodomy, anal rape.* His friends always join in. When one gets tired, another steps right up.

Cindy is alcoholic. She has cirrhosis, asthma, and is three months pregnant. She is also retarded, dyslexic, and the past victim of a rape/assault during which she sustained permanent brain damage. As a young woman she did IV methamphetamine. She has made a number of serious suicide attempts: overdoses with drugs, slashed wrists, a handgun wound to the chest, shooting PineSol household disinfectant into her veins.

First, I call Eleanor, line staffer at St. Paulus women's shelter, and ask if they'll take Cindy, if they'll be the last resort. Eleanor says, yes, of course. All their beds are full, as usual, they're putting women on the floor in the basement, and there's always room for one more. Then I call Rosalie House, a battered women's shelter well-known among my co-workers as being always full and rarely accessible to homeless women. I know tonight will be no different, but I give it a shot anyway. You never can tell. I am told that Cindy has to be 72 hours sober before they can accept her. I reply that her most recent beating has more than sobered her up. Nevertheless, I am told to "take her to detox," as if that were easy, possible, or appropriate. The woman from Rosalie House then informs me that Cindy's real problem is her addiction to battering men; she will recover only when she is "ready to confront the issues." I look over at Cindy. She is half-sprawled, half-slumped on her chair. She is drooling and keeps shoving her face against the cold tile wall. She continues to cry and her black eye has once again swollen shut and the side of her face that is puffy and abraded is beginning to swell and turn dark red.

Meanwhile, the woman from Rosalie House has shifted into a serious, high-gear, didactic mode. I interrupt and ask her what she thinks I should actually do. What do you suggest since you won't take her? She does not miss a beat. For a minute I think I'm listening to a recording. She must detox, the woman says. Then in 72 hours we'll be more than pleased to assess her.

Next, I try Rape Crisis at SF General Hospital. I call and get, to my amazement, an answering service. After three more calls and twenty minutes, they patch me through to a nurse on call in her home. She tells me that since we cannot accurately ascertain whether Cindy was raped within the last 72 hours I cannot refer her to Rape Crisis. She suggests that I call Cindy's family or friends and see if they'll take her in so she can get a "good night's rest." I reply that she has no family and it was one of her so-called friends who beat and raped her in the first place. The nurse repeats herself. "Well it's best if she gets a good night's rest."

I then call Women's Inc., the 24-hour hotline which deals with after-hour referrals for the battered women's shelters. They are, of course, all full. The homeless

shelters are all full too, although Cindy is "welcome to drop by after lights out to see if there are any empty beds." Finally, I call St. Paulus once again. I don't even have to make my pitch. "Bring her over," Eleanor says. "We'll put her on the floor with the twenty other women we have over capacity."

*Wednesday, September 1*

At 6th and Market, a shaggy young white guy weaves and staggers down the sidewalk. He opens a can of beer, takes one long gulp, and showing good form all the while, takes a pitcher's stance, winds up, and hurls the can like a fastball straight at the windshield of a parked pickup truck. The can ricochets off the glass with a loud cracking sound. It shoots a good twenty feet straight up and whirls round and round in the air sending long, loopy streams of golden foam pinwheeling into the sunlight where they dissolve, float and drift on down the street. The drunk lets out a loud warwhoop of success.

*Thursday, November 4*

HIV meeting. Ten or twelve clients have died during the last two weeks, so, as we often do, we give the meeting over to paying our respects, remembering, telling stories and anecdotes. We allow room for our collective sense of humor which is usually quite sick and morbid. When the door is closed, we can say what we god-dam please, and this helps both the quick and the dead move on. Doug, one of our

MDs, tells us that he and Basil took Alvah Hamilton to a baseball game at Candlestick last summer. The Braves were in town and they tend to draw a crowd. Their seats were in one of the upper decks. Alvah, his O<sup>2</sup> tank on wheels and rolling and bumping behind him, plastic tubes shoved up his nose and taped to his face, patiently made the trip to their seats without complaint. He was happy to be out in the air and sunshine. While Doug is talking, I wonder how many physicians in this town, in this country, would, on their own time, accompany a shambling, slow-moving, hypoxic, homeless and dying patient to a baseball game. Two physicians in this case.

I walk home up Market from 6th. Pale horizontal sunlight shoots down the street from the west. Shambling people, noisy vehicles, scrubby little piss-poisoned trees, all in black and white. Thick streamers of fog roll over Twin Peaks and a cold wind whips the trash around in little circles. The homeward bound and the homeless alike hunch up their shoulders and walk faster.

*Monday, July 26*

Monday morning, bright and sunny. I start the week off, as usual, by walking down Market to the Ambassador. Cissy, one of my most favorite clients and

*I keep thinking that in some other time and place, Barbara would have been a poet, a saint, a magic woman.*

*Continued on page 21*



# ALL THE WAY HOME

by Susan Kaplow

*The forest is a peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence that makes no demands for its sustenance and extends generously the products of its life activity; it provides protection to all beings, offering shade even to the axeman who destroys it.*

—The Buddha

Months after we had built and moved into our woodland home, I still woke in the moonlight and wandered through the rooms, touching everything to make sure it was real. I filled surfaces with flowers, with the beautiful pottery and carvings we had collected in Mexico and Israel. I actually enjoyed cleaning. Especially, I liked polishing the large window that framed a view of a close-set scrabble of pines, green tops jostling for sky room. I loved to squeeze a path through those trees, feel the bite of rough bark on my arms. Once I happened on two young raccoons there, peering at me from behind a tree trunk.

Suddenly this land was sold and a house went up on it. When we met our new neighbors, he told us he planned to “clean up the woods.” Throughout that icy January he wielded his cheerful red chainsaw, cutting down the trees. He piled the branches into a neat, high stack, which he lit and left to smolder. Smoke embittered the winter air. The raccoons’ eyeshine was replaced by the insomniac gray iris of the neighbors’ large screen TV, staring at us through the dead, empty spaces.

Anger flamed and incinerated all my prior happiness about our home. I filled the rooms with fury: Damn bastard! He murdered the trees! And with judgment: Why the hell did they move out here if all they wanted was to watch television! I neglected our house, delighting in its dishevelment. It was ruined anyway, so what did it matter if the windows were dirty or the cabinets showed fingerprints?

I shrank from the house even as I lived in it. I drew the blinds so I would not have to witness him sawing off more branches. I stopped taking walks to avoid encountering him or his wife. Sunday mornings I obsessively read the real estate ads, sure I could never feel happy again until I moved elsewhere. Inside my beautiful home, safer and more comfortable than most people in the world, I turned myself into a refugee.

I sought and found help in Joanna Macy’s books. Joanna’s clear perception about the despair we feel at the destruction of the natural world helped me to call my anger by its true name: grief. I couldn’t imagine

how my wild fury would turn into the empowerment Joanna promotes until I attended one of her workshops. There, she led us on a meditation to extend lovingkindness to ever-widening circles of fellow beings. When she directed us into space to look down on our green world and to send loving wishes to ourselves, I was amazed at the power of compassion.

I drove home from the workshop in love with the mountains, the road, the people in the restaurant, even the car driving too slowly in front of me. But when I pulled into my driveway and saw *him* mowing his lawn, my jaw clenched. I was at one with Gaia but I was cursed to live next door to a jerk who preferred his gas grill to wildflowers.

I started a meditation practice. In the silence of the zendo, my lack of compassion shouted out. I met even the smallest frustration—a cramped leg, the sound of traffic—with anger.

Chanting my vow to “save all sentient beings,” I began to question the compartments of my judgment and separation. What was the difference between his cutting down trees that messed up his neat backyard and my cutting him out of my neighborhood because he had messed up my home?

In the elegant meditation hall at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, Sylvia Boorstein introduced our group to formal *metta* (lovingkindness) practice. She told us she often sings the phrases aloud as she goes about her day. And she related how her own metta teacher, Sharon Salzberg, would end their interviews by saying: “Be happy, Sylvia.” I used to think that was some quaint salutation,” Sylvia said, “until I realized it was an instruction. By forgiving our lives, we can be happy in this moment.”

I made a commitment to send metta to the few remaining trees between my neighbor’s house and mine. I put my cushion right by the front window and said the phrases while looking at the pines. I half knew that some of the peace I wished them was reaching past their branches into his house.

Metta practice slowly repaired my relationship to my home. Without conscious decision, I began to polish and clean again, finding myself singing the metta phrases to a Yiddish-sounding melody. I resumed my daily walks and used them to wish each passing driver mental and physical happiness. Early one morning, I waved to a passing jeep, only to realize *he* was the driver. I felt confused, embarrassed, and glad he had waved back. The more metta worked its subtle shifts, the more stunned I was at my previous harshness and the

*I was at one with Gaia  
but I was cursed to live  
next door to a jerk who  
preferred his gas grill  
to wildflowers.*

more grateful for the changes. I began to study and write about forgiveness.

Three years after my neighbor moved in, I made an appointment to interview Sharon Salzberg, whose book, *Lovingkindness*, had recently been published. The night

*He came over and offered to give me a push. I refused. I didn't want favors from this enemy who had cut down the trees.*

before I was to drive to the Insight Meditation Society, the biggest snowstorm of the season fell. I was disappointed at having to cancel my meeting with Sharon and frustrated with the drive home on snowy roads. When I tried to turn into my driveway, the car could not climb the incline. Through the steamy windows, I saw him outside shoveling and I quickly turned away.

He came over and offered to give me a push. I refused. I didn't want favors from this enemy who had cut down the trees. I didn't want favors from this man

I had cut out of my heart.

He insisted: "Back up and get a running start and I'll push you in."

My heart pounded, knowing before my mind what I had to do. "Come on," someone inside my head urged. "This is your chance. Do it now." I got out of the car. He and I stood in deep snow, his elderly black dog loping back and forth between us.

"Craig," I said, "I have been acting terribly ever since you moved in and I'm really sorry." I started to cry.

"It's okay," he told me. "We got off to a bad start. I haven't been a very good neighbor either, but it's the beginning of a new year now."

I saw him then for the very first time: bad teeth, gray hair, scraggly beard. He told me his wife had moved out but he was hoping for a reconciliation. Worried that my anger had caused the rift between them, I got into my car and backed up for a running start. Craig gave me the push I needed to make it all the way home. ❖

*Susan Kaplow, a psychotherapist in Albany, New York, is writing a book about forgiveness.*

## NO PLACE LIKE HOME

### *Musings of a transient homebody*

by Cassandra Sagan Bell

Duplex, ashram, share house, cabin, commune, apartment, hogan. School bus, attic, cabana, trailer, ranch style, stepvan, yurt. Back seat, basement, tree house, cottage, split level, dormitory, tent. At some time in my life I've called every one of these *home*.

Since graduating high school in 1972 I have lived in twelve counties in 37 dwellings—for an average stay of seven and a half months. I've lived in an apartment at a busy intersection in Chicago, and a rustic cabin in the Sierra foothills where the sound of a car engine meant someone was coming to see me. The first few years I laid fresh contact paper, planted gardens, painted. Once my pattern of constant moving became apparent, I quit hanging things on the walls or unpacking all my boxes. When I moved, I gave away everything that didn't fit in the back of my pickup, or stored it at the Goodwill.

And yet I love home, long for home, envy people with roots and involvements, feel the need of a safe and cozy place to curl up like a cat, to purr and sing and sit and sleep. My husband says he'd like to make a sequel to the movie "My Life as a Dog" and call it "My Wife As a Cat." When I'm out of town I refer to my hotel

room as *home*. When I go back to the San Juan Ridge, where I lived for several years, people say, "Welcome home." When asked where I live, I have to pause in order to remember.

If I clicked my heels together, where would I go? Where is the home that there's no place like?

I've recently bought my first house; I'm planning to stay. This is the first summer since I left for college that I'm not moving. I know the best routes to the market, where to get a zipper fixed, the phone numbers for time and weather. I have a dentist, a chiropractor, and a Buddhist mailman. Now that I know where I'm going to live, I've bought a winter coat and a self-inking return address stamp. I'm not spending my time packing, looking for rentals and roommates and sturdy cardboard boxes, not unfolding the map every time I walk out the door. It's still very new. I keep finding myself saying in surprise, "Oh, so *this* is what it's like to settle down."

But homemaking doesn't come naturally to me; all I've ever done is unpack. The time, the work, the costs, the responsibility, feel oppressive. The accumulation of material possessions, and the burgeoning desire to accumulate even more material possessions, are overwhelming. The attachment factor has multiplied exponentially.

*I suffer in part from a modern syndrome I call "spoiled gorgeous."*

Wanting to settle down is one thing. Actually settling down is quite another. I am gathering moss.

I've got the hunker-down, staying put, I'm-not-leaving, saddled with responsibilities, homesick, householder blues. The sad refrain is oh so human and familiar: *Is this it?*

Is this my modest house, my overgrown patch of earth and concrete, the view out my window, my circumstance? By committing myself to one place I forego the myriad, other tantalizing possibilities. I no longer have one foot out the door.

I suffer in part from a modern syndrome I call "spoiled gorgeous." No one place could possibly live up to the conglomerate perfection of all the best aspects of my numerous former dwellings: a view of snow-capped mountains, a block from the ocean, three miles up a dirt road, next door to my best friend, five minutes away from my favorite coffee shop, \$75 a month.

Dr. Zafu, is there a cure?

Settling down is very much like formal meditation practice; it offers me a stable vantage point from which to observe the actual moments of my life as they arise. When it gets uncomfortable I do not leave, although I sometimes squirm. I take on the work and reap the cumulative benefits.

This insight is reminiscent of the one I had at the end of a relationship when my heart felt like it was crushed to gravel: it is not *my* broken heart, but the broken heart of human suffering. The pain made me more deeply human. So too, in becoming a settled householder, I sink my human root, cast my lot in a neighborhood and a place, in particular people. I've never had more to lose; I've never had the opportunity to give so much. The ante on caring is dramatically increased. I care not only about the idea of community, but about this specific one. No longer a needy wanderer, I become one of the providers. I have more time and energy for work and creativity, spiritual practice and community involvement. I'm invested. I'm engaged!

Modern life is complex; we are not neatly divided into householders/monks and nuns. The paths are numerous. I don't regret my years of *always leaving*. I was able to embody a monklike form of non-attachment, while at the same time making lasting friendships, and hopefully contributing in small ways to those communities in which I lived. As I heard Ajahn Amaro say, "Yes, monks require some taking care of, but our needs are simple." I strove to be a good guest, to not take what was not offered, to leave things a little better than I found them.

Years ago, my rabbi explained why, when the Jews left Egypt, they had to wander the desert for 40 years before they settled down. Not because they were lost, he said. But God wanted two generations to be born and come of age completely outside of captivity. God didn't want the promised land to be established in the mentality of slavery.

Perhaps it takes that long for the mind of freedom to take root. That's about how long the Buddha's ministry lasted. That's about how long I've been alive. ❖

*Cassandra Sagan Bell is a poet and songwriter. She practices vipassana and lives in Vancouver, Washington.*

## Nowhere to Run (continued from page 18)

a success story in that she is off drugs, going to school, has a job, and is not in jail, walks with me. We strategize about getting her kids out of foster care and back with her. Every man and half the women on the street check her out. She's wearing wraparound sunglasses, a tight yellow tank top and white Levis. She strides like a man, long straight-legged steps, and her biceps and pectorals move with her walk. Her skin is brown and shiny and she has a don't-fuck-with-me attitude that works like a charm on the streets.

### *Tuesday, September 7*

An easy day for a change. Bright and sunny with a slow, cool ocean breeze. Around noon, I walk to the Civic Center park and join a moderate-sized crowd of spectators who are watching the police fight crime directly across the street from City Hall. The criminals in this case being the "Food Not Bombs" people, the crime being their giving out free food to an obviously hungry crowd of 40 or 50 homeless men and women.

I watch the food servers pull four large plastic buckets of vegetable soup from the back of a van. The cops walk over, take the buckets, carry them to the curb, and empty them into the gutter. The food people leave and come back within ten minutes with more soup and two large grocery bags full of bagels. The cops also take this soup and dump it. One cop turns the two grocery bags upside down and dozens of bagels hit the sidewalk. Tourists, both foreign and domestic, are watching with curious, confused, and disbelieving looks. Office workers from nearby buildings and the homeless are also watching, but they've seen it many times before.

The third van load of soup shows up, and with it two young people with video cameras. So this time the cops take the buckets of soup and place them in the trunks of their black and whites. Their shiny boots crunch and flatten the donated bagels as they go about their work. They close the trunk lids and take off to dump the food somewhere else. That's it, no more soup.

Spectators drift away back to work or back to being tourists. The homeless go back to the park benches and the patches of grass. A few yards away nickel/dime crack deals, which had never stopped, continue into the afternoon. ❖

*Biographical information about Tony Patchell, some of which was taken from an interview in the Spring '93 issue of Wind Bell, can be found at the beginning of this article.*

*Photo by Tony Patchell.*

# MONASTERY OF THE STREETS

## *A talk with Tetsugen Glassman*

by Susan Moon and Alan Senauke

*Bernard Tetsugen Glassman is abbot of the Zen Community of New York and founder of the Greyston Mandala, a network of businesses and non-profits doing community development work in Southwest Yonkers, New York. The Greyston Mandala has five interconnected parts: spiritual practice, right livelihood, social action, study, and community, corresponding to the five Buddha families of Buddha, Ratna, Karma, Vajra, and Padma. Greyston has provided employment, housing, and childcare for many formerly homeless people in Yonkers.*

*Glassman pioneered the "street retreat," in which Zen students live on the street together for a week as homeless people. (See TW Spring '94, "Diary of a Hungry Ghost" by Robert Joshin Althouse.) He is currently planning a retreat to be held at Auschwitz.*

*Glassman is the author, with Rick Fields, of Instructions to the Cook (reviewed in TW Spring '96). He did his Zen training with the late Maezumi Roshi in Los Angeles.*

**Alan Senauke:** How did you get started with your Buddhist social action work?

**Tetsugen Glassman:** When I moved to New York in 1980, I knew I wanted to create a real community—a Buddhist model for doing social action work. I also had a sense of timing—that the first thing to establish was the Buddha family, and that meant establishing a daily sitting practice and a retreat center. The second step was to create some businesses. I came with a lot of liberal ideas, and many of my students were social activists; they were encouraging me to go right into social action. I said, no, I want to do business first. I lost a lot of people over that argument, but I really felt strongly that you had to create resources, and then go from that to social action. I wanted to show people we were self-sufficient. I wanted a model that was self-empowering, not a welfare model.

**Susan Moon:** So when you started the Greyston Family Bakery, did you know it was going to ultimately be connected to social action?

**TG:** Yes. At first, we gave all our experimental products to soup kitchens, and then eventually we were baking

from scratch for soup kitchens. But for me, the more interesting thing isn't just giving things away, but how to make the connection between business, social action, and practice. We normally think of the monastery or the zendo as a place where we create some rules to make it easier for practice—the point of practice being to lead us towards a realization of the oneness of life. Well, if I'm going to work in all these spheres, what's the equivalent of sesshin in the business world or the social action world? How do you bring people who don't know anything about zazen or Buddhism toward a raising of the bodhi mind? Are there really practical things you can do?

In the bakery, we have teams that work together producing a product. These are folks that had been chronically unemployed, been out on the streets hustling drugs. For many of them, their orientation is themselves: how much money they're making and what *they're* getting. But the thing is, they're working as a team. If anybody on the team screws up they're all going to make less money. So, within a short period of time, you're not thinking just of yourself, but how you're working as a group, and how could you help another person.

We should be looking at how business can transform society. How can the business *itself* become an instrument for social change—and not just

by donating profits. In social action, how do you make the work you're doing be empowering, and not become just another welfare state?

**SM:** What mistakes have you learned from in your own work?

**TG:** A number of years ago, the bakery had grown to a point where we needed more professional management. We were doing well on the social action and the spiritual aspects, but not on the business side. So we hired somebody to run the bakery who had a good sense of business. He was interested in the labor force, the workers. I think he did a real good job with our entry-level folks. But he wasn't interested in the Buddha family or in this unifying Padma energy, and after a few years he moved it away from being part of the mandala. People weren't developing spiritually.



*Tetsugen on street retreat in Tompkins Square Park, New York City*

So we've replaced him, and we call the new manager a "Pathmaker." Everybody has a path in life, and the Pathmaker sits down with you and talks about your housing, your job, and what you would really like to do in terms of work. They talk about your drug scene, your kids' drug scene, about your childcare needs, your spiritual needs, your interests. In a holistic sense, what's the path you're on?

What's guiding us is the mandala. How do I help you towards a realization of the oneness of life? It's not necessarily through Zen. Even if you're not into a religion, how do I help you?

I want to work not only with the people, but with the whole fabric of society; to create a monastery of the streets, a community.

**SM:** How do you help people who are chronically unemployed become employed, to make that huge transformation in their lives, which requires a lot more than just having a job?

**TG:** We're creating jobs and helping people who are chronically unemployed and *want* to work. We're not trying to convince somebody who doesn't want to work that he or she should be wanting to. The homeless work we're doing focuses on people who do not want to be homeless.

**AS:** But often for those people there are barriers, things that keep putting them back in the place of being unemployed. What kinds of supports do they need?

**TG:** The first thing, obviously, is housing. But if you just build housing, if you take people out of the shelters and put them in the housing, they can't work. Why? Well, there are no jobs, is one reason. Another reason is that most of the folks are single-parent families, with no childcare. When we started to think about building housing, we found that we needed 14,000 slots of childcare in Westchester. So there were no jobs, no childcare, and everything was unstable. There were drugs all over the place. So we had to build a childcare center, and we had to build housing. Jobs did not exist so we started creating jobs. There were some really good drug rehab programs, and we linked up with them. There were some good psychiatric programs, and AA programs.

It's a mistake to think that once you've brought somebody from a homeless situation into a home situation, with a job, that that's the end of it. That's the beginning of it. You have to realize there are going to be slippages. Any normal person who has lived for a few years in a homeless shelter has to become dysfunctional. If you were sane and I put you in a place where there's prostitution and drugs and knives, there's no way you're going to remain functional. There has got to be a period of support to help with that transition. You need time, and you need help when you slip. You may get into

drugs, you may have an old friend who's still shooting up, your kids may be shooting up. So you need a net. And that net has to withdraw little by little, so that it doesn't become a permanent crutch. When you do this kind of work with homeless people, you're not going to do all kinds of wonders, but you're going to keep learning, and you're going to do some good. Look at it holistically, look at it realistically, have patience.

**SM:** Have you lost many people, people who have fallen through the net?

**TG:** We built and opened our first housing three years ago. Nineteen units of housing, for about 55 people, a lot of them kids. Last fall we opened up nine more units of housing, and we're working on 22 more, and downstream is another 80 or so. So far, we have had no families going back to the streets. On the other hand, there is a lot of turnover in the bakery.

The bakery teams hire the people, and they train them. They may hire a friend of theirs, but again, that person is going to lower everybody's salary if it doesn't work out. So little by little you have to try to figure out: Do you really want the job, or are you here for the first paycheck so you can go shoot up? For the first three months, you're on probation. Then the teams decide whether you'll have a job at the end of the three months. Then you become an "alternate"—the teams use baseball language, team language. People eventually become regulars, and they call the regulars the "family." Anyway, there is some turnover in the bakery. But from one standpoint, if you come in for a week, and you were really just after some drug money, you'll still have picked up something good during that week.

**SM:** So it's not a dead loss.

**TG:** From a business standpoint it may be, because you're constantly training people. But our business is not just brownies or cakes—it's the people. That's our product. So if you're there for the three months' probation, you've learned life skills, job skills, though not necessarily the technicalities of the job. You've learned that you have to come to work on time, that you have to call if you can't make it. Maybe you've got three kids and all of a sudden your babysitter, the woman who's taking care of your kids gets killed. But you don't even know that you have to call in if you can't make it to work. You may not know that if I say something to get you upset, it's not appropriate for you to say "Fuck you" and walk off, that a job place is a little different; I've got to talk with you.

**AS:** Five years ago, a substantial number of the places in the bakery were actually filled by Zen students, right?

**TG:** Yes. Originally, 100 percent. Now, we have about 40 people in the bakery, and there are about four Zen

*One of the secrets of the street is that the unexpected is what will teach you.*

students. We have a staff of about 90, for the whole Greyston mandala. Once the AIDS facility opens up, which will be about two years from now, we'll probably be about 250. I would say 10 percent of the staff will be Buddhist.

**AS:** Is there any class division between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists within the overall organization? I ask this because there is often a division in organizations that are working for social change, and because Buddhism in the West is largely a middle-class phenomenon. And also because your own class background is more working class, and is different from the majority of Buddhist practitioners.

**TG:** Not with the people who work in the bakery, I don't think there's any division. But in the Office of the Founder, everyone's Buddhist, and everybody clearly knows that those people are at the top level. But if you were visiting us, you wouldn't be able to tell who was Buddhist and who wasn't. But I think you would feel that there is something different happening there, and you'd be curious about what is going on.

**SM:** Do the people working in the bakery get some flavor of Buddhism during the course of working there? Do any people feel moved to wander into the zendo?

**TG:** Yes, there is some of that. And vice versa; I think a lot about how to make what we're doing more accessible. I work with a lot of Latino and African American people. I work with a lot of poor folks, and single parent families. The zendo isn't so inviting. What's needed is something that also has family. Islam and Judaism are a lot more appealing, because they provide some family.

**SM:** What are some of the new projects you're working on?

**TG:** One project is the Peacemaker Internship program. I want to have a residence house and do an outreach, a scholarship, for people who are already social activists, and who would like to spend a year in a practice center learning our model. We're looking for leaders, people who already have a lot of experience.

**SM:** One thing you hope to do is to function as a model for other places—is that true?

**TG:** There is a part of me that is doing this as an offering. I would want it to be a model if the offering is tasty. If the offering is not tasty, please don't model it, don't copy it.

**SM:** You've been quoted as saying that society doesn't change; the only way you can change society is to change one person at a time.

**TG:** I do think you have to work person by person. But if you're trapped in the paradigm of the system, then your work, person by person, is going to still keep you in the system. For me, the interesting thing as a Buddhist is that every paradigm is just another

paradigm. Just another structure. None of them is the answer. You've got to switch out of paradigms.

**SM:** How do you get out of the paradigm?

**TG:** You know Godel's proof? He came up with a mathematical proof that shocked all of mathematics in the early 1900's. At that time, mathematical philosophers were looking for the perfect set of axioms to create an algebra, a mathematical system that was consistent. What Godel found was that no matter which axioms you choose, there is going to be a flaw in the system. Once you find the flaw, you can introduce some new axioms to correct it, but that will create another flaw. That proof ended the illusion that you're going to come up with the perfect system. So, if you know that, you keep looking for the flaw in the paradigm you're working with, and what might be a better paradigm to work with. It's an endless process.

**SM:** How do you apply that to what you've experienced in the Greyston mandala? Did you have a system and then find a flaw in it?

**TG:** In a Buddhist mandala, there are no enemies. You invite everyone into the mandala. The practice is, how do you convert what you think are enemies into allies? It eliminates the notion that you can blame the government for the problem, or you can blame the rich or the poor. You can't blame. There are interesting axioms of a mandala, but I also know that no system, no paradigm is complete.

**SM:** Economically, your paradigm seems to be based on a capitalist system of selling consumer goods to people for a profit.

**TG:** It's a market system. Right.

**AS:** It's based on having people with disposable income, who can purchase the products that you sell.

**SM:** Cheesecake.

**TG:** I don't know, that's just one business. The businesses we're starting are ones, first of all, that are labor-intensive. Second, they provide a good salary. And third, they provide a very high quality product. I like the paradox—producing something that's very labor-intensive and high-quality, in our economy, done by folks that our economy thought were worthless people. So our cheesecake is the best in the New York area, and it's produced by people that society thought couldn't hold a job.

**AS:** But can your employees buy your cheesecake?

**TG:** They can eat it. Maybe they can't buy it. That wouldn't stop me from making Cadillacs, just because the employees couldn't buy the Cadillacs.

**AS:** It might stop somebody from wanting to make Cadillacs. That's another paradigm.

**TG:** Yes. It's true that our clothing goods are very expensive. But they are created out of throwaways.

**SM:** What about worker ownership? Are you moving in that direction in any of the companies?

**TG:** It's something that is of big interest to us. With the clothing business, for example, we're looking at not just worker-owned, but cooperative. But there's been failure with a lot of these models. We know people who have had some success after decades of failure, and we know people who have never made a success.

The biggest question is: How do you work towards raising the bodhi mind? That's the primary point of the whole community. If you don't know what that means, your work is going to drift. In Chogyam Trungpa's words, we're trying to build an enlightened society.

**AS:** Could you say something about the Peacemaker ordination?

**TG:** When I did the first Peacemaker ordination, it was for somebody who was active in social action, and who wanted to be a priest. That combination intrigued me. After that, other people asked for ordination, people who are doing wonderful engaged Buddhist work. I'm not trying to teach them anything. What I'm hoping is that just by creating that Peacemaker container, people will keep popping up who will define what it's all about.

**AS:** Is the ordination much the same as a regular Zen priest's ordination?

**TG:** Yes. They take vows that I've created. I also ask the person to make their own vows. It's simple and straightforward, to the point, and very beautiful. I wasn't sure when I did the first ordination what would happen. But I felt it was an important step to take. What's fascinating to me is that the Peacemaker priests come from different traditions. One person works with Thich Nhat Han. Another guy brings the Tibetan tradition. It's not just one lineage. I've also ordained people in other religions.

**SM:** The fact that these people just came forward, and you didn't know what was going to happen, impresses me. Things unfolded in a way that you didn't foresee. In reading the material about Greyston and your other businesses and projects, it looks like a very well-organized, well-thought-out system. But talking to you now, I see that you just entered into these different things with a tremendous sense of trust that things would unfold the way they were supposed to.

**TG:** One of the secrets of the street is that the unexpected is what will teach you. Don't worry about what you can expect. It's the unexpected that you're going to learn from. It's just a matter of cultivating, opening up. You let the fruit bloom of itself, as fruit will bloom. ❖

*Susan Moon edits Turning Wheel. Alan Senauke is National Coordinator of BPF.*

*Photo by Peter Cunningham.*

## I REMEMBER

I remember. For a few times each day it comes to my mind and I think of my home and my mountain Bilogora. My beautiful orchards and my flowers are still there. I had loved and tended them. And now when I am so old and ruined, I am not lucky enough to pace around my home and my orchards. I often remember maiden Bilogora where I used to sing and pick mushrooms. When I remember, I know my destiny is hard, since I have been through this once before, and have run away from my own house to save my children and my own bare life. And now, when the years wash over me and illness comes, I have no strength and I don't believe I ever will come home. And now my village, Loncarica, is devastated, without any people remaining.

—*Stekovic Danka, Camp Mala Krsna*

Far away, but still deep in my heart, there is a blue street and a red skyscraper on it, where I used to live. My thoughts and my desires dissipated in that blue street. There I left my first steps, my girlhood and college time, walks, laughing, life. There I left everything I liked...What for? And I will never understand why people shoot each other—neighbors shoot neighbors, godfathers shoot their godsons, only because we are Serbs, Croats, or Muslims. But we all pace the same earth, the same sun heats us, we breathe the same air. I want to forget all bad things, but the pain remains. Everything hurts me, my heart bleeds, there is no joy in my eyes but melancholy and sorrow. There is a blue street remaining in my heart.

—*Ljiljana Trkulja*

*These writings of refugee women from the former Yugoslavia are from a forthcoming book, I Remember, to be published by Aunt Lute Press, in September, 1996. Copies can be ordered from your local bookstore, or by writing to Crabgrass, 3181 Mission St. #30, San Francisco, CA 94110. Price: \$22 + \$2.50 shipping. Proceeds from book sales support the refugees.*



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# A DOCUMENTARY OF GRACE

## Story and photos by Meredith Stout

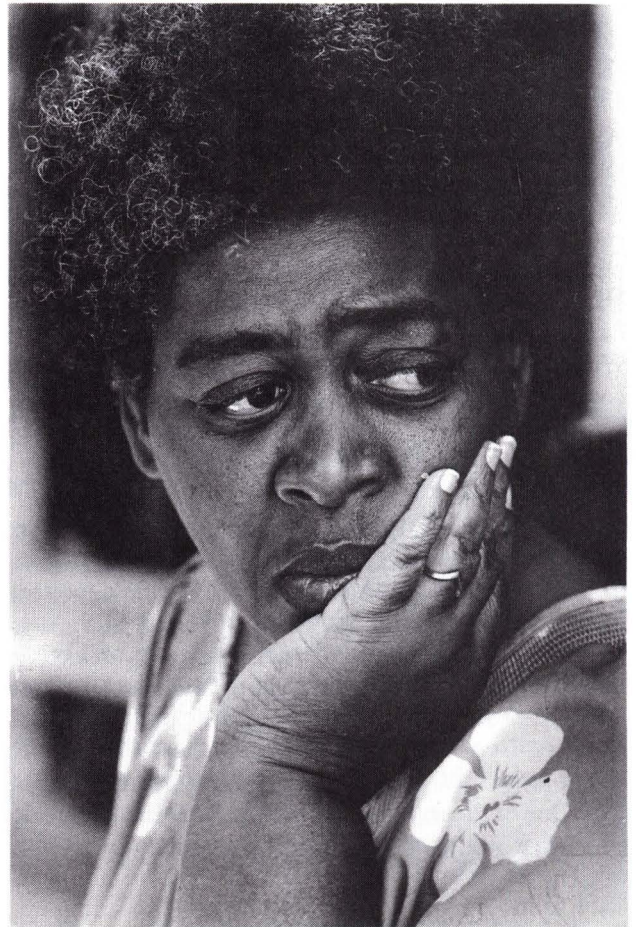
At the Women's Daytime Drop-In Center in Berkeley, the women come and go. Some are long-term homeless and come every weekday to the brown-shingled, crowded little house on Acton Street where they can count on getting some breakfast and a hot, home-cooked midday meal. It's a friendly place to be, a place where women can talk to other women, use a clean bathroom and a telephone, get advice and referrals from the counseling staff, or find a spot to rest.

There is impermanence as well. New women come each day who need the Center for a shorter time while they cope with a financial or domestic catastrophe (or both) and try to get their lives into some kind of order before they can move on. Many have their children

with them, and here, thanks to the help of other women, both volunteers and staff, they find some relief from the burdens of single mothering in a chaotic world. Everyone takes turns with daily chores.

Before I started at the Center as a volunteer, I had thought in dualistic terms—in terms of Them and Me. I felt embarrassed, shy about the good fortune and the satisfactions in my life which I thought made me different from them, setting me aside. Thinking I would like to document the Center, I had brought my camera with me, but at first I kept it shut away, afraid to ask if I could use it, afraid to interfere.

It didn't take long for those "differences" to begin to fall away. One morning Brenda talked about a "make-over" she'd had, and told me I'd look better if I wore more makeup, which is probably true. When I

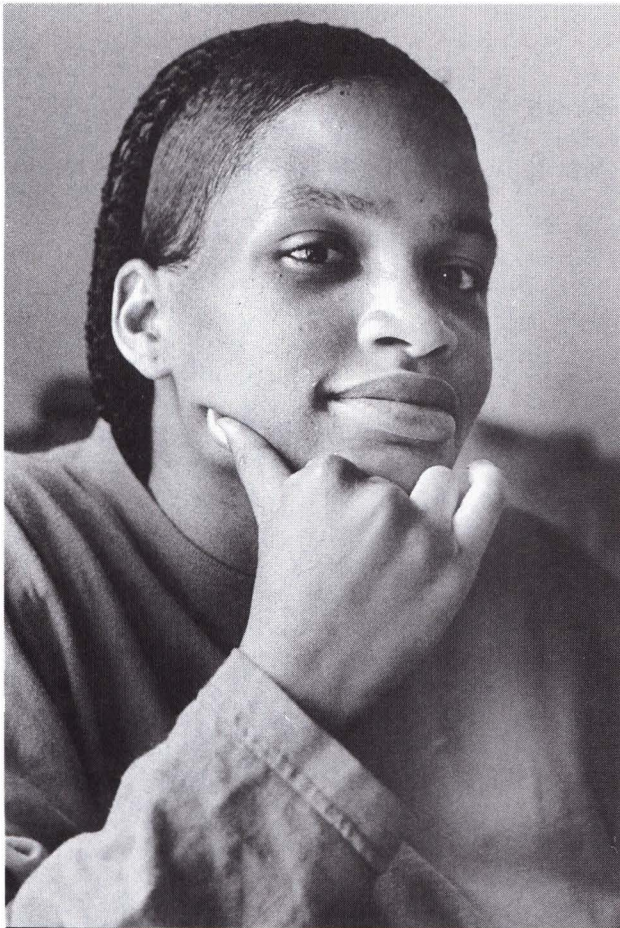
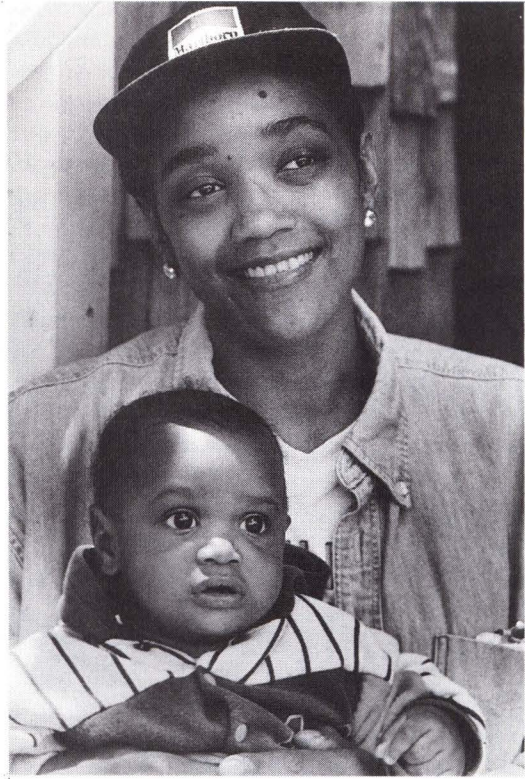




asked to take her picture she said she would be very pleased. In the kitchen, Sukey, who started cooking for her brothers and sisters when she was only five, showed me how to make a wonderful meat gravy with vinegar as a base, and said I could photograph her after she was through. Another morning, Ann and I weeded in the garden behind the house and then I photographed her underneath a tree. Sandra, a newcomer, had worked in photography before, and we talked cameras, dark-rooms, and different kinds of film. After I took her picture, she took mine. Hunched over in an overstuffed living room chair, Jenny worried about her bad teeth, but said she'd like it if I took a photograph for her to give to her grown kids. They are the same age as mine.

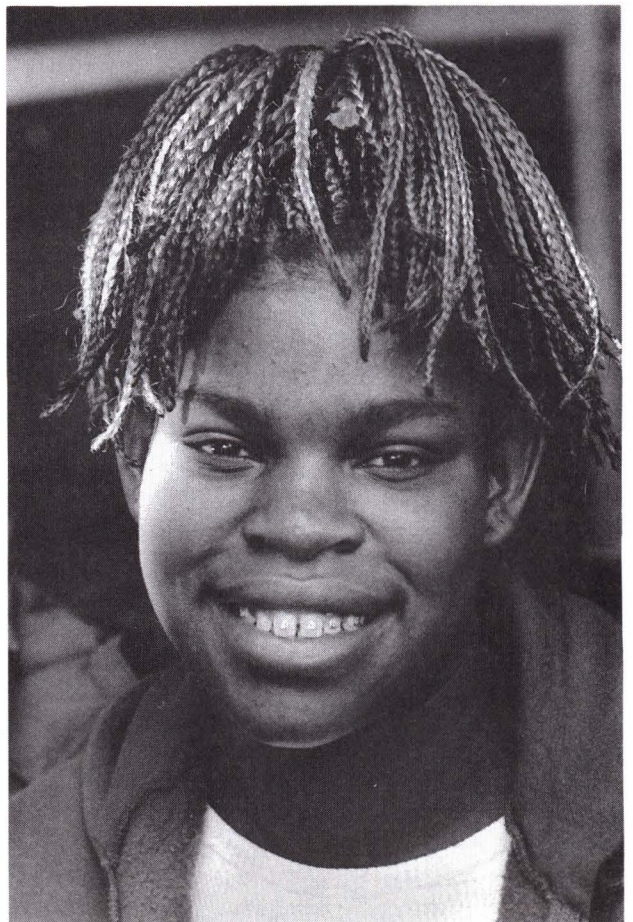
Gradually, we are filling a part of the living room wall with the faces of women, a record of lives in transition and in need. It is also a documentary of strength and serenity in a disordered world. Each woman sits before the camera with such dignity and grace, and inside the lens she is so close to me, so focused, so beautiful that it takes my breath away. For a moment, inside the lens, she and I are one.

"Yes," I say each time. "I wish you could see yourself." I thank them. They thank me. I give to them. They give to me. It's as simple as that. ❖





*"Each woman sits before the camera with such dignity and grace, and inside the lens she is so close to me, so focused, so beautiful that it takes my breath away."*



# SANCTUARY

## *Finding a Home in Prison*

by Jarvis Masters

I first entered the gates of San Quentin in the winter of 1981, and as I walked across the upper yard holding my prison-issued belongings, called a "fish kit," I saw hundreds of prisoners who had already made the prison their home. Their rugged faces and beards were of all different shades. Dressed in prison blue jeans and worn coats—some with cigarettes hanging from their lips, others with black glasses covering their eyes—they leaned against the chain fences and stared at me.

I will never forget when the loud steel cell door slammed shut behind me. I stood in the middle of this darkness trying to fix my eyes, trying to readjust my thoughts that were telling me that this was *not home*. That this tiny space would not, could not be where I would spend more than a decade of my life. My mind kept saying, "No! Hell no!" I thought again of all those prisoners on the yard who appeared to be accustomed to their fate.

I dropped my fish kit and opened my arms out to either side of me. The palms of my hands touched the opposite walls with ease. I tried to

push them further apart with all my might, as if these thick concrete walls were somehow going to budge.

I found the light switch on the back wall, a few feet above the narrow steel bed. The bed was bolted into the wall like a shelf, several feet above the concrete floor.

My eyes had adjusted to the darkness when I turned the light on. But what I hadn't seen until then were the hundreds upon hundreds of cockroaches clustered all about, especially around the combined toilet and sink appliance on the back wall. All the roaches suddenly scattered. They dashed into tiny holes and cracks behind the sink and in the walls. They disappeared, leaving only the very fat and the very young roaches still running scared. I was beyond shock to see so many of these nasty creatures. And although it was not true, I felt roaches climbing all over me. I even imagined them mounting a counter-attack on me when I was asleep.

This was home. I couldn't bear the thought. The hundreds of roaches, the top-to-bottom filth covering the walls, the balls of dirt on the floor, and the awful smell of urine that had been left in the toilet—for God knows how long—sickened me so much that I nearly passed out.

To find home in San Quentin I had to first find an unbelievable will to survive. The first domestic action in this direction was to flush the toilet. Surprisingly, all

the necessities to clean the cell were in the fish kit, which contained a towel, a face cloth, one bar of state soap, a toothbrush, a comb, a small can of powdered toothpaste, a box of state detergent, and a small plastic cup. There were also two *National Geographic Magazines* that were 20 years old, one of them from the exact month and year of my birth.

It seemed that time was now on my side. I took to cleaning vigorously. I started with one wall, scrubbing it from top to bottom, as hard as I could, to remove all the markings and filth. Then on to the next. The cell bars, sink, toilet, and floor all got the same treatment. I figured that if I had to sleep in here, this was the least I could do. For hours, I washed down every inch of my cell, including the ceiling. I didn't stop scrubbing until the whole cell was spotless.

When I was done, I could have eaten a dropped piece of candy from the floor. The roaches had all drowned or been killed. I solved the problem of their hiding places by stuffing balls of wet toilet paper tightly into all the cracks and holes.

The toilet was another real concern to me. I had heard about prisoners being compelled to wash their faces in these very holes. This happens whenever tear gas is shot into the units to break up mass disruptions, and the water is purposely shut off by the authorities. I imagined my face going inside this toilet

and I cleaned it to the highest military standards.

After the first days had passed, I decided to decorate my walls with photographs from the *National Geographic*. The landscape of Malaysia and other parts of the world brought enormous beauty to my cell. I gladly plastered them about—small tokens that helped me imagine life beyond the walls of prison.

After a while, the idea of home seemed to be whatever I could make of it. Over the years I collected books and even got a television and radio—a window to the outside world. And I pasted many thousands of photographs on the walls throughout these past thirteen years. The one that has most of all made my prison home a sanctuary is a small photograph of a Buddha statue sent to me by a very dear friend on the outside. It has been in the center of my wall for a number of years now.

I always begin my prison day with the practice of meditation. I sit on the cold morning floor, cushioned only on my neatly folded blanket. There I welcome the morning light and realize, like seeing through clouds, that home is genuinely wherever the heart can be found. ❖

*Jarvis Masters is a frequent contributor to Turning Wheel. He is an African American on Death Row in San Quentin Prison, where he practices Tibetan Buddhism and writes. He can be contacted c/o San Quentin Prison, P.O. Box C-35169, Tamal, CA 94974.*

*For hours, I washed down*

*every inch of my cell,*

*including the ceiling.*

*I didn't stop scrubbing until*

*the whole cell was spotless.*

# EACH ONE, REACH ONE, TEACH ONE

## An Interview with Valerie Street

by **Thelma Bryant**

"I'm not the one who's important, it's the work," Alameda County Homeless Coordinator, Valerie Street, said, declining my request to interview her over a year ago. I had met Valerie at Emergency Services Network meetings where she presented a report on current issues relating to the homeless population. Valerie is now additionally working on strategic planning to implement "welfare reform." Her attitude has changed significantly in the interim. The situation has changed. A difficult situation has become disastrous. So, over a year later, she was ready to make her views public. Over a year later she was "really happy" to share her knowledge, experience, and personal philosophy.

Here are a few of the reasons why. General Assistance (GA) in Alameda County has decreased from \$300 a month to \$221. In January 1997, there is a strong possibility that people considered employable will have their GA cut off after three months, whether or not there are jobs for them. At the same time, and this is definite, people with drug and/or alcohol problems will no longer be eligible for Social Security Supplemental Income (SSI). This despite the fact that substance abuse problems are designated mental health problems in the basic handbook of mental health professionals, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Some people will still qualify due to other disabilities, but there is only a 15-day period in which they may reapply for other reasons. Many will of necessity go back on GA. In addition, the governor of California has tried, so far unsuccessfully, to cut assistance to elderly, blind, and disabled people, as well as pregnant women on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

The problem is money and where to spend it. What projects do we deem worthy to spend public funds on? Alameda County is broke, with a huge deficit, resulting from decisions made at the state level to shift property taxes from the counties to the state. In addition, counties in California may not raise revenue (only the state and the cities can tax) but must, nevertheless, foot the entire cost of General Assistance. As a consequence,

GA has been reduced, and there have been serious reductions in health programs and social services. Many groups are competing for limited funds. Thus we see the bizarre and tragic situation of programs for children vying for the same funds as programs for homeless people.

One spring morning I drove down Telegraph Avenue from Berkeley to Oakland and the offices of the Social Services Agency of Alameda County. In downtown Oakland I saw numerous boarded-up store fronts, closed department stores, empty movie theaters. A few men were pushing grocery carts filled with black plastic bags of cans and other recyclables. At 401 Broadway, my destination, a large group of people were waiting in the lobby to see and, hopefully, receive help from social service employees. The security guard rang Valerie's office. She came down to meet me, then we went up in the elevator to a conference room where we could talk in privacy.



Valerie Street

Meredith Stout

**Thelma Bryant:** I really want to know, what is the work you're doing as Alameda County Homeless Coordinator?

**Valerie Street:** Alameda County has numerous programs that cover the continuum of care for the homeless, including programs that deal with prevention, outreach,

emergency needs, transitional needs, and permanent housing and support needs. Over the last seven years since I've been homeless coordinator, I've worked long and hard to strengthen that continuum of care, so that families and individuals who are homeless can come in, receive services with dignity, and exit into permanent housing and restored lives. So many people come to us broken-hearted, broken-spirited, and broken in mind, and if we can help restore their spirit and their mind, and help them go on, then we've done a good thing.

**Thelma:** You've been coordinator of Alameda County services for the homeless for seven years. How did you happen to come to this position?

**Valerie:** It was spiritual guidance, to be honest with you. One day I had been praying and I asked the Lord to guide me in the way he wanted me to go, and I made a promise to him that I would speak on behalf of those who could not speak for themselves, and help

empower those people to move forward and speak for themselves. So it's not just a job. It's a *mission* for me, a personal mission.

**Thelma:** And did your previous work experience lead you to this also?

**Valerie:** Yes, I had worked in government for seven years, and I saw how our system is fractionalized and fragmented. We have more fiefdoms than we can shake a stick at on the local, state and federal levels, and I thought if we could take a little piece of the continuum, and model how integrated services could work, maybe the bigger systems would get the idea.

**Thelma:** On my way here, when I got to downtown Oakland, I saw so many stores closed, boarded up . . .

**Valerie:** How can a community become healthy and vibrant if there's no economic development, no jobs? I talked to some people over at the local Salvation Army in Oakland and was told they're turning away 250 families a month because there aren't enough beds. People feel helpless and hopeless because there's no way out. Now the federal government is saying, "We're getting out of the business; we're changing the social contract between ourselves and the American people." Where are the American people supposed to go for health care, for housing, for education? The government is saying, "We don't want to do that any more. Let big business take care of it." But big business demands a profit. Is that the kind of world we want, that's run by the corporate sector, where people are sacrificed? No, we need to hold our government—federal, state, and local—to the social contract, to provide competent education, affordable and accessible health care, affordable and accessible housing.

The disabled and the poor are viewed as totally expendable. Totally expendable. But it's OK to give megabillions to the military for airplanes that don't fly, Bradley tanks that don't work. That's acceptable in the American mind.

**Thelma:** I think the value system has changed radically from the 1930s, the Great Depression, in terms of the attitude toward those less fortunate.

**Valerie:** You're right. Where is the value system now? And why are we having such massive institutional breakdowns: religiously, morally, spiritually? Why are we a broken people? And how can we move away from spiritual brokenness to spiritual wholeness?

**Thelma:** Each one of us can only do what one person can do. Sometimes I think it's like a drop in the ocean, but it's going to be a drop.

**Valerie:** It's the old adage: each one, reach one, teach one. We need to live that out, along with the principle of CREED: compassion, respect, encouragement,

empowerment, and dignity.

**Thelma:** What brings you the most satisfaction from your work?

**Valerie:** Oh, I get a lot of satisfaction from my work. I'm blessed in a lot of ways to be a visionary. I see the possibility of being, and I move toward that. And I'm blessed that I'm able to help individual homeless people and families actually access what they need. For example, a homeless man came to me on the street, and he said, "Miss, I know who you are, and I see how you feed and care for the homeless when you walk up and down Broadway. I need a place to live. I really need some place to stay."

I said, "Here's my number. Call me and we'll work together to make it happen." I was able to get him into a Catholic Charities project, and he's been living there now for well over a year. He's well-adjusted, he's happy, he's got friends. And I've been able to do that many times for people. And that gives me a lot of satisfaction, just to know that someone's been able to come out of the cold, to get a meal to eat, to have a shower. I don't ask for the big things, just the little things.

**Thelma:** Well, I think that's big.

Those "little things" are the necessities, without which you really can't function very well.

What's most frustrating?

**Valerie:** What's most frustrating is the bureaucratic structure of government, when you know government has the resources to do what needs to be done but no political will to do what's right. We need to look at doing government in a different way, to really serve the people.

As a homeless person, I don't have time to think about voting and educating myself on the issues if I don't know where I'm going to eat next, if I have no place to lay my head except on cold concrete. I am the man outside the door, and there is nothing for me because you've not opened your heart, your gate, your door to me.

**Thelma:** I recently was appointed to the Alameda County Mental Health Board, and I did want to ask you: How, in a more perfect world, would we respond?

**Valerie:** We would have a continuum of housing with mental health and primary care support. But we don't live in that ideal world, and so we have people unable to access community mental health—we have lots of schizophrenic and other mentally ill people walking the streets who formerly were at least housed. Now they don't even have that. They're just totally cut off. They are the most vulnerable among us, and the hardest for us to see because we see ourselves. It's like looking in a mirror. We say, "Oh, my God, that could happen to me." And we turn away. We imagine that if we don't acknowledge it, it won't happen to us.

*You must be the catalyst for the change you want to see. You can't ask Joe or John; you must be that person.*

**Thelma:** I think there's been a terrible deception, because when they closed down the hospitals for the mentally ill, it was with the promise that there was going to be housing and mental health facilities for those people.

**Valerie:** That never came to pass. People got turned out on the street.

**Thelma:** The government took the money they saved from the hospitals, and where did it go? I don't know, but it didn't go where they said it was going to go. It didn't go for the people who needed it.

**Valerie:** We've had studies done on Alameda County, through the Berkeley Alcohol Research Group, showing that from 40 to 50 percent of the homeless population are dually diagnosed as both mentally ill and substance abusing. It's a very complicated problem.

**Thelma:** Which comes first, do you think—mental illness or substance abuse, or does it matter?

**Valerie:** It doesn't matter. If you don't have any resources to address either, it really doesn't matter. The people are still left out in the cold.

*You would self-medicate, too, if you had to live on the concrete.*

**Thelma:** I think that a lot of people who are on the street understandably resort to whatever medication they can get, and often it turns out to be alcohol and drugs.

**Valerie:** That's right, it's a human response to an inhumane situation. You would self-medicate, too, if you had to live on the concrete.

**Thelma:** How do you think we could educate the larger community about the needs of homeless people?

**Valerie:** It's important for people to become engaged in their own communities, doing *something*. I realize that between raising children and long hours at work, it's hard to find the time. But it's really important that every family, every individual, take one hour, two hours, to do something positive, whether it's helping the senior neighbor next door who needs food from the store and is too frail to go out, or attending a church or spiritual place where you are renewed, so that you can give something back to the community and give something back to yourself.

It's of paramount importance that we pass on to children the value of giving something back to the community. There's not enough modeling of this for children. If you are so blessed in your life as to be able to see, walk, talk, have your basic needs met, get an education, then what is your responsibility to help someone else in the community who may not have all the things that you have? We have no right to criticize our children if we are not mirroring what should be done.

People say they don't have time. But there are simple things you can do: when you go to the Safeway or to Costco, you can pick up a case of dried soup for an extra three or four dollars, and drop it off at the local church or synagogue or soup kitchen.

If we don't teach our children compassion, they're not going to grow up knowing these things and doing these things innately.

**Thelma:** And we have to see that they're all our children. There's an African proverb: It takes a village to raise a child.

**Valerie:** We are all one family. We must care for one another or we will perish on the earth.

**Thelma:** What about training homeless people to help others like themselves?

**Valerie:** We call that peer support. We do that in a lot of our shelter programs. We have that in our single room occupancy hotel programs, where formerly homeless people have peer support groups.

**Thelma:** What have you learned from homeless people?

**Valerie:** I've learned to see God's face in all people. And seeing their faces I get to see my face. I get to see a different side of life, and to remember how fragile my life really is, how fragile all of our lives are. Also, without being there as a guide and an angel for someone else, we won't make it either.

**Thelma:** Have you ever been homeless?

**Valerie:** No, but I grew up in extreme poverty. I grew up in public housing in Cleveland, Ohio, so I know what it's like to be poor. I'm now a member of Sacred Heart parish, the poorest parish in San Francisco. We have many programs dedicated to strengthening the family; we also have a food-share program. I live in the public housing area of Hayes Valley. It keeps me humble. I get to serve as a role model for children growing up. They get to see someone who goes to work, who keeps the stoop clean, who plants trees. I had a community tree planting just a year ago.

**Thelma:** Do you think homeless people have any political power?

**Valerie:** They have the power of the vote, just like everyone else. If we could build coalitions between the homeless, the working poor, people of color, we would be a powerful group. But the people who need to vote are not voting.

**Thelma:** It sounds as though there's no separation between your work and your spiritual practice...

**Valerie:** They are one. And from that perspective I'm really blessed.

**Thelma:** Did you always have that really strong connection to your faith from the beginning, or did it come to you later? It happens for different people in different ways.

**Valerie:** Let's just say I've been on my own continuum of spirituality. Like children, we grow up in different phases, and our spirituality goes through different phases.

es, too. My spirituality is different now from what it was 20 years ago because my life experiences have changed me. I'm just so grateful for the richness and the beauty that the Lord has been able to reflect back to me, even through tragedy and sadness. I'm grateful to have come out on the other side, to see that there is wholeness, that the plants do come up in spring. God renews himself through people and things constantly, and our challenge is always to see God in other people, no matter who they are.

**Thelma:** Yes, each individual is sacred, each plant, each phenomenon, and there's something about bringing that into your own life...

**Valerie:** You must be the catalyst for the change you want to see.

*You must be the catalyst for the change you want to see. You can't ask Joe or John, you must be that person. That was Christ's ultimate message: You must be the catalyst for change. I am the representation of how to do it, but you must be that catalyst. You must go forth and care for the most vulnerable among you.* I think it's the same for all religions. Each one, reach one, teach one. Universal concept no matter what religion. As it says in the sacred Bible, we are all different members, but only one body. One universe, different parts. But one universe. One God.

**Thelma:** We're all interconnected.

**Valerie:** Absolutely. We're only as strong as our weakest link. And let me tell you, humankind is on a very weak link right now.

**Thelma:** What changes have you noticed in the homeless situation in the past seven years?

**Valerie:** The homeless situation is getting worse. As drug use increases, so do broken families and broken-heartedness. Broken-spirited people come to the fore. We haven't done anything to stem the tidal wave of drugs into this country, and people and communities are being torn up by it. Also, the downsizing of the economy is affecting people in profound ways. They can't find work. Families are breaking down faster than I've ever seen. We won't have any decline in homelessness until systems change. It's only going to grow worse.

**Thelma:** What do they mean by the term "welfare-reform"?

**Valerie:** What they say they mean and what's going to happen are two different things. What's going to happen is that states will be given block grants. Individual families will no longer be entitled to welfare. I think you'll see starvation. I think you'll see massive homelessness. Welfare reform will be the worst thing ever visited on our local communities. It's eliminating what's left of the tattered safety net. It's unacceptable, absolutely unacceptable. And I don't know what it will

take to open up the voters' minds to see that this is not only not moral, it's not practical. What are we going to do with people—put them in jail? Let them just stay out on the streets? There are public health issues.

**Thelma:** I'm reminded of what I've read about France before the Revolution, or 19th-century England and Russia—Dickens and Dostoyevsky.

I have a relation who recently moved to a gated community down in Southern California, and he was saying that what people like the most is the safety. They can walk around day and night because there are a lot of security guards, but back in L.A. there are all these people...

**Valerie:** It's the Marie Antoinette syndrome—let them eat cake. But

you can't live that way for long. You can't live at another person's expense. Eventually it will catch up to you.

**Thelma:** What about the other people you work with in the agency? Do you have a sense of community, or is it more of a bureaucracy?

**Valerie:** We *have* to have a sense of community. I think social service agencies are probably the most hated agencies around. And the sad part is, we *are* the safety net that people rely on. I don't think social service agencies get enough credit for the good work we do just to help people stay alive. We try to work together to serve the client to our best ability with the resources we have.

Whoever we are, wherever we work, we really must be a catalyst for change in our society, and it does start with us. We must find a way to give back to our neighbors and to our community, and to teach our children the value of service. Service, service, service. That's what we're put on this planet to do. We must be the catalyst for change. ❖

*Thelma Bryant, a psychotherapist and teacher, has worked with homeless people and programs for many years. She is an active member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and Berkeley Zen Center.*

*I get to serve as a role model for children growing up. They get to see someone who goes to work, who keeps the stoop clean, who plants trees.*

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# MAINTENANCE

by Lin Jensen

*Here born, we clutch at things and then compound delusion, later on, by following ideals.*

—Sandokai, Sekito Kisen

These words are being written from a room in a house which has recently become, for me, a temporary residence. The walls and ceiling of the room are covered in rare and beautiful vertical-grained Douglas fir, all heartwood, rescued from a fire-burned ridge in the Santa Cruz Mountains of northern California. The windows and doors are framed of clear, kiln-dried redwood. The floor is laid with Spanish-red paving bricks underlain by an inch of mortar, small-mesh wire, 30-lb. felt, and a tight sub-floor. Every brick (3,460 of them) was each lifted by hand and grouted in place by my wife, Karen, and me. Every wall and ceiling board, every inch of trim, was milled and cut and nailed by the two of us. From the first spade full of rocky earth torn loose to allow for its concrete footing to its cabinets and bookshelves that now hold all the personal possessions either of us owns, this house was built by we who were to live in it and who would come, in time, to know it as "home."

But now, only six years since the Plumas County building inspector signified that our work was finished and that Karen and I could move in, a sign has been posted at the entrance to our drive, declaring to all who travel Plumas County Rd. A-23 that the house we built is for sale. I can see the sign from our kitchen window. It is about 4 ft by 4 ft., tacked to a post and cross arm and, though it faces away from me toward the road, I know its message by heart:

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When Karen and I retired, she from a hospital pharmacy and I from teaching and carpentry, we had thought to live out the remainder of our lives on these 20 acres, in this house, within walls grown as familiar to us as our own aging images in the mirror. But now, whenever I return from some outing with a load of groceries or gas for the snowblower or whatever, Welch Realty is there to remind me that I am, once more, a person in transition.

The place has already been "shown" a few times and, when prospective buyers come to look at our home, we point out everything good about it, includ-

ing the yard that Karen has landscaped so beautifully, and the vegetable plot with its 16 raised beds, and the compost bins and garden shed, and even the wood shed where cords of firewood are so conveniently stacked. We fairly glow with custodial enthusiasm; so naturally we are sometimes asked why it is that we are leaving. The question always strikes dead center (as its consideration does now), and I find myself avoiding the eyes of the questioner, offering up the obvious and plausible response: that a recent injury to my spine prevents me from continuing the heavy work of maintaining the place.

What I don't tell the questioner and what the meeting of our eyes might give away is that I regret not doing the things that need doing, that Karen and I have always done together. I do not tell my questioner of how the demands of this place measure with distressing accuracy the exact extent of my daily inadequacies. I do not tell of the loss that this evokes in me. I tell of it now because I wish to show how loss itself cancels the source of its own distress.

In late November of this past winter, I was lying in bed in the room adjacent to where I now sit. With the exception of the most necessary movement, I had lain exactly there since, doubled over in pain, I had limped into the house nine weeks before. My legs, useless to me, were propped up on pillows in a futile effort to ease the pain that was perpetually with me. Throughout those days, I could hear Karen moving about in the other rooms, hauling in armloads of firewood, shoveling snow away from the outside doors and digging her way to the woodshed so that she might haul in wood again, and then mopping her own muddy tracks off the floor. I could hear her cooking and washing up and carrying kitchen waste to the compost bin and doing these things again and again and again. Beyond all this, I had no option but to watch her care for my needs as well, bringing me water and food and tablets of codeine, endlessly bringing me these things day after day, night after night, week after week. And still in the early a.m., when she herself was hopelessly exhausted, she would try, just this once more, to rub the pain away.

I could do nothing to ease the burden on her. I could do nothing at all. And I knew, for I had been explicitly told so, that, when the surgery I was awaiting had restored me to my feet, much that I had always done I would never do again. "No weights over 25 pounds, no repetitive movement of an extended dura-

*I would never again do  
any sustained carpentry, or  
turn clover under in the  
garden, or split wood.*



tion, no twisting, compacting, or sudden bending of the spine." I would never again do any sustained carpentry, or turn clover under in the garden, or drag up a few bales of hay for mulching, or split wood. I would never backpack, or turn a somersault, or jump to the ground from even the most modest height, or run the length of half a block. I lay in bed, looking up at the ceiling Karen and I had nailed in place, and I realized that, if I was not that person who nails ceilings, I had no idea who I was.

One nails a wooden tongued and grooved ceiling in place while standing on planks laid across sawhorses. A partner helps secure the board in place. The nailer

*I had tried to build my life as I had built  
this house, with some fixed and lasting sense  
of myself nailed securely in place.*

bends backward pushing the tongue hard into the groove with one hand while driving the nail with the other. That was now impossible. I had to let it go. In the instant of that yielding, a sweet, sad calm swept through me, and I was shown something I had not noticed before.

I saw then that I had tried to build my life as I had built this house, with some fixed and lasting sense of myself nailed securely in place. I saw that no "life" so constructed could be held secure against the exigencies of time and circumstance, that I must inevitably exhaust myself in the futile maintenance of such a structure. A lifetime of certainties fell about me in disrepair. I could no longer conceptualize who I was and, in that loss, the healing had begun.

We invent ourselves that we might know who we are and what we are to be. But the consistency we seek in these inventions cannot be maintained against the fabulous inconsistency of actual life. Sensing this, we clutch at our cherished constants ever the more urgently. I am weary of maintenance now. The builder of the house of ego can never rest, for he is ever at work to wall out alternatives and limit space. His structure makes its appeal to our longing for the familiar and the safe. In the end, he delivers only diminishment.

Knowing we must move on, Karen and I recently drove over the mountains to Chico, California to see if perhaps it might be a place for us to live. The town has a state university, and Karen thinks she would like to go back to school for awhile. Of course, there's much adventure in an excursion like this, yet, at times while we were there, we both felt a little forlorn. The motel room was unfamiliar, its papered walls not those of our own making. The toilet was sealed sanitary with a strip of paper assuring us of this precaution that some stranger had taken on our behalf. The towels smelled

of some alien detergent or softener we were unaccustomed to. And when we sought out the weather channel on a TV so awkwardly hung as to be reasonably viewable only while lying on the bed, the meteorologist bore a face we did not recognize.

But we persisted in our intent, and were able to join a small group of local residents on a wildflower outing to nearby Table Mountain. On the mountain, we walked with the others on a windswept plateau where tiny flowers of yellow and blue hugged the rocky earth. Karen and the other women were talking among themselves and, when they turned down along a little stream toward a falls, I was drawn uphill to see what species of sparrow it was that moved so low among the grasses. They turned out to be Lark Sparrows and, in my tailing after them, I found myself brought out upon a prominence that laid an unobstructed horizon about me on all sides. I turned slowly, 360 degrees. In all that space, nothing, not even a trace of the very steps that had brought me there, could be seen to suggest where one might choose to go next. I understood that I could, at that moment, walk in any of all possible directions.

Later that evening, Karen and I sat opposite one another in a restaurant we knew nothing of, trying to select something to eat from an uncertain menu of no acquaintance. I saw, even in the dim lighting of the room, the silent tears spread down from Karen's eyes.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I don't even know who I am," she answered.

I said, "I know." ♦

*Lin Jensen lives in Chico, California. He is a Zen Buddhist of the Soto tradition who writes primarily of the human relationship to the natural world, and has recently published in Turning Wheel, World magazine, The Quest, Birding, and Bird Watcher's Digest.*

## Sky Mind

A mind like the sky  
Filled with stars and mosquitoes  
Space enough for both

—Robert B. Brudman

# "The Men Are Hungry and Need Our Help"

## Children Serve Dinner at a Men's Shelter

by Chris Ritter

It was 9 PM and my eight-year-old son Andrew was tired, very tired. He had every reason to be. For the past four hours he had been helping a handful of adult volunteers from the Berkeley Zen Center in preparing and serving dinner to 45 homeless men at the Dorothy Day House, across the street from Berkeley City Hall. Now, at the time that he would ordinarily be getting ready for bed, the kid who wouldn't clean his room was eagerly throwing away used paper plates and wiping off sticky dinner tables.

"What do you think?" I asked with considerable apprehension.

"Loved it! Next time, can we invite some of my friends?" Andrew replied.

The following day, Andrew and his sister Kelsey wrote letters to approximately 20 of their schoolmates, inviting them and their families to join us in serving a dinner at the shelter. Andrew's letter was direct: "The men are hungry and need our help. If we don't feed them, they will have nothing to eat. The men are nice. Don't be afraid of them. Please come help serve dinner. You will feel really good about yourself afterwards." Kelsey, who was five, told her classmates about a friendly dog that hung around the shelter, promised them that working at Dorothy Day House "would not be boring," and carefully drew bright yellow sunflowers in the margin of each letter.

We were hoping to persuade a few families to join us in serving one or maybe even two dinners at the shelter. That was nearly two years ago. Last Friday, our group served its twentieth dinner at Dorothy Day House. In all, we have dished up close to 1,000 meals. Not bad for a group that still has no name, more than half of whose members are under the age of 12, and, except for the money we pool together for our bi-weekly "Costco runs" to buy food, has no funding.

Our group consists of about a dozen families, all of whom live in the same neighborhood in Oakland. Each family has children ranging from ages 4 through 12, most of whom go to the same Oakland public elementary school. Every other Friday afternoon, several of the adults and a few of the older children cook dinner for "the guys," as the children affectionately refer to the men of the Dorothy Day Shelter. At 6:30 PM, the younger children arrive to help set up the dining room.

The guys (the number has increased to close to 60) arrive at about 7, and the children serve them dinner.

The shelter is in the basement of the Berkeley Veterans Building. On the kitchen wall is a portrait of Dorothy Day, for whom the shelter is named. She stares out, a stern face, her eyes fixed intensely forward. Beneath the picture there is a brief biography describing how, after many years of being a member of the Communist party, Dorothy Day converted to Catholicism and started numerous social service programs for the poorest of the poor throughout New York City. Recently, our youngest son Erich, who is five, explained the picture to one of his friends. "That's Dorothy Day. This whole building used to be Dorothy Day's house. When she died she gave her house to the homeless guys so they would have a place to sleep. She's a spirit now. If you see her, don't worry. She looks hecka mean but she's not."

*Kelsey, who was five, promised her friends that working at Dorothy Day House "would not be boring."*

Over the months, several of the men and children have developed friendships and, as a result, the dinners have begun to take on a certain family feel. Some men inquire about what has happened in the two weeks since our last dinner: "How's your soccer team

doing?...You got any boyfriends yet?...What did you cook this time?...Last time the chicken was goood!"

The children respond. There is often much sweetness in the exchange. "You need to eat some carrots. They're good for your eyes," advises an eight-year-old who is clearly concerned that the men will not want the carrot sticks that she has helped cut and is now serving.

The family atmosphere continues after dinner. As one of the men said, "It's like being at home for the holidays." Some of the children draw pictures, while others play checkers with the men. A parent discovers that one of the guys grew up not far from where she did in New York, and they swap stories about their old neighborhoods.

Two weeks ago, my son Erich challenged one of the guys, named Luke, to a "laughing contest." Whoever made the other laugh first would win. For a few long minutes, Erich and Luke squared off, taking turns crossing their eyes, sticking out their tongues and generally making funny faces at one another. Neither one of them even smiled. But the spectators—men, parents and children—were all laughing together. Luke eventually won by making a big smile, crossing his eyes, and sticking his tongue through the space where his front

teeth used to be—a move that some of the men declared unfair since Erich still has all of his teeth.

We have never experienced any problems from the men. On those very rare occasions when one of the guys has started to act inappropriately, two or three others quickly surround the potential offender. "There are kids present—watch it man." The conflict instantly dissolves.

Recently, the normal buzz of conversation that accompanies dinner was broken by singing. It turned out one of the men was having a birthday, and several of his friends were singing "Happy Birthday" to him. Within a few moments, some of the children and parents had joined in the song. This incident led directly to a recent addition to our dinners.

Before serving food, some of the children draw birthday cards, which they hand out to any of the men who have recently had or are about to have a birthday. Last week I understood how important these cards are. As I was locking up the kitchen, I noticed one of the men sitting alone looking fondly at his birthday card. "Happy Birthday," I said. "Thanks, man. And thank the kids," he replied, waving the card.

But there is an undercurrent of sadness as well. Each week certain familiar faces are gone. Last fall, Sonny, a good-natured silver-haired gentleman, disappeared. For months he had played tag with the children after dinner and shared stories with their parents. Then one evening he was gone—no one knew why or where. Some weeks later, on a rainy night, he reappeared at the kitchen door saying that he could not stay, but he wondered if he could get something to eat. The children flocked to him. He seemed very happy with the recognition, but as abruptly as he appeared, he walked away again, taking a plate of food, thanking everyone, and telling the children to "be good and listen to your parents." That was the last that any of us ever saw of him.

The children play an essential role in the continuation (and hopefully expansion) of our dinners. Many parents, who initially come to the dinners for the sake of their child or with the intent of awakening "a sense of community involvement" in their sons or daughters, experience such an awakening in themselves. Additionally, in a strange way, the children act as the lubricant between their parents and the men of the shelter. Many of the parents, like the vast majority of their contemporaries, have kept a comfortable distance between themselves and the homeless. A parent volunteering for the first time will often stay busy in the kitchen, rather than going into the dining room, admitting, "I don't know what to talk to those guys about." The children have no such difficulty and the gap the parents feel is often bridged when they later

hear the guys debating the finer points of baseball with their children or see them playing checkers together.

Personally, I have learned much over the past two years. I have observed a depth of compassion on all sides. Like the time that a ten-year-old girl offered her dinner to one of the guys who had arrived late at the shelter after the food was mostly gone. No pause, no thought, just the offer of her plate of food. Or the evening in late December, when one of the men who had spent the day trying to stay dry in what had been record rainfall approached me. "Merry Christmas. These are for your kids. I found them in a trash can. Can you believe someone didn't want them?" He

handed me a crumpled, wet, brown bag. Inside were a dozen little plastic angels—Christmas tree decorations—some playing musical instruments, others holding banners between outstretched arms. On the banners were written the words "Noel" and "Peace." The two of us embraced. "Merry Christmas." was all I could say. "Merry

Christmas." he replied.

In my conversations with friends and co-workers, I hear over and over again how much people want to become involved in their community. Often people are just waiting for an opportunity, and they find the experience of direct contact with those in need much more fulfilling than simply writing a check. I encourage you to join with other families in your community in a similar project and find out what your children have to offer. To paraphrase my son Andrew, "You and your children will feel really good about yourselves." ♦

*Chris Ritter lives in Oakland with his wife and three children, and practices at the Berkeley Zen Center.*

*If you would like to help with dinners at Dorothy Day House, if you would like advice on how to start a similar program, or if you have ideas or recipes to share, Chris can be contacted by phone at 510/482-3988, or by mail at 3351 Guido Street, Oakland, California 94602.*



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*Last fall, Sonny, a good-natured  
silver-haired gentleman, disappeared.*

*For months he had played tag with  
the children after dinner.*

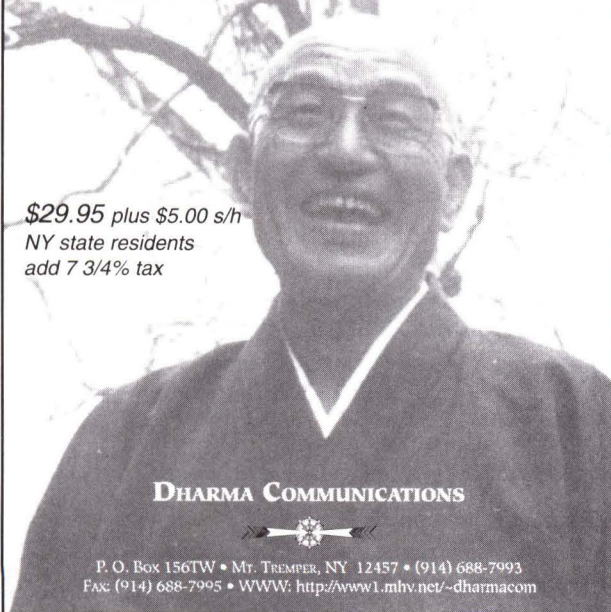
*Then one evening he was gone.*

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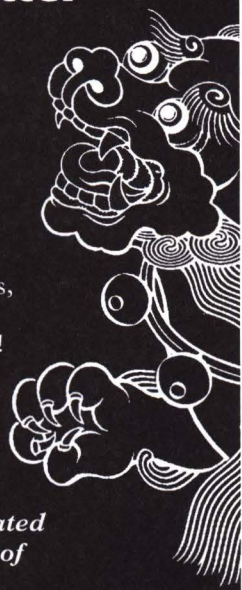
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## Noble Truths

For some  
pain sharpens  
nerve-ends  
to spurs  
that barb, slice,  
cut up  
nearest, dearest.

But you used  
pain's hook  
to reel us in,  
fasten us to you:  
at last,  
your nearest, dearest.

—David Chura

## If You Seek

the stillness  
make of  
yourself  
a pond  
rather than  
a river  
so sunlight  
can sit  
for a spell  
and warm  
your midnight  
places  
instead of  
running off  
to sea so  
the rain  
can rest  
familiar  
before it  
rises

—Kathryn Dohrmann

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

by Barbara Hirshkowitz

### *The Evacuation Diary of Hatsuye Egami*

edited by Claire Gorfinkel

Intentional Productions, P.O. Box 94814, Pasadena, CA 91109, \$15 (paper)

This short poignant book brings to life a seldom heard piece of history—the U.S. government's internment of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II. The introduction gives the historical context as well as explaining the personal connection between Claire Gorfinkel and this diary which was given to her during her preparations for an American Friends Service Committee exhibit "50 Years Later: Remembering the Japanese American Internment."

Hatsuye Egami and her family were evacuated from their home in Pasadena and sent to an internment camp near Tulare, California. She resolved to make the best of a difficult situation and decided to keep a diary recording their lives in the camp. A young scholar in the camp encouraged her and offered to translate the material.

When she and her three daughters arrived in the camp, newly homeless, they stared in horror at the latrine which afforded no privacy. Here is what she told them: "When people return to a state of nakedness, their true worth becomes evident. I think that life here is going to be largely primitive and naked. But don't you think that this is interesting, too?... It may be that in a naked life there is poetry and truth. I think that from this bare life we can weave something creative and interesting."

### *Take Up Your Life: Making Spirituality Work in the Real World*

by Janet Cedar Spring

Tuttle, 1996, \$19.95 (hard cover)

Here is a collection of short essays on making a spiritual journey, informed by the author's experience and the wisdom of an eclectic selection of philosophers, poets and mystics. Janet Cedar Spring has the gift of expressing things simply and with elegance: "This book is for everyone who lives in the spaces between one religion and another, or between one religion and the vastness of empty space. It is for anyone who feels entirely lost, without even a place to set a foot...It is for those for whom spiritual homesickness is the defining fact of their lives. I write not because I have exactly found home, but because I know the search so well."

Each section concludes with exercises, many in the form of guided meditations. A resource and reading list

are also provided. The author is a Zen practitioner and co-founder of Ravenswood, a retreat center in Wisconsin.

### *Beyond Dogma: Dialogues & Discourses*

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, edited by Marianne Dresser and translated by Alison Anderson

North Atlantic Books, 1996, P.O. Box 12327, Berkeley, CA 94712, \$14.95 (paper)

Recently published, this book presents the dialogues and discourses of His Holiness the Dalai Lama from a 1993 trip to France. The collection is unusual in that it is organized by theme, i.e. "Spirituality and Politics," and "Nonviolence: An Example to Follow," and includes press conferences, private meetings with activists, public discourses and the question and answer periods that followed them. It has been translated from Tibetan and edited and organized with intelligence and skill.

The book is elegantly summed up by the dedication: "May this book contribute to mutual understanding beyond dogma and thereby to both inner peace and peace on earth." A must read for those interested in the intersection of politics and spirituality.

### *The Book of Tibetan Elders: The Life Stories and Wisdom of the Great Spiritual Masters of Tibet*

by Sandy Johnson

Riverhead Books, a division of G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1996, \$24.95 (hard cover)

Traveling the world, Sandy Johnson has visited and interviewed many elders of the Tibetan community in exile, including Jamyang Dagmo-la who escaped with her family over a 24,740-foot mountain, and Dr. Tenzin Choedrak who survived 21 years in a Chinese prison. She selected people based on attainment rather than strictly by age and was inspired to do this book during her research for a previous book, *The Book of Elders: The Life Stories and Wisdom of Great American Indians*. Starting with no knowledge of Tibetan culture or Buddhism, Johnson has learned much from her research and from the people she interviewed.

The stories told here are often bittersweet, as these homeless people, displaced by the Chinese occupation of their homeland, struggle to remake their lives while simultaneously holding on to the wisdom of their culture and seeking ways to pass this legacy on to the next generation. The book is illustrated by beautiful photographs. ❖

*Barbara Hirshkowitz lives in Philadelphia. She is the book review editor for Turning Wheel.*

## KNOWING ONE'S PLACE

### *A Place In Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds—New and Selected Prose*

by Gary Snyder

Counterpoint, 1995, \$15 in paper

### *Original Dwelling Place:*

### *Zen Buddhist Essays*

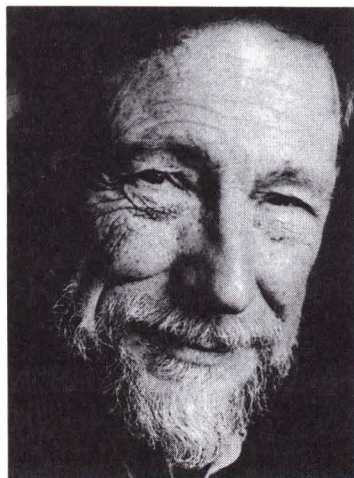
by Robert Aitken

Counterpoint, 1996, \$22 in hardcover

### Reviewed by Alan Senauke

The Zen way is to do each thing completely—sitting, chanting, working, thinking, writing—using oneself up for the sake of all existence. This is *virya paramita*, the perfection of effort or zeal, the same root from which we get words like “virtue” and “virility” (though here unbound by gender). This energy, *virya*, runs like a great river through the work of both Gary Snyder and Robert Aitken, two root founders of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, teachers of the way to a couple of generations of us.

Now we are fortunate to have two new collections of essays, Snyder's *A Place in Space* and Aitken's *Original Dwelling Place*, from Counterpoint, worthy successor to the late, lamented North Point Press. “Place,” how we inhabit our lives in harmony with all others, is the linking concern. But the approaches and language of inquiry are different.



Gary Snyder

Snyder's subtitle outlines vast territories of ethics, aesthetics, and watersheds. With an infectious love of language, dharma, and the wild, he opens these territories in 29 essays spanning 40 years of writing. Wildness is the mark, the main taste that pervades Snyder's concerns and his writing itself. Not just a kinship with wilderness and wild

life, but the wild mind that each of us still has inside us, though it's too often paved over by so-called civilization. His admonition in the book's first page is, “be lean, compassionate, and virtuously ferocious, living in the

self-disciplined elegance of ‘wild mind.’” Later, Snyder proposes a “New Nature Poetics” that would “study mind and language—language as wild system, mind as wild habitat, world as a ‘making’ (poem), poem as a creature of the wild mind.”

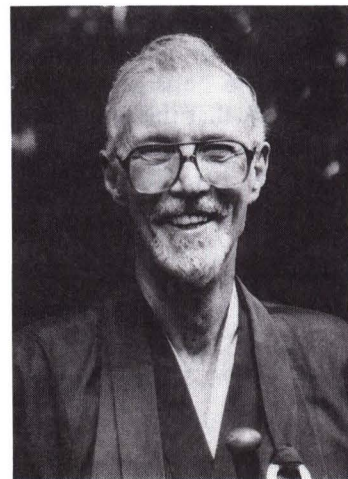
What is our place? In “The Rediscovery of Turtle Island,” an essay from 1993, Snyder argues:

“We are all indigenous to this planet, this mosaic of wild gardens we are being called by nature and history to restore in good spirit. Part of that responsibility is to choose a place. To restore the land one must live and work in a place. To work in a place is to work with others. People who work together in a place become a community, and a community, in time, grows a culture. To work on behalf of the wild is to restore culture.”

So the work is laid out for us, reckoning with wildness in all its forms, including poetry, community, and society, and revering beings both human and non-human. My own habits of anthropocentricity are challenged by Snyder, as they are meant to be. But there are also old friends revisited: the direct pleasures of Zen verse in “A Single Breath,” his classic “Smokey the Bear Sutra,” an early review of Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry*, a book that first opened my eyes to poems in 1962, and more. I delighted in this volume, so much so that I was sad to turn the last page. Maybe this means I should read it again, for the pleasure of the words and for the expansion of my soul.

Original dwelling place is wherever one meets oneself. For Robert Aitken Roshi it is an urgent matter, to meet himself and to help us to meet ourselves in this suffering and joyful world. In a book of elegant essays, *Original Dwelling Place*—the first collection in which he lays out the full range of his interests and careful scholarship—Aitken begins with a tender portrait of his first Zen teacher, Nyogen Senzaki, “an American Hotei,” humbly teaching all comers from his quarters in Los Angeles's Miyako Hotel, long before Zen had become hip. He ends with “Uphill Downhill,” a piece about finding our place beyond words, invoking the *enso* or Zen circle.

“Turning against the ordinary current of greed, hatred, and ignorance is the way of the bodhisattva, taking joy in songs of birds and human beings—and responding with compassion to the sounds of their



Robert Aitken

anguish. Our task as laypeople is to live by this piece of rice paper with its single symbol of the Buddha Way, and to leave the world without leaving it."

Always Aitken stresses how to live in the world, the bodhisattva Hotel's marketplace. This is a way that has quite different challenges and pitfalls than traditional monasticism. He writes for those who find our practice place in this messy world, the wide ground of engaged Buddhism. So his writing here must cover a wide ground: basic teachings and sutras, practice and realization, marriage, ethics, poetry, money, community, death, the whole catastrophe.

Aitken's language is cool and clear, heedful of Senzaki's advice to "keep your head cold and your feet warm." Once at a retreat I woke an hour before dawn and heard a voice from Aitken Roshi's room. Listening at the door, I found he was polishing his talk for the morning, reading it aloud to find just the right flow of words. That kind of care has its rewards for his readers.

But cool is not distant or dispassionate. He speaks movingly of his wife Anne's death. "I relate through flawed material, and so does everyone else. With her

death, however, Anne stands forth as the Nirmanakaya, the mysterious and joyous Buddha who is individually unique and pristine as herself. This is her gift, her *dana*, which she entrusted to me and to her relatives and friends by dying."

"Envisioning the Future" as a mosaic of interdependent community (much as Snyder pictures it), Aitken writes:

"Goodwill and perseverance can prevail. The rounds of circulating the gift are as long as ten thousand years, as brief as a moment. Each meeting of the little sangha can be a renewal of practice, each encounter, each thought-flash. At each step of the way we remember that people and indeed the many beings of the world are more important than goods."

This is the warm heart of engagement, the deep river of Aitken Roshi's dharma that touches us in these too few pages. Again we turn back to his words, and wait for future instruction. ❖

*Alan Senauke is the National Coordinator for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and is spending the summer of 1996 at a practice period with Aitken Roshi in Hawai'i.*

## ABOVE AND BELOW THE STREET

### *No Place To Stay: A Handbook for Homeless Outreach*

by M. Elizabeth Fuhr

Order from M. Elizabeth Fuhr, P.O. Box 7159, Oakland, CA 94601. \$9.58, including tax and mailing.

### *The Tunnel: The Underground Homeless of New York City*

by Margaret Morton

Yale University Press, 1995, \$40 cloth, \$20 paper

### Reviewed by Thelma Bryant

"To save one life is to save the whole world." This quotation from the Koran, which comes at the end of *No Place to Stay*, expresses the essence of the philosophy of the writer, a member of the Franciscan order who has worked with homeless people, especially seniors, for many years. M. Elizabeth Fuhr (most people call her "Liz" or "Sister Liz") says she wanted to write a manual for people working with the homeless, based on her experience as director of a program for homeless seniors at St. Mary's Center in Oakland, California. Much, if not most, of the material is relevant also for people who need help but have not (yet) reached the abyss of homelessness.

In her preface Liz Fuhr expresses concern for the

policies that are causing homelessness to increase, such as reducing funds for affordable housing and dismantling the social system that provided a safety net. In this book she presents extensive material, including practical exercises, for those who work with homeless people.

Liz tells the stories of several people she worked with. One of them, Lovie Burkes, traveled all the way to Oakland from Youngstown, Ohio by bus to help promote the book. I heard both of them talk at a book reading at St. Mary's Center shortly after the book was published. When Liz first saw her, Lovie had been homeless for three years and felt so fearful she ran from Liz after meeting her on the street. It took a long time for Liz to gain her trust. Initially, Lovie even gave Liz the wrong social security number. Lovie had serious medical problems, psychiatric problems, alcohol problems. Liz was patient and persevering. She listened. She feels listening is the key to gaining trust: "To listen is to love." Eventually Lovie helped Liz start a women's support group.

One of the formerly homeless men at St. Mary's says in the book, "If you listen long enough, a person will tell their whole story." Liz recommends responding with "reflexive comments" rather than "intrusive questions" which may annoy or upset the homeless person. She sees the purpose of the first contact as "forming the bond," not collecting information, which is of secondary importance at this stage. Liz cautions workers not to get "hooked into a rescue mode," as this often leaves the

homeless person feeling more helpless. Instead she recommends an empathic relationship where the worker is supportive and encouraging, seeing the other as a capable person experiencing pain. Ultimately, decision-making and responsibility remain with the homeless person; the worker maintains boundaries and avoids becoming over-identified with the client.

Because seniors feel extremely vulnerable, few of them go to shelters, so the number of homeless seniors is underreported. The program at St. Mary's discovered that 70 to 80 percent of their homeless seniors are addicted to drugs and alcohol. So addiction treatment became an integral part of their work. In fact, many of the people who come to St. Mary's have a dual diagnosis: an addiction as well as another mental disorder. Working with these people requires even "more patience, energy, and advocacy."

Liz feels she's been "very enriched by each person" she's worked with: "Nobody out there is undeserving of our compassion and caring." *No Place to Stay* is a valuable resource for those people working with the homeless, as well as for those who want to learn more about this tragic situation.

What would motivate a person to live underground in a dark, abandoned railway tunnel, with no lights, no water, and the possibility of encountering rats? Photographer Margaret Morton, an associate professor of art at The Cooper Union, learned of more than 50 people living in such a tunnel stretching two and a half miles between 72d and 123d Streets in New York City, and decided to capture their stories with her camera and tape recorder. In *The Tunnel*, 60 powerful black and white photographs and the words of 14 of the tunnel residents create a memorial to the pain, shattered hopes, strength and endurance of these people—black, white, Latino, part Asian, native born, immigrants, men and women—for whom the tunnel became home.

"I have no regrets," says Bernard, referring to his living in the tunnel for ten years. "There's a certain level of consciousness required of man. And one can't perfect that within functional society. You have to basically be separated and apart from it...I've been put into a hell of an environment to try and perfect this." Bernard is obviously an unusual person. Five of the 14 people say they moved to the tunnel because of him. Bernard collects cans and bottles for cash redemption,

earns extra money helping building "supers," raids gourmet grocery stores for food, and loves to cook.

In the tunnel—the darkness, the silence, the emptiness—people discover something not available to them in the bright, noisy world above ground. Bob, who had been addicted to drugs, says, "A lot of times I'd sit on the tracks and do a lot of thinking...At nighttime, when everything is silent, is when you can really find yourself." Jose, originally from Puerto Rico, lost his job, then his apartment and wife; in the tunnel he built a house for himself. He says, "I'd rather be here. Got my privacy...No way in the world I'm going to go." Cathy, though, expresses quite a different view when she says, "We don't live here because we want to. It's

the only place we got."

When Amtrak workers started laying new tracks in the tunnel in 1991, these "mole people" were discovered, and efforts to evict them began. Morton then contacted the Coalition for the Homeless, which uncovered a substantial grant to help relocate people living underground. But some of the people resisted leaving, I learned when I talked to Morton by phone. Joe and Cathy refused to leave without their pets, a dog and 15 cats. Morton told me she finally managed to secure transitional housing for the animals with the help of an animal rights' group. She said that many of the resi-

dents of the tunnel, like Bob and Jose, had moved to housing above ground and made a good adjustment. But Marcos, traumatized by the mental health system while suffering from mental problems, still refuses to leave the tunnel. In the book he says, "I feel free here...this is my home...people here, I know them as friends." And although Bernard now has a nice apartment, he still secretly lives in the tunnel and only visits his apartment. Living above ground is too chaotic for him.

Everyone needs a home, a place to feel safe and free. For about 20 years a significant number of people sought refuge in a place most of us would never consider living. Margaret Morton provides a tremendous service to all of us by documenting the lives of several of these individuals. But she does more than this. In her pictures we experience beauty in a most unlikely place, among people we are not likely to meet. And we are impressed by the capacity of the human soul to survive and prevail even in the darkest of places and times. ❖

*Thelma Bryant's biographical note appears on page 33.*



*Cooking dinner in the tunnel*



## CHAPTER & ACTIVIST NEWS

At the Summer Conference on Socially Engaged Buddhism and Christianity in Chicago, Diana Winston, our Chapter Coordinator, held a meeting with BPF chapter members who had attended the conference.

They had a wonderful discussion with friends from Seattle, Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. They spoke about the status of chapters, frustrations, plans, regional goings-on both in BPF chapters and in Buddhism in general. Several good suggestions were given to make the national office and chapters more linked, and you'll be seeing some changes in the upcoming months. Suggestions included having all chapters focus on one project, and using an electronic bulletin board to strategize and discuss ideas. Diana will write more about her experience at the conference in an upcoming *Turning Wheel*.

Welcome to our new affiliate: **Buddhist AIDS Project (BAP)**. BAP is located in the Bay Area and "provides free information on Buddhist resources and events, and alternative AIDS services to anyone living with HIV, including family, friends, caregivers, and people who are HIV-negative." They have a newsletter, a telephone referral line, and are working on publishing an anthology on Buddhist practice and living with HIV.

The **Buffalo Chapter** is conducting a series of classes to introduce individuals to Buddhism. The current class is on Buddhist Psychology and has 15 people attending. They are in the process of building support for the chapter and are considering a BASE model for the future.

The **Los Angeles Chapter** is planning a series of lectures for the winter on Buddhism, Violence, and the city of Los Angeles. They will invite speakers from a variety of Buddhist traditions.

At the May meeting of the **New York Chapter**, Tibet was the focus. One of the highlights was the presence of a reporter for public radio who shared his recent interviews with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and members of the Tibetan Government in Exile.

The July meeting of the **Triangle Area Chapter** in Pittsboro, N.C. had a morning of mindfulness and an afternoon of business. Over the last few months they have been exploring five possible projects for their group to take on: prison work, in the form of offering meditation and corresponding with prisoners; supporting a local Family Violence and Rape Crisis Center; supporting a Non-Violent Toys for Children Project; working with a group to prevent the building of a nearby

nuclear dump site; and issues of mediation and conflict resolution. They will decide as a group which program to pursue. Currently they are offering support to the local Black churches against the threat of burning.

BPF member Wendy Johnson, a gardener at **Green Gulch Farm** in Muir Beach, California, writes, "Over the Memorial Day weekend, we welcomed our old friend and teacher, John Jeavons, and his wife, Cynthia, to lead a three-day workshop in bio-intensive agriculture here at Green Gulch. John has been on the frontlines of the organic movement for almost 30 years, and is the author of several fine books about bio-intensive gardening. In our training session, attended by 60 dedicated people, we examined in depth how best to grow food, grow soil, and grow people in these closing hours of the 20th century. With direct speech, John taught us that the world's soil and water resources are being limited by our human population. Together we explored how to grow food in a sustainable way."

### Chapter Briefs:

...Welcome to our new contact in **Nevada City, California**, Annette Dunklin...The newly formed **Spokane Chapter** will be holding a two-day residential retreat in September with Jason Siff. They had their first annual picnic in July... ❖

## A Buddhist-Christian Synthesis:

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# WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

*We acknowledge that these suggestions are addressed to people with means; we cannot speak for everyone. And yet, there are ways that people from all socioeconomic levels can act to benefit others.*

## 1. Study and Inquiry:

A wonderful book that demystifies much of the confusion about homeless women is *The Women Outside: Meanings and Myths of Homelessness*, by Stephanie Golden, from University of California Press, 1992.

*Under the Safety Net: The Health and Social Welfare of the Homeless in the United States*, ed. by Philip Brickner, is a good compilation of essays.

*The Journal of Progressive Human Services*, from the Bertha Caten Reynolds Society, published by Haworth Press (1-800-HAWORTH) has excellent ongoing discussions from a variety of perspectives.

*No Place to Stay: A Handbook for Homeless Outreach*, by M. Elizabeth Fuhr. (See review on page 39.)

## 2. Personal Practice:

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of homelessness is the sadness, fear and frustration we all feel as we encounter the never-ending flow of homeless

people on the street.

We can encourage each other to use this time as a practice. Notice what your mind does when asked for the fifteenth time that day for money. Notice when you are frustrated, angry, confused. Where do you numb out? Have you stopped noticing people on the streets because of their sheer numbers, or your own feelings of hopelessness? Notice despair. Perhaps by looking at these feelings we can be less in denial about the problem of homelessness. Also, notice when you make a choice to give on the streets. If you have money, what are your "requirements"? If you are concerned that the money is going to support a drug habit, then go with the person to buy a sandwich or a shirt. Or drop your attachment to the notion that you don't want them to buy alcohol. Let go of the idea that *you* know what's best for them.

There are certainly practical things one can do to "help out," including donating clothes, working at a soup kitchen, volunteering at a shelter or clinic. Another important step is simply to get to know somebody who doesn't have a home. Invite a person you regularly encounter on your way to work to have coffee with you. Find out about their lives, listen to their stories. There is much less fear when we feel connected.

Think about the longer term perspective: Do you have an extra room where you could house someone for a month? If you own an apartment building, consider renting one apartment at below-market value.

## 3. Community-Based Action:

Any of the above can be done with your group, chapter, or community. Organize a day when your group works at a soup kitchen. (See article in this issue on page 36.) This also builds trust and support within your own group. If there is a situation in your neighborhood that is inciting fear, such as the planned construction of low-income housing or the development of a shelter, organize a meeting with your community and the people involved. Try to work together to arrive at a solution that satisfies everyone. Help others to see all sides of the story. This will prevent an us/them dualistic mentality.

## 4. National and International:

Pay close attention to legislation that is being passed that relates to homeless people. Write congresspeople or the President when you discover injustice. Track where welfare is being cut, make calls, write for more job training, more low-income housing. Work for alternatives rather than "welfare reform." There needs to be a radical shift in the way most people view the disenfranchised in our country. Every person deserves access to jobs and housing. Speak out for these basic human rights. In most every major city there is a National Coalition on the Homeless that you can support financially or with volunteer time. ❖

— Diana Winston

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

**BEARING WITNESS: A RETREAT AT AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU.** November 24-28, 1996. An interfaith, international assembly of Buddhist monks and teachers, rabbis, priests, nuns, and laypeople. Retreat will consist of walking meditations traversing the route taken by Auschwitz slave laborers, along the railroad tracks and around the extermination sites; sitting meditation at the selection site; recitation of *Kaddish* and memorial services from the various traditions represented at the gathering. The retreat will conclude with an American-style Thanksgiving meal in the nearby town of Oswiecim with representatives of the town. Following this retreat, there will be a retreat for those interested in the formation of a Zen Peacemaker Order, November 29 - December 1. Contact Greyston: 914/376-3900.

**SUPPORT INMATES** with literary materials. Please send to: Prison Library Project, 976 W. Foothills Blvd. #128, Claremont, CA 91711.

**THE CONCH-US TIMES**, the Journal of the Dead Buddhists of America, for those appreciating both Grateful Dead and Buddhist Cultures: \$8/yr. Payable to: Ken Sun-Downer, Box 769, Idyllwild, CA 92549.

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**PEN PALS WANTED.** Male Buddhist inmates in various prisons around the U.S. are in search of Buddhist pen pals. If you have a P.O. Box and are interested, contact Lewis at the BPF office.

**BISEXUAL BUDDHIST ASSOC.** affirming unity, positive self-image, and bisexual identity for those committed to meditation and mindfulness practice. P.O. Box 858, Amherst, MA 01004-0858.

**IMMIGRATION SERVICES** for international sangha. Individuals, organizations. Theodore C. Olsen, Immigration Law Offices. 970/468-0219. Email 73344.1167@compuserve.com.

**TEACH ENGLISH IN THAILAND.** BPF is looking for several women to spend 6 months to a year teaching English to Thai Buddhist nuns. Basic room and board in exchange. Contact Alan at the BPF office.

**KARMA HAPPENS** bumper stickers. It's both noble and true! SASE and \$2 payable to: R. Lovitt, 5226 Puget Rd. NE, Olympia, WA 98516.

**BPF'S AFFILIATE, THE GAY BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP**, has sittings, speakers, and discussions every Thursday evening and every other Sunday morning in San Francisco. In addition to classes, workshops, and weekend retreats, they hold monthly potluck dinners. They also participate in Buddhist AIDS Projects. The newsletter, with information and articles on topics of concern to gay Buddhists, is available for \$15/8 issues. (See inside back cover for address.)

**THE PRISON DHARMA NETWORK** is alive and well and in need of funds so that it can distribute the materials it has received. Please send your tax-deductible donations to: PDN, P.O. Box 912, Astor Station, Boston, MA 02123.

**HELPING HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN:** You can help by donating personal care items that are greatly needed—toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, hair brushes, combs, and hand lotion—to the Women's Daytime Drop-in Center in Berkeley. Volunteers are also needed to work with the women and children. For more info: 510/548-6933.

**VOLUNTEER M.D.'S AND NURSES** are needed to provide health care to Tibetans in India. Former volunteer will provide information on how to help. Barry Samuel, M.D., 18324 Newell Rd., Shaker Heights, OH 44122-5052.

**ZEN VIEWS**, *Generic Zen With a Beat*. Commentary, translations, reviews, recipes. Subscriptions: \$10. P.O. Box 273, Powell River, British Columbia, V8A 4Z6, Canada.

**MEDICAL CHI GONG** is an ancient Taoist system of simple movement, breathwork, visualization, and meditation. It is gentle and easy to learn. Daily practice encourages self-healing by mobilizing the body's natural healing capacities. Chi Gong is profound inner medicine that quiets the mind, increases energy and vitality, enhances immunity and encourages longevity and spiritual development. For information and schedule of Bay Area classes call Ellen Raskin at 415/431-3707.

**CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED** to feed Sunday dinner to homeless women. Please send to Padmasambhava Buddhist Center, 151 Lexington Ave., Apt. 8A, New York, NY 10016. For further info contact Marie Friquegnon at 212/473-0365.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES** in a Buddhist community. We invite you to participate in a work/study program offering classes, room, board, and a small stipend. The work schedule is demanding but rewarding. Work for a leading Buddhist publisher in the areas of shipping, warehousing, book-binding, and sacred text preservation. Part-time internships also available. Dharma Publishing, 2910 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702. 510/548-5407.

**INDIANA STATE PRISON** Zen group seeks donations: materials for tea ceremony (especially green tea), study materials, incense, robes, beads, etc. Please send them to: Indiana State Prison Chapel, Zen Buddhist Group, P.O. Box 41, Michigan City, IN 46361.

**THE M.S.C. BUDDHIST GROUP** is in need of zafus and/or zabutons and any other dharma-related materials to help their 30-member strong, multi-tradition sangha. Donations may be sent to: M.S.C. Buddhist Group, c/o Chaplain William Peck, Washington State Penitentiary, P.O. Box 520, Walla Walla, WA 99362. Donations need to be sent from organizations or centers only, and marked to indicate that they are from a Buddhist organization. Donors should also request an acknowledgment of receipt.

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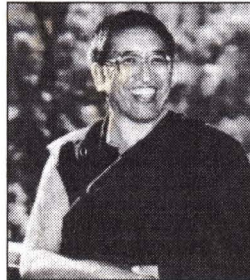
# TARA ABBEY



A Monastic Center for Himalayan Women  
Under the direction of the Very Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche

Tara Abbey was established in 1992 by the Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche. As is generally known, the situation of Tibetan and other Himalayan women who aspire to a life of religious practice and study has been bleak. A vast majority of nuns live with their families or with a few other nuns, in impoverished conditions, with no formal education and little or no access to religious teachers.

In 1991 Thrangu Rinpoche gathered a group of 17 Nepalese and Tibetan nuns for the purpose of providing them with the full range of monastic training which is available to monks. At that time, they lived in rented quarters in the outskirts of Kathmandu.



At present, there is a very serious need for funds to complete the next wing of the abbey, which will contain the main shrine room. Until now, all practice has been done in the area intended as a dining room.

An English language program has been initiated so that these women can someday come to the West, as lamas, to teach. Funds are needed to provide supplies and support to the volunteer lay teachers.

Your help is very much needed. If you would like to make a tax deductible contribution to either the building fund or the English language program, make donations out to:

TARA ABBEY, THRANGU NUNNERY FUND.



In 1992 land was purchased in a peaceful valley near Swayambunath, and in 1994 construction began for Tara Abbey. The nuns carried bricks, mixed mortar, dug trenches and through their labor helped in the building of the abbey. In the winter of 1995 the nuns, now numbering near 40, moved into the first completed wing of their new home.

Please indicate your preference for a contribution to the **Building fund** or the **English language program**. Thank you.  
For a videotape on Tara Abbey send \$25 to:  
Sylvia Bercovici  
P.O. Box 2356  
Idyllwild, CA 92549 U.S.A.  
Tel: 909-659-3883

## Gary Snyder

Reading from his new book,

*A Place In Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds*

in a benefit for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Monday, December 9, 1996; 7:30 PM

*St. John's Presbyterian Church, 2727 College Avenue, Berkeley, California*

### Buddhist Peace Fellowship

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