



# TURNING WHEEL

*Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship*

*Spring 1995 \$4.00*



*Sentient beings are numberless. I vow to save them.*

Davis TeSelle

BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP  
P.O. BOX 3470  
BERKELEY, CA 94703-9906

## SUFFERING

*What can we do about it? What does it do for us?*

*Poets, prisoners, Vietnam vets, people with AIDS,  
therapists, activists, and insomniacs speak—*

# FROM THE EDITOR

## Suffering—When to Avoid, When to Embrace?

Buddhists are always saying that we shouldn't turn away from our suffering, because that's denial, and denial doesn't work anyway. Life is suffering.

But what about my friend Henri? The other day, on our weekly walk, I was talking about the First Noble Truth, that life is suffering. Henri isn't a Buddhist, but he's curious. As we walked on a trail in the hills behind Berkeley—the wind freshening us, the mockingbirds mocking us, the sweet broom smelling us—he objected: "But my life isn't suffering. I'm happy. I really like my life. I love teaching. I have a happy marriage, wonderful friends, my children are thriving. Is there something wrong with me? Am I in terrible denial? Should I try to learn to suffer?"

Obviously not. Actually, he does have a bad back. Plus, he worries about injustice, he goes to demonstrations, he listens to me when I'm upset. His heart is open.

I guess some people are just happy. They don't have to practice Buddhism. By contrast, I know a woman who says she came to Buddhism during a painful time in her life because it was the only religion she could find that really acknowledged suffering. That's good—that it helped her. But could Buddhist practice be a way for us miserable ones to get a stamp of approval for our misery? We can even tell ourselves that those happy people—those people who *think* they're happy—are deluded. We know they're suffering, even if they don't.

Is there a way in which Buddhism puts a premium on suffering?

Yes, if we misapply it. Why not avoid the suffering that can be avoided? Your knee hurts in zazen, and even though your teacher told you not to run away from your pain, you shift to a different position, and—surprise!—you *are* more comfortable. You might even be saving yourself the cost of knee surgery. There's plenty of suffering you can't avoid: you can embrace *that*. And others who are suffering—you can embrace them.

As for me, when I boil and boil my suffering—"reduce" it, as the cookbooks say—mostly what's left in the bottom of the pan is *fear*: of being lonesome, sick and old. It's all completely imaginary. Right now I'm not sick, getting older has been manageable so far, and when I'm lonesome I have lots of friends I can call. I have an attitude problem—and I can't blame Buddha for it. Actually, Buddha wants me to notice that this suffering is a creation of my mind, of my self-clinging. Second Noble Truth. Walking with Henri, can't I interrupt my discourse on suffering long enough to inhale the sweetness of the broom?

And what about the people whose suffering has nothing to do with their attitude?

I was in Cambodia a few weeks ago. The civil war continues there, the forests are being cut down. Land mines (one hiding in the ground for every Cambodian) tear apart the bodies of children as they collect bamboo shoots, farmers as they plant rice, cows as they graze. I talked with Chan Than, a woman my age whose husband was killed by the Khmer Rouge, and who was separated from her young children during those four nightmare years. She said, "Don't ask me any more about those times. It hurts me too much to talk about it." Instead, she wanted to tell me about the women's weaving collective she started, and the patchwork banner they're making to take to the U.N. women's conference in Beijing next August.

She's almost always smiling.

Maurine Stuart Roshi said we have a responsibility to be happy. She said it's our natural state. And Thich Nhat Hanh says the best thing a parent can do for a child is to be happy—to show the child the example of joy.

They remind me of what I so easily forget: that happiness is not the opposite of suffering. It's okay to want to be happy (I can't help it), but happiness is not exactly a goal. If you make it a goal, it continually recedes before you. Happiness is a side effect.

The Third Noble Truth tells us there *is* freedom from suffering. If we stopped with the first two, we'd probably just throw in the towel. But the third one gives us a reason to keep going.

Like the people I met in Cambodia. They replant trees. They go with Maha Ghosananda on peace walks through the middle of the fighting. They teach each other how to use artificial limbs.

We practice a religion that talks a lot about suffering. I hope the remarkable collection of articles and poems in this issue will help us to think about which suffering to avoid, which to embrace, which to alleviate, which to accept. ♦—Susan Moon



## TURNING WHEEL

Editor

Susan Moon

Associate Editor

Denise Caignon

Editorial Assistant

& Advertising Director

Lewis Woods

Consulting Readers & Editors

Thelma Bryant, Ami Duncan,  
Melody Ermachild, Tova Green,  
Alan Senauke, Meredith Stout,  
Jordan Thorn, & Peter Wood

Production & Design

Lawrence Watson

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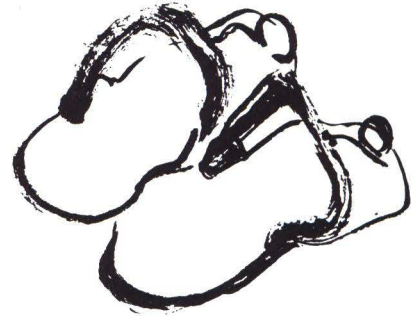
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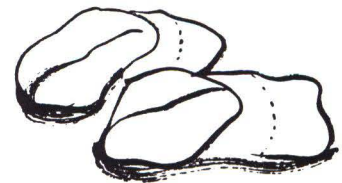
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# LETTERS

[Turning Wheel welcomes your responses. Please send your letters to us at: BPF, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704; or via e-mail: bpf@igc.apc.org. Letters are subject to editing.]

## Wholehearted Acceptance

Several years ago I had the privilege of working with Helena Norberg-Hodge in Ladakh. I think very highly of her and her work. So it was with great distress that I read her conversation with Andrew Harvey in *Turning Wheel*. By the end of the article I don't think there was a person on this planet they hadn't separated themselves from. The gist of the conversation seemed to be, "Everybody else is wrong, and we know what is right." Both of them are very insightful, but I don't think this kind of judgmental attitude is appropriate for a Buddhist journal on peace activism.

I think our practice teaches us that what heals is acceptance. And just as I heal when I greet the madness of my own mind with tenderness, so too does the earth, when we greet human folly with, "Ah, just so." What would it be like if, knowing all that is wrong, we accepted the world as it is and held it lovingly, as a mother her baby? And we also know from our practice that acceptance does not prevent change. What we resist persists. When we accept something wholeheart-

edly, with deep love, it transforms.

So I would ask Helena and Andrew to practice more acceptance. And I see my own work here—not to put Helena and Andrew out of my own heart for speaking in a way I don't like. In fact, separation unites us. The human condition is separateness. I pray that my experience of it, and Helena's and Andrew's, can allow us to open our hearts to each other. What an amazing world it would be, right here, right now, if we greeted it as it is, with wholehearted acceptance.

—Dawn M. Gruenenfelder, Friday Harbor, Washington

## Helena Norberg-Hodge responds:

I'm sorry Ms. Gruenenfelder felt I was separating myself from everyone. I certainly didn't mean to imply that I'm right and everybody else is wrong.

I believe that in teaching acceptance, the Buddha was referring to the cycles of life, encouraging us to accept the fact that nothing remains unchanged in the living world. He was reminding us that life does not consist of static separate entities, but is an inextricably connected, dynamic process.

I think it's useful, however, to distinguish between the biosphere and the human institutions and structures which constitute a technosphere. This technosphere is responsible for a widening gap between rich and poor, and for polluting and poisoning on a scale that could be equated with mass murder. I don't think the Buddha meant for us to accept this sort of change.

## The World of Tibetan Buddhism

An Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice

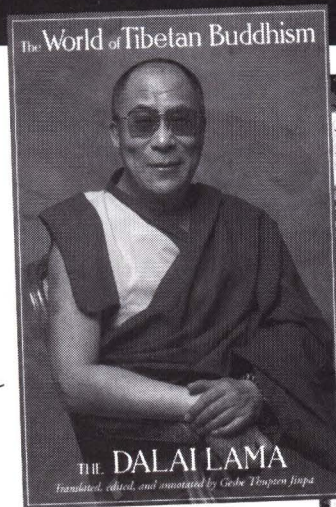
### The Dalai Lama

Translated and edited by  
Geshe Thupten Jinpa  
Foreword by Richard Gere

"WE ARE NOW BEGINNING TO appreciate that the question of environmental protection is ultimately a question of our very survival on this planet... Compassion, loving kindness, altruism, and a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood are the keys to human development."

—The Dalai Lama, from  
*The World of Tibetan Buddhism*

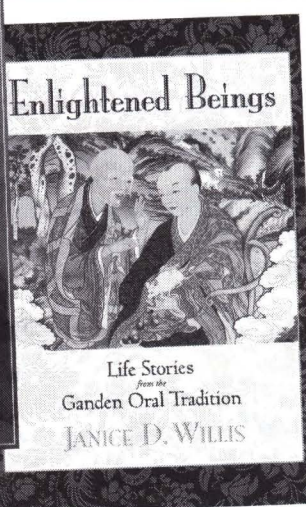
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We must take responsibility for the way our culture has plundered the planet, even though the complexity of our economy hinders us from seeing the chains of exploitation.

My perspective often differs from that of others because of my unusual experience in Ladakh, but in no way do I mean to imply that I am wiser or purer than others. I, too, participate in a wasteful and exploitative economic system. I don't have the right to point the finger at anyone. I'd just like to encourage us all to analyze the system, so that collectively we can figure out how to get out of this mess.

### *TV, the Environment, and the Mind*

Stephanie Kaza's "Can Television Bring You Closer to Nature?" was a thoroughly matronizing and elitist bit of writing. Does she really believe that I cannot tell the difference between television and "nature?"

When I watch a nature show on a Tuesday evening after a full day of work and commuting, to "consider going for a walk" is not an alternative in my working-poor neighborhood. Even a six-inch, flat glass image of a bear fishing for salmon on Kodiak Island is an improvement in the quality of my sense field. That is to say, it's beautiful, unconditionally. I know a real bear's life takes more than an hour and doesn't come with a new-age soundtrack. How stupid does Ms. Kaza think the rest of us are? Beauty is in short supply in my life. It is a reminder. It is water on the dry places of my heart. I will drink from that spring wherever I run across it.

—Jill Grundberg, San Francisco, California

### **Stephanie Kaza responds:**

*Mea Culpa* to an air of self-righteousness and indignation that filtered through my thoughts on television and nature. But questions about the impact of TV on human perception still remain. John Daniel, in his essay, "The Impoverishment of Sightseeing," suggests that living-room viewers miss "the un-framed sensory texture of the thing itself—the scale of the trees, the pervasive stillness, and the filtered ambient light, the dark smells of the forest floor, the feel of moss under the feet. They will miss the varying rhythms of their walking and . . . the primordial alertness that comes in the presence of trees, shadows, and small forest sounds." He argues, as I have suggested, that diminishing nature to a collection of visual objects seen on TV can be impoverishing to people and also dangerous to the land.

The people most susceptible to perceptual distortion are children, for they have relatively little real life experience with which to compare their impressions. A group called Children Now recently held a conference at Stanford University to assess the role television plays in shaping children's values. Many at the gathering called for more parental and industry involvement in monitoring content and values. A recent poll by Children Now

shows that 54% of young people ages 10-16 have a TV set in their own rooms, giving them quite a measure of autonomy over their viewing choices. Elizabeth Thoman, director of the Center for Media Literacy in Los Angeles said, "We need a national conversation about the role and function of mass media in our culture. There is no Ralph Nader of the media world blowing the whistle on the industry."

Media education is a school requirement in France, Spain, Canada, Britain, and Australia. American educators have launched a media literacy campaign through the Assembly of Media Arts of the National Council of Teachers of English, based in Urbana, Illinois. Media literacy education is based on these key principles: 1) that TV reconstructs reality for an editorial purpose; 2) that profit is behind everything on commercial TV; 3) that competitive pressures among media drive them to amplify what they carry beyond its actual significance (witness the O.J. Simpson trial); and 4) that media filters set the public agenda and influence public behavior. Media literacy courses are now being offered to help students examine what they see and to engage the critical mind. Some classes decode TV advertising, others compare TV newscasts with print media content. Students in Billerica, Massachusetts have produced their own TV campaigns against smoking, violence, and sexual harassment which have aired in classrooms and on local stations.

What I find hopeful about such media literacy education is the possibility that we can control our response to television and the degree to which it shapes values. This puts culture back in the realm of the personal, wresting some of the power for creativity away from the almighty corporate media monopolies. These are the cultural relations I most want to foster with the natural world.

### *The Precepts and Gotama's Path*

When I was 16 and secretly, haltingly practicing Buddhism, I was distressed to find that the Buddha had advocated a code of behavior virtually identical to the one I strained against at church: don't kill your neighbor, don't steal, keep your pants zipped, tell the truth, and stay sober. Part of Buddhism's appeal was its apparent disdain for convention. The prospect of living unadorned, free of the lies with which society cloaks the world and its inhabitants, was refreshing. *Sila*, Buddhist discipline, sounded like an oxymoron.

After all, I thought, Buddhism isn't essentially concerned with the battle between good and evil, or with piling up merit for a happy rebirth, or navigating the karmic stream to sweeter waters. The whole point is to cross over the stream and get out, beyond rules, good and evil, and rebirth. Besides, as we progress spiritually, our behavior follows suit: lust falls away; killing and stealing become unthinkable; truth-telling becomes pleasant and easy. So what good are the precepts?

In the first place, they remind us that everything we

do, including crossing the stream, is done in the world. We follow our paths with other creatures, or alongside them, often against them; even in an isolated hermitage that isolation is in relation to others. What we do matters.

Secondly, *sila* is a measure of progress. When I find myself breaking the precepts, this is a clue that I'm not as far along the path as I'd like to believe. Yet, the fact that I've become aware of the infraction may indicate that I am ready to take another step.

The precepts are like grammar. Grammar is the logic of language: we speak and think more clearly with it than without. Similarly, *sila* is a logic of behavior: we live more clearly with it than without. But verb conjugations won't generate sentences and disciplinary rules won't generate behavior. If one weighs each word against the rules of grammar, our speech will come out sounding forced. So it is with the precepts. If we weigh every move against them, we won't get much done and life will be mechanical and superficial. The precepts are a starting place for plumbing the depths.

But what happens when authentic promptings conflict with the precepts? When the policeman asks me whether the beggar was asking for money, do I tell the truth and get the man thrown in jail? Buddhism is full of stories about this kind of conflict. It expects intelligence and moral courage, not slavish obedience. These conflicts, in fact, provide opportunities to explore the sources of action. What is my relationship to the beggar, to the policeman, to truthfulness? How do I respond?

Practicing *sila*, we develop mastery in living. In time, we may develop the mastery to transcend social conventions, and the mastery, eventually, to take Gotama's path.

—*Santipala Stephen Evans, Denver, Colorado.*

### ***The Precepts and Abuse in Buddhist Centers***

I write the following letter as a long-time student of the dharma who would like to celebrate the arrival of Buddhism in America, but is concerned about abuses of power in Buddhist communities.

A while ago, due to a misuse of power and the exploitation of female students, my sangha partially disintegrated, leaving its members in varying amounts of pain. I was not a witness to the action itself, but have been a witness to the pain it caused.

The Dalai Lama reportedly admonished Westerners to publish the names of teachers who consistently exhibit ethical misconduct. I wanted to do that, but I learned that the laws against libel and slander in this country protect people like my teacher from people like me. (I was not directly victimized.) So the trap is still open and victims can still walk right in.

In Zen monastic practice the usual contexts of everyday life are turned upside down (life! death! no difference!!?) It is at this point that meaningful person-

al and spiritual growth can occur. It is also at this point that victimization and exploitation can occur. Moreover, the Buddhist precepts against gossip, giving way to anger, and defaming the three treasures can have the effect of isolating one sangha member from another. In this climate of secrecy, exploitation can easily occur, and go on and on.

Each day at the monastery we recite the first bodhisattva vow: "Sentient beings are innumerable, I vow to save them all." I have heard it said that fundamentally there are no beings to be saved and no one to save them. It is also said that, "One who lives in right and wrong is a prisoner of right and wrong." "No right, no wrong" is one way to look at things, but what if your house is on fire? Are the Buddhist precepts against harming each other merely relics left to us by less enlightened ancestors or are they perhaps safeguards for our journey on the pathless path?

—*Naming No Names*

### ***Buddhist Family Values***

To this father of two children, Patrick McMahon's last two columns on the family were long overdue. Patrick was absolutely right when he said, "The Western sangha still mirrors the anti-family, child-unfriendly attitudes of our society." The American sangha has been politically and socially myopic by showing too much concern for issues on the "left" side of the political spectrum, and not enough concern for the family. Engaged Buddhists can *also* work creatively on issues such as abortion, child abuse, drug addiction, crime, education, and integrating children and the elderly into our lives.

If the North American sangha (engaged or "disengaged") does not confront these issues, then it will have little relevance to the lives of parents and their children. On the other hand, if it confronts these issues and integrates families into the sangha, then the Buddhadharmas can be successfully transplanted in America.

—*Matthew Tandler, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin*

### ***A Mother and a Buddhist Teacher***

It was with deep interest and appreciation that I read Patrick McMahon's Family Practice Column, "Follow the Bouncing Ball."

I have been trying to make it to the Western Buddhist Teachers Conference for the past couple of years. The obstacles have been uncanny. The first meeting was held a year and a half ago on the day my twin daughters entered the first grade. This year the conference is scheduled to take place on Mother's Day. Again, I will stay home in the loving presence of my daughters to celebrate our connection.

—*Jacqueline Mandell, Portland, Oregon,  
Teacher of Mindful Awareness Meditation for 19 years*

# READINGS

## *Indigenous People's Struggle in Borneo*

Dislocation and deforestation are destroying the traditional life of the indigenous Dayak people of Borneo. The Dayak people live on the north coast of the island of Borneo and comprise 70 percent of the population of the Malaysian state of Sarawak. The Malaysian government plans to build the hydroelectric Bakun Dam, which will necessitate massive clear-cutting and relocation of thousands of indigenous people. The government claims that the 230-meter-high dam will improve the people's standard of living by bringing the villages into the cash economy. But for centuries the Dayak tribes of Borneo have practiced subsistence agriculture and depended on the forest for supplementary food and other necessities. Now they will have to give up the sacred forests, traditional agricultural practices, and village life for city highways, low paying jobs, and lack of care for the children and elders of the community.

In 1990, during his opening address to the International Conference on Conservation and Tropical Biodiversity, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced he would cancel the controversial Bakun Dam for the benefit of Malaysia's environment. Three years later, the Malaysian government announced a change of policy and revived the project. By January 1994, Mahathir was praising Bakun as a necessary part of the country's modernization and the answer to Malaysia's growing need for electricity.

The sentiments of the Dayak people were expressed by exiled Dayak leader Anderson Mutang Urad in his address to the United Nations: "I say to my country, and other developing countries, we must not blindly follow the model of progress invented by European civilization. We may envy the industrialized world for its wealth; but we must not forget that this wealth was bought at a very high price. The rich world suffers from much stress, pollution, violence, poverty, and spiritual emptiness. The wealth of indigenous communities lies not in money or commodities, but in community, tradition and a sense of belonging to a special place."

The good news is that resistance to the Bakun Dam is spreading and includes a coalition of 16 environmental organizations.

➤ For more information contact: Berkeley Borneo Big Home Project, 1137 Hearst Ave., Apt. D, Berkeley CA 94702.

## *Update On Violence in Burma*

The Karen National Union's (KNU) headquarters in Manerplaw was recently captured by Burma's military government, SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council), forcing thousands of people to

flee to Thailand. Manerplaw was not only the headquarters for the KNU, it was the center for pro-democracy dissidents, The All Burma Young Monk's Union, and Green November 32, an organization focused on human rights and the environment. This attack blatantly exposes the inconsistencies in SLORC's recent propaganda campaign about seeking a negotiated political settlement with ethnic groups. Instead, SLORC is continuing to attack all remaining KNU settlements, showing that military objectives have priority over diplomatic ones.

The situation along the Thai-Burmese border is also very tense, as fighting spills over onto the Thai side of the border, and more than 10,000 new refugees arrive in Thailand. Tensions rise, as SLORC generals accuse Thailand of assisting KNU rebels and the Thai government complains that SLORC troops have violated Thailand's sovereignty by crossing the border to abduct refugees and attack KNU bases.

These events took place just shortly after the signing of Thailand's 30-year contract to purchase natural gas from Burma, which will provide SLORC with \$400 million per year.

Thailand's House Committee on Foreign Affairs has urged the government to review its policies on Burma.

➤ Burma Information Group, P.O. Box 14154, Silver Spring, MD 20911.

## **IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BUDDHA**

**A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH INDIA AND NEPAL:**

LUMBINI, BODHGAYA, SARNATH, VARANASI, RAJGIR, NALANDA,  
SRAVASTI, KUSHINAGAR

Enjoy the beauty and serenity of the places where the Buddha lived. Shantum Seth is your guide.



With each step and breath the Buddha comes alive. Shantum's balance of knowledge, insight, and joy to those journeying with him in the footsteps of the Buddha. —Zen Oaxaca, Thich Nhat Hanh

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**Two Monks Arrested in Vietnam**

Venerable Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, senior leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church (UBC) in Vietnam, were recently arrested, and the police have confiscated important church documents. The State-controlled Vietnamese Buddhist Church (VBC) is the only Buddhist church recognized in Vietnam. The two monks were seeking the release of other Buddhist prisoners and government recognition of the UBC.

Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, the Supreme Patriarch of the UBC, had begun a hunger strike to protest the November arrest of five UBC monks working to provide relief for victims of the Mekong Delta flood. The government refused to release these monks or even acknowledge their arrest. In response, Venerable Huyen Quang made public appeals for religious freedom and respect for human rights.

Venerable Quang Do, UBC's Secretary General, has been an outspoken supporter of the UBC's movement for religious freedom. From 1982 to 1992 he was under house arrest without charges. In August the Vietnamese government offered him an important position in the state-sponsored VBC if he would agree to dissolve the UBC. He refused, and sent a protest letter to the Communist Party Secretary General Do Muoi.

*"Forty-nine years ago, my master, Thich Duc Hai, was publicly executed by the Communist authorities... My uncle,*

*superior monk of Phap Van Pagoda, was arrested and died shortly afterwards. My Dharma grandfather, superior monk of Tra Lu Pagoda, was accused by the Communists of 'using religion as the opiate of the people.' Knowing he would be subject to public denunciation, he hanged himself. My turn to be imprisoned came in 1977 and again in 1982. I was exiled to Vu Doai village and they condemned my mother to share my fate... Suffering from a chronic lack of food and severe cold she died and I was detained under house arrest for 10 years and 27 days."*

There has been no news on where the two monks have been taken, and now virtually all the UBC's senior leaders are either imprisoned or under house arrest.

✉ Write to: Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet, Chairman Council of Ministers, Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and urge the release of Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, Venerable Thich Quang Do and other UBC monks.

**Unethical Medical Practices in China**

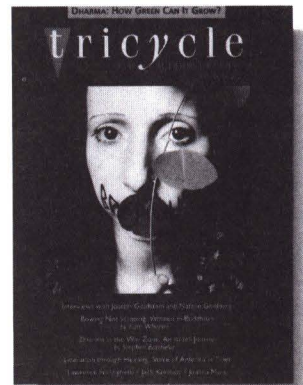
Chinese doctors are stealing body parts from prisoners for organ transplants. In August of 1994, Asia Watch published a report documenting the fact that executed prisoners are the principal source of body organs for medical transplantation purposes in China. This is clearly a gross violation of human rights, partly because prior consent is not required. Furthermore, the lack of judicial safeguards in China means that many people are

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wrongfully executed. And some executions have even been deliberately botched to ensure that prisoners were not yet dead when their organs were removed. Doctors participate in the actual execution process, in violation of international standards of medical ethics.

There is speculation that the Chinese government is now looking towards the Tibetan population for donors. Mysterious cases have made the people of Tibet wary: for example, a 23-year-old woman went to a maternity hospital in Lhasa to deliver her child. After three hours on the delivery table the doctors pronounced her dead. The mother of the woman felt there had been some mishandling of the delivery and brought her daughter's body to a Thom-dhen (a traditional disposer of the dead). The autopsy revealed that the young woman's heart, kidneys and womb were missing.

Asia Watch calls on the Chinese government to stop taking prisoners' organs and urges United Nations human rights experts to investigate China's execution and organ procurement procedures.

### *Peace Protests in Chechnya*

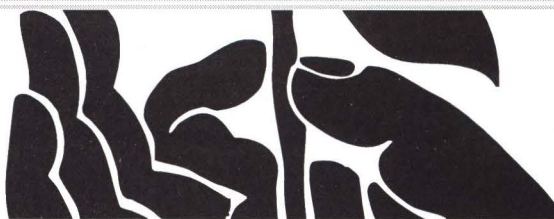
Chechnya, a breakaway republic of the Russian Federation, is the center of great suffering, as a result of the escalating war between Russian troops and the Chechen rebels. It is estimated that 25,000 civilians have already been killed and approximately 80,000 refugees have fled to neighboring republics.

As the war in Chechnya continues, more and more people are demonstrating against it inside Russia itself. Over 200 protesters, including Russian soldiers' mothers, Buddhist monks and anti-war activists, have begun a "Mothers' March for Life and Compassion" from the Russian city of Mineralnye Vody to Grozny, the war-torn capital of Chechnya. The Soldiers' Mothers' Committee has brought to the surface alarming facts about human rights abuses in Chechnya and they have held many demonstrations, even traveling to Chechnya to bring their sons home.

Religious leaders in Russia have also joined together to protest the war. On December 15, Patriarch Alexei, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Moslem leader Mufti Alsabekov of the Chechen Republic issued a joint appeal for peace.

*"We call upon all people invested with powers...to renounce the use of weapons as a way of solving the problems. The bloodshed in Chechnya must be stopped immediately. People living in this land must restore peace with each other in harmony with all peoples of the Russian Federation."*

✉ Write to: President Boris Yeltsin c/o the Russian Embassy, 1125 16th St. NW, Washington DC 20036; urging immediate negotiations with the Chechen government, the withdrawal of Russian Federation troops from Chechnya, and access for humanitarian organizations and international observers to monitor the situation. ❖



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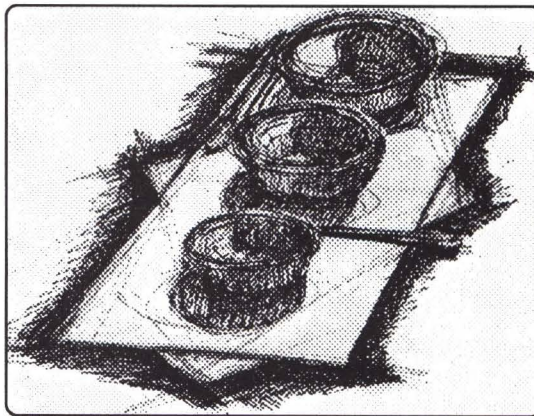
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# NO PROBLEM

by Patrick McMahon

Early last December I celebrated Buddha's enlightenment with my sangha family. Each year, observing the traditional Zen calendar, we gather for a meditation retreat beginning the 1st of December and ending the morning of the 8th. For a generation now we've been developing a culminating ceremony reflecting the culture of our community, and the place—the California Sierra Nevada. The night of the 7th we sit up late, drinking spicy chai to stay awake. Then, shortly before midnight, in the dimness of the lantern-lit zendo, out of the silence a voice begins to tell the tale of Shakyamuni Buddha, prince-turned-ascetic: how, "born of a noble house," he saw through the illusion of earthly pleasure and power; how he underwent austerities in pursuit of the knowledge that ends anguish; how at length he saw the dead end of that harsh route and took nourishment; how he settled under the bodhi tree for his night-long vigil, and, on witnessing the morning star all afresh, found satisfaction to his quest.

It's a legend, I've thought, for adult ears, for those who themselves have gone that journey of self-torment, and at length abandoned spiritual heroism for a vision no glitzier than Venus at dawn. Not a story, I've assumed, for children. Yet this year we were joined by three ten-year-old boys. Sitting next to their parents, they listened, and Buddha only knows what they heard. But no mistake: they were getting the straight dope, privy to a matter of gravity, in no way lightened for their green ears.

Five AM the next morning found us all, adults and boys, walking single file without flashlights, through dark trees to Bald Mountain, the site of the morning star ceremony. In the darkness, with each figure so heavily bundled, it wasn't possible to tell a small adult from a large child.

Finally, at the top of the mountain, with the eastern sky lightening, I could just make out the faces of the three boys, narrow bands of eyes and cheeks between their mufflers and hats. I'd thought I knew them, had traded basketball statistics and bad jokes with each. But in this hour I hardly recognized them, their faces pale in the dawn, their eyes intent on an elder setting up the rough altar. The dawn breeze fanned incense to ember brightness. Four conches blew three blasts each to North, South, East, West. A cold mystery was unfolding, and the boys shivered. But as we chanted for sangha members and friends sick, dying, or deceased in the last year, and the sky lightened, their red-cheeked faces bloomed. Witness to the ancient way, they seemed to mature through ages. In my eyes, on this mountain top they seemed young gods, children no more.

As we walked back down to the zendo, I felt that

without conscious effort something rare had passed on to the three boys: nothing less than the enlightenment of Shakyamuni. Re-enacting the old story, following the well-worn trail of mountain dwellers, we, young and old, had renewed the sacred. Our roles in this ritual had been perfectly complementary. Sitting through many dark nights, grieving many deaths, we adults had brought forth this fruit, ripe-red and sweet as persimmons hanging on winter's leafless branches. Holding out their hands, the boys caught it as it fell.

Back in the zendo, warming with hot tea and cocoa, we adults sat in our circle, the boys in theirs. While we roared with the jokes that come from a week of little sleep and a final night of nearly none, the boys quietly played "Magic," a card game involving lavishly pictured monsters, enchantments, and spirit guides. At one point, struck with their sobriety, I yelled over to them, "We bothering you guys?"



They looked up from their cards. "No problem," one responded, and the three heads ducked back to their preoccupation. No problem indeed. No problem going from one circle to two. No problem shifting from the sacred to the mundane. No problem with passing on the dharma. If one generation follows its own feet, the next follows—or doesn't. Efforts to direct would just be so much muddying of the path. As long as together we continue to observe the dawn, the Buddha's enlightenment passes on, sure as night to day. ❖

# RACHEL CARSON RETURNS

by Stephanie Kaza

Last week I invited a guest speaker to my eco-feminism class to talk with my students about breast cancer. She had a good story. Thank god. Something to finally counteract all the horror stories. Ever since Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962, we have known that pesticides are a questionable addition to the interdependent web. Her work was not accepted at the time; it ran too counter to the prevailing trance of American prosperity. Rachel Carson was dying of breast cancer when she wrote that book.

Now the bubble has burst and women are suffering the cumulative effects of the pesticides that are everywhere in the environment. Our guest speaker's good story was about the fight for public knowledge and action, the next round of Rachel Carson's work. The Vermont-based Breast Cancer Action Network had successfully lobbied Senator Patrick Leahy (Dem-VT) and Representative Bernie Sanders (Ind-VT) to initiate the Cancer Registries Act of 1991. BCAN wanted to see systematic data on the occurrence of breast cancer so the real truth of this horrible epidemic could be exposed. It's hard to believe, but so far there has been no nationwide record-keeping on cancer. The breast cancer statistics we do have come only from isolated sampling sites

across the country, but each node of the interdependent web has particular causes and conditions; for instance, high rates of breast cancer occur on Long Island, where potato fields were once widely sprayed with pesticides.

The Cancer Registries Act was a moving testimony to the commitment of our two Vermont legislators. But the BCAN lobbyists didn't stop there. They went to the National Institute of Health to demand increased research funds to investigate the possible environmental causes of the disease. NIH was unwilling to increase the allocation for breast cancer at the expense of all the other pressing illnesses. So the women went to the Department of Defense and said, "You don't have the Cold War to fight anymore. We want you to fight a war on breast cancer." The Defense Department was already funding AIDS and prostate cancer research; now they will fund breast cancer research as well.

With a national breast cancer registry and increased research, we may now be able to see if breast cancer is an environmental issue. The signs are pointing that way. Rachel Carson would not be surprised. Recent studies reported in *Mother Jones* (May-June 1994) and elsewhere show that chlorine-based pesticides may be directly responsible. DDT, DDE, and PCBs accumulate in the fatty tissues of mammals and apparently mimic natural estrogen in the body. These chemicals, disguised as estrogen, may stimulate cell growth, and the growths may become cancerous and then metastasize to the rest of the body.

The official story so far has been told in terms of each woman's behavior and medical history. Researchers have framed the risk factors as entirely personal: age at first menses, family history of cancer, "lifestyle" choices, etc. But what about the interdependent web? What about exposure to pesticides on fruits and vegetables, in the soil and water, in dairy products? And what about dioxin, which suppresses the immune system and enhances the effects of other carcinogens? To investigate these toxins is to consider the poisoned environment, rather than the woman, as cause.

As I looked around the room at my students, I was haunted by their expressions of helplessness. They have inherited a full legacy of environmental toxins and are daily taking them into their bodies. Some of them will probably lose their lives to breast cancer. Now the statistics are 1 in 7; in ten years, as they are raising young children and/or growing into their careers, will the rates have gone up? And will the medical establishment finally acknowledge environmental causes? With compassion for their plight and the tragedy that touches all of us—our sisters, our mothers, our daughters, our lovers, our friends—I gave each student a pink ribbon, for solidarity. They need to know we are fighting together on this one. ❖

[For a related discussion, see Weiss, pp. 35-37 in this issue.]

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# PATIENCE

*A private investigator and her Death Row client write together in San Quentin prison*

by Melody Ermachild

I have a mantra I comfort myself with when I'm working with Death Row inmates: "Nothing really bad is happening right now." Trying to stay in the present has helped me reduce the unhelpful drama that goes on in my mind around Death Row. When I first started out in this work, I had trouble getting close to my clients because I imagined that they were going to die and I wasn't. Now I'm more aware of my own mortality; I realize I could die in an accident or of disease, before any of my clients is executed.

Still, I wonder how I can help. How can anyone ever really "help" anyone else? People who are wise about this, people who do hospice work with the dying, for example, say that the task is just to be present with a suffering person. And good helpers always talk about the benefits they themselves gain; what they learn.

One of the people on Death Row I've learned the most from is Jarvis Masters.

\* \* \*

I usually write *with* Jarvis, not about him. When we write together at the prison, we take a break from discussing the appeal of his case. I take off my watch and put it where he can see it on the ledge between us and one of us says, "All right, ten minutes, OK? Go!" The idea of this exercise is to loosen up our writer's muscles without worrying about results. We just write, sometimes about a particular topic, such as, "A conversation overheard," or "Rain." Sometimes we write whatever comes, just keeping our pens moving. He on his side of the thick wire mesh, and I on my side, the side with the door to the outside world—we both of us put our heads down and scribble away. We are breathing the same stale prison air. We can both hear the murmur of other visits through the walls, and occasionally a guard's voice calling out. Jarvis has more light—the visitor's side of the visiting booth is dim and the prisoner's side is brightly lit with a fluorescent tube.

I have an ordinary ball-point pen, but he has only the innards of one; he's not allowed to have the hard plastic case, so he writes with the flimsy plastic tube of ink. We are both equally intent on getting words onto paper.

Sometimes we pretend we're "cafe writing"—which is what I do with my writer friends outside. We go to a favorite place for coffee and do the same exercise, only we write longer, maybe 45 minutes before we break to

read aloud and order some lunch. "Tell me *everything*," Jarvis says, hungry for every detail of the cafe. He's been in prison so long, he loves to hear about ordinary life. I tease him that he probably went to jail before airplanes were invented. It's true he never flew in one. So I describe the pungent crowded atmosphere of a favorite cafe, the students with their "power books," the smell of espresso, the stacks of free weekly papers.

Jarvis wants to know all about a family dinner or a hike, how it looked, felt, tasted, all the flavor of life that's missing inside. When I tell such stories, we're not exactly living in the moment. In fact, we're not present in San Quentin at all. He is leaning back, smiling, imagining himself with my family or friends. I am reliving some recent event in my own life, seeing it all again. From Jarvis's perspective my life is so rich, so complex, the world so beautiful.

When I'm having a good time somewhere else, I often think of Jarvis, and I want to bring him suddenly out just for one minute to see a tree or the ocean or even to sit in traffic on the Bay Bridge. Then I have to realize that it can never happen, that he must sit where he sits and I must sit where I sit.

When our writing time is over, Jarvis and I read the results to each other. These

brief shared writing exercises encourage both of us to keep on writing, and sometimes together we produce seeds that later grow into Jarvis's stories and my essays.

His writing and his meditation practice are what make life worth living for Jarvis. Studying Buddhism these last few years has helped him to gain remarkable insight. Neither he nor I have any illusions about the fact that he has done harm to others in this life. He has taken the precepts that dedicate his remaining life to compassion and nonviolence. Not an easy path in a violent prison.

\* \* \*

Investigating Jarvis's life to prepare his trial, I learned how far he has traveled spiritually in one short lifetime. Jarvis was born in 1962, the same year my oldest child was born. I met Jarvis's mother Shorty while I was preparing his case, but she died of heart failure just before his trial. She had not seen him for many years before she died. All of Shorty's children were raised in foster care, because she had been addicted to drugs. Jarvis's father had left the family, and later,

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*I have an ordinary ball-point pen, but he writes with only the flimsy plastic innards of one—he's not allowed to have the hard plastic case.*

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he too became an addict. In a series of foster care placements, Jarvis was separated from his sisters and brother. For several years, he stayed in his favorite home, with an elderly couple he loved, but when they became too old to care for him, he was moved again, at the age of 9. After that, Jarvis ran away from several foster homes, and went back to the elderly people's house. So then he was sent to the county's large locked facility for dependent children, and later to some more group homes. Once, he stayed with an aunt for awhile, but he got in trouble. At 12, he became a ward of the court because of delinquency, and was in and out of institutions after that.

During my investigation I met people who knew Jarvis in foster care and institutions, and they told me he had always had a lot of potential. They remembered a smart and articulate youngster with a sense of humor. But too many times he was pushed—and he went—in the wrong direction.

At the age of 17, when he was a very angry young man, he was released from juvenile hall and went on a crime spree, holding up stores and restaurants until he was captured and sent to San Quentin. He never shot anyone, but when I read a big stack of reports about his crimes it was scary. As I told him, I'm glad I wasn't in Taco Bell when he came through.

When Jarvis arrived in San Quentin in 1981 he was 19. Right away he got involved in what the prison system calls a gang. Most young men coming into prison—black, brown and white—group together for a sense of belonging, for family. Blacks in those days passed on political education from older men to younger inmates.

In 1985, an officer named Sergeant Burchfield was murdered in San Quentin, stabbed to death at night on the second tier of a cell block. At the time, Jarvis was locked in his cell on the fourth tier.

Although many inmates were suspected of conspiring to murder Sergeant Burchfield, only three were tried, Jarvis among them. One was accused of being the "spear man"—of actually stabbing the Sergeant. Another, an older man, was accused of ordering the killing. Jarvis was accused of sharpening a piece of metal which was allegedly passed along and later used to make

the spear with which the Sergeant was stabbed.

In one of the longest trials in California history, all three were convicted of their parts in the conspiracy to kill Sergeant Burchfield. But their sentences varied. One jury gave the young "spearman" the death penalty, but the trial judge changed his sentence to Life Without Parole because of his youth. Another jury could not reach a verdict on the older man's sentence, and so he was also given Life Without Parole. Jarvis was sentenced by that same jury to death in the gas chamber, partly because of his violent background.

Although his lawyers asked the trial judge for leniency, also on the basis of his youth—he was 23 when the crime occurred, just two years older than the "spearman"—she denied this appeal and sent him to Death Row. He has been there since 1990. There he must be patient, waiting for appeals to be filed, waiting for the outcomes.

\* \* \*

Because his appeals are pending, Jarvis cannot write about his case. The appeals will go to both the State and Federal courts, and he will not be close to execution for a couple more years at least.

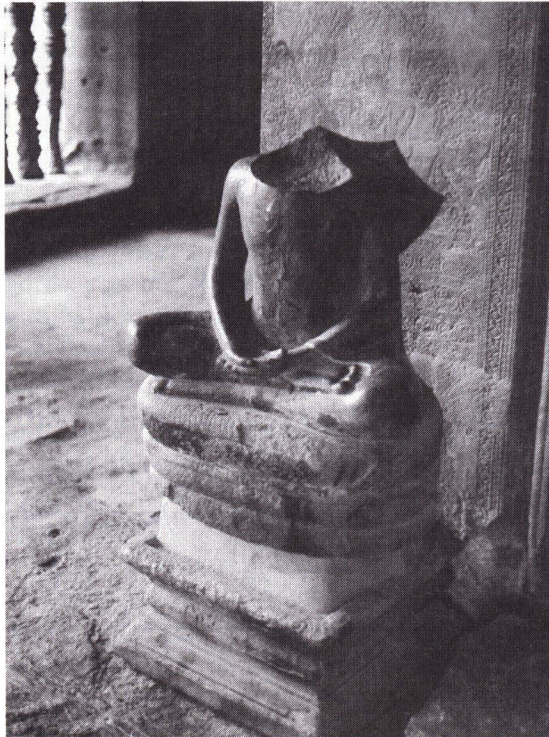
Jarvis hopes, as he has written, that "Those who want to try and make sense of it all will see, through my writing, a human being who made mistakes. Maybe my writing will at least make me a human being—someone who felt, loved, cared and who just wanted to know for himself who he was."

Jarvis's situation is unique in one way: he is the only man

on death row living *in* his crime scene. It's as if he'd been convicted of killing a store clerk in a robbery, and his cell had been set up in that same store, so that for the rest of his life, his every move was watched and he was even fed by people who identified with his victim, people who thought every day about the dead clerk's wife and children. And some day, several of the workers at that store may participate in executing Jarvis. Jarvis has more opportunity than most people on this earth to face up to how people feel about him.

Jarvis is usually stoic about his situation. He talks about karma, and the path he himself took, the choices he made. He often asks me to tell the "at-risk" youths I volunteer with, "You guys still have choices!"

The hardest thing is that he has so few: he doesn't



*Buddha statue at Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Head lost to thieves. Photo by Susan Moon*

live on ordinary Death Row. Because the crime he is convicted of involved a guard, he lives in San Quentin's security housing unit. Men on the more relaxed part of Death Row can make phone calls, listen to tapes, use typewriters. Those in the security housing can have only a few books and a TV. They stay in their cells for all but a few hours of yard time three times each week. Jarvis cannot choose what or when to eat, when to exercise or shower. He can't turn the tier lights off or on, regulate the temperature in his cell, or

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*The officer reached through and ratcheted cuffs onto Jarvis's wrists. Now, when the time was up, Jarvis didn't smile.*

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have any control over when he receives visits or how long they last. I think it must be almost impossible to grow into a mature, responsible man when one is infantilized this way, and yet I have seen Jarvis grow.

\* \* \*

Jarvis is very different today from the troubled, defensive young man I met in 1986. He even looks different. When I met him, his face had a sullen, callous expression. But, as happens so often to patients with

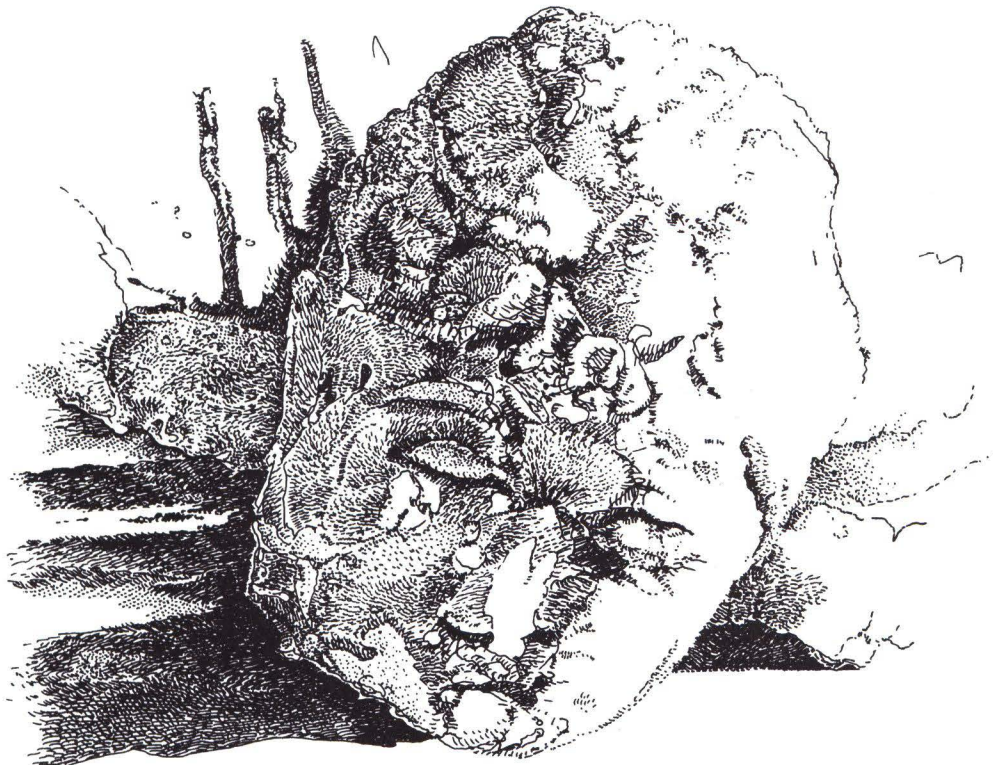
fatal or life-threatening illnesses, facing his death has opened him up. He started to educate himself and to meditate. He is a mature 33-year-old man now, and he plays a constructive role on Death Row, helping younger men.

Not all officers hold a grudge against Jarvis. Quite a few have told me they respect the changes he has made in himself. I can tell from the relaxed bodies of the officers who know him that they do not fear him. In contrast to how they handle some other clients of mine, many greet Jarvis, smile at him, touch his shoulder. When I arrive for a visit, typically several officers I run into on my way in tell me to "say hi" to Jarvis.

As his defensive shell broke away, Jarvis's handsome face emerged. He has a lot of expressive light in his eyes now. But he can't change the crude amateur tattoo on his cheek just below his left eye. It says "255" in fading blue ink numerals about half an inch high, done in ball-point pen. It's the name of a dead-end street in Harbor City, California where he lived for awhile when he was about 12 years old. Jarvis can't help showing his past to everyone, and it's not a bad thing. As Chogyam Trungpa wrote, "Ultimately, the definition of bravery is not being afraid to be yourself."

\* \* \*

Sergeant Burchfield was killed in June, and if Jarvis is going to have trouble with staff in the prison, it usually



comes in the month of June. This year between June and November, Jarvis was placed in the worst part of the prison—on the bottom tier of the security housing. He was just minding his own business as usual before he was moved. The person who made the decision said it was “for convenience.” The move was especially stressful at first, because Jarvis’s belongings—including his books and legal papers—were all taken from him, although they were later returned.

On the bottom tier of the security housing is a row of cells where the most problematic prisoners are kept. They are moved there on the basis of their behavior. Jarvis’s new neighbors yelled all day and all night, and some hallucinated that insects were crawling on their bodies, or that other people were in their cells. Some could not clean themselves, or refused to eat for fear of being poisoned.

If inmates in this condition don’t improve, they are eventually sent to hospital prisons and officially designated mentally ill. But in the meantime, such inmates can be segregated, as they are in the security housing.

A Federal Judge recently ordered the California prison system to provide improved care for mentally ill prisoners, but it’s unclear how this ruling will affect the mentally ill men on Death Row.

During those hard months Jarvis spent on the bottom tier, it was particularly difficult for me to watch him get ready to go back to his cell after our visits, which I knew were the only pleasant time Jarvis had. Ordinarily, Jarvis smiles and says goodbye while he turns his back to the officer and stands with his hands behind him, holding them close to the portal in the metal door so that the officer can reach through and ratchet cuffs onto his wrists. Now, when the time was up, he didn’t smile.

Thinking about him being locked in there again made the routine goodbye as upsetting to me as if police had walked into my favorite cafe and arrested my writing partner.

I didn’t know what to do, except to stop and stand patiently an extra second holding my papers, waiting for him to go.

\* \* \*

The noisy motorized gate slides back to let me walk out into the breeze blowing off San Francisco Bay. I pass by a granite marker in the grass near the main gate. On it are etched the names of ten officers killed on the job in California prisons since 1952, and Sergeant Burchfield is one of them. The prisons are dangerous and inhumane places for everyone in them. I always nod my head in a brief bow to the officers’

memorial stone.

San Quentin is a ring of high walls on a promontory at the edge of the Bay. When I’m inside, those walls seem to hold in so much pain that people should be crying all the time. They aren’t, and I don’t either, but even after fifteen years on my job, I am not used to the concentration of suffering inside our prisons. I often leave with what I call a “need-to-cry” headache: pressure around my eyes and forehead. Sometimes, as I drive out of the parking lot, I picture the space within San Quentin’s walls filling up with all those unshed tears, until they spill over into the salty Bay.

\* \* \*

During the months Jarvis was living with the troubled inmates, I worried more about him than I usually do, afraid he would get sick or depressed there. But he kept up his spirits amazingly. He said that in a way his new neighbors were easy to live with, because no matter what they did, he couldn’t really get mad at them. One day he

told me, half-jokingly, that another positive thing about living with them was that they were giving him lots of material to write about. “That proves it once and for all,” I told him. “You’re definitely a writer!”

Finally, in November, Jarvis was moved back upstairs to a warmer, drier cell. It’s even better than his original cell. The

men on either side are very quiet, giving Jarvis the best meditating and writing conditions he has had at San Quentin. Across from his new cell there’s a window. Jarvis is glad the glass is broken, because although the air is cold sometimes, he is grateful that it’s fresh. Best of all, through the window Jarvis can see some far-off houses. Several children play outside, riding tricycles and throwing balls. Jarvis has given each child a name in his mind, and he’s gotten to know them individually by watching them for hours as they play. At Christmas time, the homes had colored lights which Jarvis could see at night, the first he’d seen for many years.

Recently I read that the word *patient* comes from the Latin word for *suffer*. I think of patients in hospitals, of course. But people are also painfully waiting for healing or for death—for release—in prisons. In the old meaning, we are all patients—sufferers—even in our monasteries, and at home in ordinary life. Some have patience, some do not.

I often drive to the shore near my home in the evening, and walk to a place where I can look across the Bay and see the lights of San Quentin. I think of all the men I know in there, and of Jarvis, the most patient of them—Jarvis, calmly suffering. ❖

*Melody Ermachild is a writer and private investigator.*

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*Jarvis cannot choose what or when to eat, when to exercise or shower. He can't turn the tier lights off or on, or regulate the temperature in his cell.*

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# Fruitcakes

*Life and death on the bottom tier of San Quentin's "Adjustment Center"*

▼ A True Account ▼

by Jarvis Masters

When the cell doors slammed shut behind me and I found myself on the south side of the first tier in the Adjustment Center, I didn't know what to expect. I only understood that I had been relocated to what was considered the "crazy tier" by some, and by everyone, the worst place San Quentin had to house its prisoners. I was in the worst of the worst.

The cell stank. Mostly from the toilet, where I found a fat dead rat floating inside. It took several flushes to send it spinning down.

"Hey, man," a voice whispered from the adjacent cell. "What's your name? Can you spare a smoke?"

"No," I said, "I don't smoke. What's yours?"

"Joe," the voice said. "I'm in cell 60, right next to you. Hey, though, man! You sure you can't spare a smoke?"

"Yeah, I'm sure," I said. "I wish I did smoke right about now! But I don't. I guess they let you guys smoke down here on this tier?"

He hesitated. "Not really. But sometimes, you know, every blue moon or so, someone will keister a good issue of tobacco right before they come down here. Man!" Joe pleaded. "I need a fuckin' cigarette! How about a butt, huh?"

"I wish I could help you, Joe! But I really don't smoke," I said. It was hard to believe inmates really keister tobacco down here. In all my years here, I'd never heard of anyone in San Quentin smuggling tobacco in their rectum!

"Hey, Joe," hollered another voice from down the tier. "Save me shorts on that cigarette," he said.

"Who's that?" asked Joe.

"This is ol' Cal and his dog Spot!" he said. "Send us shorts on that cigarette."

"Say, Dude!" Joe hollered down the tier. "You heard my neighbor just say he didn't have any. So get up off me, punk!"

"Now, Joe!" said Cal. "My dog don't care for all that profanity. Go get 'em, boy! Sic 'em! Kill dog, kill!" Cal barked at the top of his lungs and it sounded real.

"Punk," Joe hollered. "I'll kill you and that damn dog!"

"Shut up!" another voice interrupted. "Lay yo' fruitcake asses down."

"Ah, Angry Bear," said Joe. "You best shut up too. You ain't kickin' up no dust! Man, I'm the hog with the big nut sack around here."

"Ah, man, Joe," said Bear. "Man, all you doing is fronting—trying to act like, man, you something, man, all because you got a new neighbor and cravin' yo' punk-ass off for a smoke. That's all."

"Man!" Joe yelled, "let me tell yo' punk-ass some-thin' dude!"

The screaming and yelling went back and forth and the whole tier went berserk. So while I was cleaning out my cell, I learned about the people around me. I heard everybody's name at least once, what they accused each other of being in prison for, which psych medications they were on, and which of them were the real racists on the tier.

They liked this tier just fine. It had no rules—there wasn't even a difference between night and day. They could be as crazy as they wanted, say anything they wanted, do anything they wanted, and disrespect whomever they pleased—including the prison guards, who saw the uselessness of writing disciplinary charges for any of the prison rule violations. In a way, this was the prisoners' own tier. And nobody had anything to say about it.

I couldn't believe that the only reason I was moved to this hell-on-wheels was simply a "con-

venience move," which was the official explanation. "Where did all these crazy people come from?" I wondered. At first it seemed like everyone was holler-ing, but as I listened I realized that there were only six or seven inmates yelling out of the 17 on the tier.

The tiny square windows, high on the upper walls, were all open a foot wide. This was their full extent. They were for ventilation more than light or scenery. Only by standing on the concrete slab that was my bed could I see whether it was day or night. The metal mesh that covered the windows made looking out unpleasant; it seemed like bars had been placed on the sky. The view was no more than a clock, the better to guess the time of day.

One evening not long after I got there, the chow cart came rolling down the tier. The guards started with the end cell and moved towards the front. They unlocked each cell's food port and gave each prisoner the portion of food he wanted from the cart. Today

---

*Only by standing on the concrete slab that was my bed could I see whether it was day or night.*

---

was Mexican food, my favorite.

The cart came smoothly down the tier until it was just a few cells away from mine. Suddenly I saw a hand lunge out of an open food port to fling a cup full of human urine and feces right into the faces of the two guards serving food. It took a few seconds before I believed my eyes and my nose. The guards stood there with dripping faces, their serving spatulas still in their hands. Then a voice broke the silence with a maniacal laugh.

"Eat my shit," he laughed. "I saved that from yesterday when you punks didn't give me no shitwipe. Now both of you can just eat it!"

"You'll surely pay for this," one of the guards said calmly, and they hurried off the tier with the food cart.

"You did it now!" said Joe. They'll be back to beat the Rodney-King-shit out of you, Walter!"

"Who cares? I need an ass-kicking anyways." He started laughing. "Did you guys see that? Those two punks was smacking on my shit. I did that for you guys, too," he added.

"You did that on your own," Joe yelled. "We didn't ask for no toilet paper yesterday. So don't try to pull me into it. It's bad enough you fucked off all the damn food!"

"Hey, Joe," I asked, "You mean we don't get to eat tonight?"

"Yeah, you'll eat," he said, "if you want to eat off a cart scattered with Walter's shit."

I said, "You aren't serious, are you?"

"Listen man, we're just a bunch of fruitcakes down here. We don't have nothin' comin' tonight! That's the bottom line—not unless you want to eat Walter's shit!"

"Ah, man," said Walter. "None of what I threw hit the food cart. It hit the cops."

"Man," shouted Joe, "you's a damn lie! That fuckin' shit hit everything—I hope they kick yo' teeth in, punk."

About an hour later I heard what sounded like an army of guards preparing to enter the tier: lots of keys jingling and armor shields clanking and the rattle of the huge plastic emergency gurney being taken down off the wall.

Then 15 guards marched past my cell, dressed in full armored gear, with helmets and batons, and riot shields held tightly to their chests. The unit sergeant held a tazer electric shocking device and several other guards carried block guns, which shoot a high-velocity wooden block that can severely disable a person.

They gathered in front of Walter's cell. When I stood right up at my cell bars, I could just see down the tier to where they were. The voice of the unit sergeant shouted the order for Walter to immediately

step to his cell door to be handcuffed.

"Are you going to cuff up?" he demanded.

Walter's response was quick. "Yes sir! I don't want any problems. I'm fully cooperating. I'm not resisting—"

"That's not fast enough," said the sergeant. He stepped aside to give the gunmen a clear shot into Walter's cell. The gun blast sounded like shotguns. POW! POW! Then the cell door was racked open and the guards rushed inside. The whole tier heard the beating and the sound of Walter's screams. I could smell his flesh burning from the tazer device.

They went on beating Walter until the screams stopped and their kicks and punches sounded like thuds on a corpse.

"Throw his ass on the gurney," the exhausted sergeant's voice ordered. They dragged Walter out of the cell. The emergency gurney sat on the tier floor, just a few feet from my cell. To my shock they used only their booted feet to get Walter onto the gurney. There was blood everywhere, and I realized they were all thinking about HIV. The guards' adrenaline

rush seemed to have come down, and now they did not want to be touched by blood, although many of them already had blood on their clothing.

When Walter finally lay on the gurney, they lifted it up. As they began to leave, a guard called, "Wait a minute," and picked something up from the floor. "Here's some of the bastard's teeth," he said, and threw them onto the gurney. I'll never forget that rattling sound, like craps being thrown against a wooden ledge.

There were no witnesses to this other than us "fruitcakes." I felt alone to have seen what I had seen. As far as I could tell, none of the prisoners gave any thought to all this. A guard mopped up the blood, and everyone went back to the routine of hollering back and forth. There was not even a mention of dinner.

One evening, as darkness was falling, and I was wishing for nothing else to happen, it did.

I smelled toxic smoke on the tier. The thin wisps of gray smoke were leaking out of the "quiet cells." These are the last six cells on the tier, used for solitary confinement. They are called "quiet" because each cell is reinforced with a steel-plated door, and there are no windows. The idea is not to make it quiet for the inmate, but to keep the occupant's noise, such as screaming, from being heard. Water is rationed: every eight hours the toilet and sink are turned on for a short time, then turned back off.

Standing at my cell bars, I could see fire coming from the quiet cells. The smoke began to thicken.

*Then 15 guards marched past my cell, dressed in full armored gear, with helmets and batons, and riot shields held tightly to their chests.*

I wasn't sure of the prisoners' rules here. I didn't know enough to mind my own business or pretend, like everyone else seemed to be doing, that nothing was going on. I heard someone yelling for help, and I thought I should try to holler over the noise on the tier to the guards that there was a fire in one of the quiet cells. I was certain that everybody smelled what I did and I couldn't imagine why nobody else was saying anything. These were "fruit cakes," I thought. That's why.

Now came the awful smell of paint burning—thick layers of paint on the walls of this old prison were catching fire. I hid my coughs in a pillow.

"Hey, Joe," I finally choked. "Can't you smell that fire in the back?"

"Yeah, that's that dumb-ass Jack Marbol in Cell 63," said Joe. "He's trying to get out of his cell. He just wants to take a night stroll to the hospital...to see the pretty nurses."

"He's going to die back there," I said. "Don't you think we better call the cops down here?"

"No," said Joe. "If you do, he'll do the same thing next week—and we'll all be chokin' again. The last time he set his cell on fire, we all helped to get the guards down here, but we told him if he ever did this shit again, we'd just let his punk ass die. Let the asshole die!" Joe insisted.

"How many times has he done this?" I asked.

"He does this shit every week, man. He's going to kill us all sometime. But he's going to learn this time."

"Yeah, by dying, if we don't help him," I commented.

"Nah, he'll be okay," said Joe. "Don't worry. Sooner or later the goons will get a whiff of this and they'll come and drag his ass out."

No sooner had Joe said this than the guards entered the tier. They were the same two guards who had had human waste thrown on them, so I wasn't surprised that they weren't in any great rush. They walked down the tier, taking their routine body count, and when they got to where the fire was at, they appeared to ignore it, and strolled away, as if to say, "Let him die."

But minutes later the same guards returned suited in gas masks and carrying small fire extinguishers. "There's more smoke than fire," I heard one of them say, while he sprayed the extinguisher into the smoke-filled cell.

I couldn't see anything. I could only hear one of the guards shouting. "Hey, Jack Marbol," he said. "Come on, guy! You want out of this cell, you're going to have to let us handcuff you. Step over here to the front of your cell. Step up...step up to the bars. Listen! We can't get you out of there until you let us cuff you up."

"There you go," said the other guard's voice. "Move closer...there you go. Are you burned any place? We'll have you out of there in no time now. Clear on Cell 63!" he hollered to another guard wait-

ing off the tier, who controlled the bar gate that would open the cell door.

"Stand clear!" the gate guard yelled back, and the cell door came open. A minute passed.

"Close Cell 63," hollered the guards.

"Stand clear!" came the answer back. "Cell 63 now coming closed!"

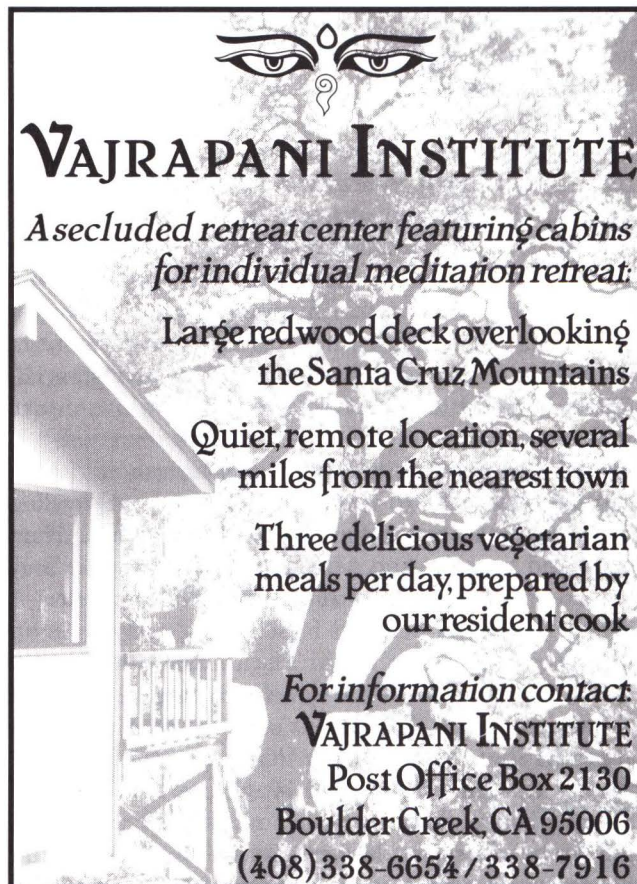
"There you go," the guards said to Jack Marbol, and I saw that they held him up by the arms.

"Whoa! Whoa! Take it easy, take it easy," they kept repeating. "Watch your step."

I watched as Jack Marbol, dressed only in undershorts, tried to walk. Then he collapsed on the tier, right in front of my cell. He fell to his knees, coughing and retching. His white skin was charred black, like a coal miner who had been trapped in a mine shaft. The whole tier began laughing up a storm, and some said they wished Jack Marbol would die right there on the spot.

I stared into his choked eyes, and I saw a person's heart on fire. No matter how the others laughed or what they wished for, I vowed I was one nut in this very large fruitcake who would not be cracked. I hoped and prayed that ol' Jack Marbol would be okay. ❖

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



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# Vietnam: room for every sorrow

*My friend Janey recently asked me, "Have you let go of Vietnam? Is it finally over for you, or does it still shape your life?"*

*Janey knows that in Vietnam I was a medic for an infantry battalion commanded by George Armstrong Custer the Third. Although my platoon wasn't annihilated as in the Battle of Little Big Horn, more than half the boys were wounded or killed, and of course we killed and wounded some of those we called "the enemy." Janey's questions reminded me of the countless sleepless nights, long difficult nights, that for me have been the aftermath of war.*

*Years ago I wrote in my journal: "I am looking for a kind of gracefulness that comes home to me shining with love, a love long-steeped in my old heart and bones and in the heart and bones of star, moon, tree—flesh of all kinds as well as the stuff beneath the flesh, the love-light that is the architect of all things seen and unseen. Within pain, I know a place that is graceful. And within joy I go there again."*

*Although these words were written long ago, it seems that each night and day I need to relearn that pain and grace are inseparable. My tendency is to resist pain, to want only "pure healing and grace," but true healing and grace visit me only when I open myself to whatever arises. R. D. Laing wrote, "There is a great deal of pain in life, and perhaps the only pain that can be avoided is the pain that comes from trying to avoid pain."*

*In Vietnam, I reflexively became numb to my own and others' pain. I had no meditation practice, no spiritual community, and probably could not have survived emotionally and mentally had I let myself truly see the war. But despite my own limitations, I believe the heart has room for every sorrow, every joy, every pain, every smile. In Vietnam, Thich Nhat Hanh remained compassionately awake in the midst of unspeakable destruction. Today the Dalai Lama, fully aware of the suffering in Tibet, continues to inspire those working for peace and reconciliation throughout the world. For me, these men are beautiful examples of what is humanly possible when the heart is open: gracefulness, peace, equanimity, and the courage to embrace all things. —Jim Janko*

## PROMISE

by Jim Janko

The day we found him we were in a thick woods that slanted down to a brown river. I lay by a small tree, watching my friends search the caves and tunnels dug in along the bank. The steady rain and gray light of the monsoon made them look like ghosts moving through soft woods, like smoky figures searching for their own bodies. Flesh and tree trunk, spidery brush, holes in the earth—became light and insubstantial. Often I would hear a pop as clouds of white smoke mixed with the grayish mist. CS gas—tear gas—to flush the enemy from the shelter of the earth.

We had wanted to keep moving. The earth smelled bad. Briny and sour. With lots of booby traps. Then caves and tunnels. And woods too thick. Captain Brey had stopped us with the order to search the holes. A West Pointer, he believed in searching every hole on the other side of the earth. The routine: My friends, bellies down, approached caves and tunnels, popped the white smoke, then edged back to see what might appear. If by some miracle a VC peeped out his head, twenty trained guns would blow him to heaven. If nothing happened one of our boys would crawl out of the bushes to set explosives—C4 or pentrite—sealing the caves and tunnels in a mound of earth.

Hernandez crawls up beside me. I watch his eyes as he fans his M-16 over trees and mist, nothing substantial. "Got any water?" he says. I hand him my extra quart—a medic carries extra. He tries to drink silently, but I hear the water loosening his throat.

I smile at him. Although we've been blowing things up, popping CS gas, we practice silence out of habit. By now every VC in this forest knows we are here. We whisper to sustain the illusion of being hidden and sheltered by this unknown earth.

"Hernandez," I say, "have I told you about my promise?"

He squints, shakes his head.

"Remember the night in the Renegade Woods? The night they killed Bloomer?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Well, it's raining," I say. "Raining a lot more than right now. You remember?"

"What the fuck I just tell you?"

"Shh, Cholo. Not so loud, now. The night they killed Bloomer I made a promise, see? I told myself that if I get out of this war I will renounce suffering forever." We grin at each other, teeth showing. "This is the most serious promise I have ever made on this earth. *Sin loi*, motherfucker, no more suffering. Maybe there is a place where nothing can be destroyed."

He's still grinning, eyes getting brighter. "Here," he says, handing me back my canteen. "See you later. If I find a gook down a hole, I'll tell him you renounce suffering."

"Thanks."

"Stay cool," he says. "And try and remember where the fuck you are."

I watch him, Cholo Hernandez, move slowly and quietly toward another tunnel. Someone's popped white smoke that curls up through the trees, slow and steady. I'm sorry, Cholo, but I can imagine rising that same way, my body growing lighter and lighter, merging with air and mist because I am no one. To fulfill the promise, Cholo, I have to develop a certain style of lightness.

Maybe a man in my position is already a ghost, a phantom. I become human and heavy only when treating a bloody wound.

I draw into myself, feeling smaller. A medic stays low, waits for someone to call, waits for whatever causes movement. I listen to soldiers whispering to each other, their tentative voices far away, disembodied. Glancing up, I see four of our boys fanned out over the top of the hill, guarding a small clearing. Rain and soft light sift through the trees, the dense canopy that makes me feel I am under water. The night I made my promise I was this same way, in a place that was under water. I remember the rain filling the rice paddy, the red ants chewing my legs and back, using me as an island. I shivered in the rain, kneeling down beside Bloomer, arranging his body in a way that appeared respectful. It seemed right to roll him face up over his helmet and pack, head and chest rising like a small prow over the knee-deep water. I avoided his face, taking in just the outlines of his head and chest, imagining these upper parts must stay afloat for there to be any decency whatever. In time, I tired of my charade, of keeping him propped in the rain till the weather cleared, till a chopper touched down on this earth to fly him out of our sight forever. I let the rain cover him, let his body grow cold and blue. . . invisible underwater. Shrapnel had split his throat, his chest—wouldn't matter to Bloomer. He was far too lonesome to care if his body vanished in water or air.

I hear a shout along the river. No whisper or cry. A solid shout rising from the shore. I hear coughing and choking and imagine one of us dying. For an instant I see an image of my body, my head and chest rising above the water. "Anyone hurt?" I say. "Anyone . . .?" Through palls of smoke, I see a thin black figure pinned against the shore.

"Get 'im. Hold 'im down." I hear a jumble of voices: "You believe that little fucker?" "Cap, make him talk. Just so I hear what he sounds like." "Christ, ain't no more than a boy. Got a brother his age." And Cap

says, "Spread out, keep quiet . . . Quit gawking about like you never seen a gook."

We haven't. I mean we've seen the lumps of body, the dead hair and scattered bones. But never a live enemy soldier who looks back at us and breathes. No one, not even the Cap, expected to capture a living body. The Vietnamese are magicians, renowned for their ability to become invisible. They can ambush, attack, inflict wounds, and suddenly disappear. I often wonder if our struggle is not against human beings, but against the earth that sustains them. We've become experts in blowing the earth up huge chunks at a time, using bombs, artillery, mortars, C4, gunships, napalm—using everything but our nuclear arsenal to reduce the earth to ashes.

I often remember and dream about flying in helicopters, hovering thousands of feet over the earth, over the burned villages and farms, the bombed-out paddies, the defoliated forests. If we

cannot find and kill our enemy, we can find and kill the earth that conceals him.

I see the boy. Lying on his back on the shore of the brown river, heavy cords securing his ankles and wrists. Tatters of red bandanna cover his hair; a gray cloth covers his loins. I guess he's twelve years old, maybe four feet tall; his thin frame appears tough and hard as walnut. His mottled skin begins to blend with the gray trees, the brown river, the gray and brown stones littering the shoreline. He smells of seaweed and fish, cool and briny. Although he's bound by cords, two of our boys hold his shoulders to the earth.

"He need a medic?" I say. "Is he hurt?"

Everyone goes silent. As they look from me to the boy, no one breathes but him.

"Shit," says Nawalsky, M-60 gunner. "I don't know why we didn't shoot him. He comes up outta that hole and . . ." He jerks back his head, decides not to finish. Maybe he wanted to say the boy surprised us and we kept him alive because we've never seen an enemy soldier suddenly appear.

Behind me I hear Captain Brey reporting on the radio: "One VC, one POW, over . . . Request immediate evacuation, over . . . Inform Army Intelligence . . . No wounded, no KIA, over."

Someone says, "Cap, what they gonna do? String him up in Cu Chi?"

Someone else: "Little fucker's been plugging this hole a long while. Goddamn root in a forest."

"Gook's a root," says another.

Hernandez, confused, says, "Doesn't look like he's hurt, though. Looks better off than I am."

"Roger that, Cholo."

"Lookee here," says Cap. "This is the little piss ant been chewing on our ear."

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*I remember the rain filling the rice paddy, the red ants chewing my legs and back, using me as an island.*

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I peer into his tunnel, a narrow slit camouflaged by bushes. I try to see his darkness, and the way he would crawl back to the safest hole when he felt us near his body. Not much air when you get way in I bet. And not much light, except what's shining from inside you. For a moment I close my eyes and feel the brightness of my body. I wonder if while in the earth he heard our loud and soft noises, our footsteps and breath, our C4 and pentrite, our whispered chatter and terrible fear of darkness. From inside I believe he heard everything on the earth's skin: our bodies' weight, our explosions, the river filling its channel, the animals and the old trees holding to their shelter. I wonder what can destroy this child. The soldiers and their captain appear worried that he will vanish upward into rain and light, or vanish beneath us into holes, roots, pools of dark water. I watch the captain aim his .45 caliber pistol in the boy's direction. Nawalsky says, "Little fucker looks like a muskrat." Someone else says, "Looks like a bird. Some wingless little bird."

A helicopter sets down on the hill above the river. I volunteer to be one of the four boys who carry our prisoner up the hill. We break a trail through thick woods, avoiding the paths that may be booby-trapped by the child whom we carry. I find myself rubbing his skin, caressing his right shoulder and wrist, needing to touch him. I hear our feet crumpling leaves and twigs—small snapping sounds under the tension of our voices. Two of our boys grunt and whisper, a quiet conversation:

"Little mother don't weigh nothin'. No wonder our bullets miss. Too light. Too skinny."

"They'll fly this little mother to Saigon, set him in a bright light, make him jabber."

"No way . . . Gook won't jabber."

"Give him time, he will. 'Where the VC?' they'll ask. 'How many, son? How many battalions? Regiments? In what strategic positions?' They'll pretend this little gook's the whole fucking war—he'll jabber. If not, they got a good excuse to blow him all to hell."

I watch the boy's breathing. I see beads of rain and sweat trickle down his chest. The cage of his rib bones swells outward with his inhale. His chest and belly move slowly, finding a rhythm of their own. I feel him gathering his strength, holding himself in a quiet place where our voices and touch mean nothing.

I can feel my breath mixing with his, the breath of flowers and weeds that bloom after the bombing. He breathes as we all breathe, and the air—open and soft—holds back nothing. I smile as I consider telling the prisoner of my promise to end suffering. Maybe my promise belongs to him, and to those like him who will not stop breathing. ❖

*Jim Janko, a writer and ESL teacher, combines Vipassana practice with the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. "Promise" was previously published in the Massachusetts Review. It is dedicated to a Vietnamese boy, name unknown, who was the only "enemy soldier" Jim's platoon captured in Vietnam.*

## Two Poems about Vietnam

by Ted Sexauer



### The Well

—by the trail to My An, Binh Dinh Province, Vietnam 1970

I think of you  
papa-san, grandfather, Ong,  
standing at your open well

there you are, smiling host  
to a squad of well-armed foreigners, pulling up  
a red Folger's coffee can of cool sweet water  
dousing bowed teen-aged heads  
eight young men this time, huge, all hairy  
like dogs, bearing strange black rifles  
(they will not go away) wearing only  
boots and floppy war-green undershorts  
careless youth from a rich world, blind  
to soap water spilling back down the well  
your task of diplomacy to keep the soap out  
without getting shot

for once  
I could see clearly what you thought  
as I watched you grin and nod nonstop  
like an imbecile, disappearing with that grin  
into a sea of caricature papa-sans  
I saw something I knew in your eyes  
I saw you calling on the god  
of get-me-out-of-this  
I saw in you myself  
desperate  
to preserve the healthful water

#### Background:

*The thing I loved about Vietnam itself—the country, that is, the countryside, not the corrupt cities, not the politics, not the war—was how simple everything was: just what you need to live and no more.*

*Near the company CP we worked out of in August 1970, next to one of the smaller back trails, was a farm on tiered land. On that farm, on the first tier below the trail, was a well. There was a lawn of sorts, a bed of tough broad-leafed bunch grasses trampled low, and the well was a plain hole in the ground maybe eighteen inches wide. The water was drawn up in a one-gallon coffee can (Folger's, I think, a red can) on a length of parachute cord, and the water was cool and sweet. On a tier below and to the side was the thatched house of the farmer. Palm trees grew all around that place.*

On days we weren't patrolling or dealing in some form of mayhem, we would take a break from war. The simplest of pleasures: squad by squad we'd file down to papa-san's well and for a time be cool and even clean and at peace. Maybe my favorite memory of Vietnam. . . But I had a feeling for the old man who owned the well, and it must have been quite an ordeal for him.

Back then, I would probably have said "The Well" is overstated. Back then, everything was compressed by fear. When you're living in a terror you can't fully acknowledge or admit—and know you will do so every day for x number of days—the amount of sensitivity you can field is limited. That's one of the things we need to deal with, in order to come back to life.



## The Test

In my new company  
I'm cool right off the bat.  
The senior medic whom I replace,  
Edwards, was in the class behind me.  
They know I've been to the best schools,  
know I was busted for smoking dope.  
I fit right in.

The first night, to break me in easy,  
I'm sent out on a low-risk ambush.  
Twilight, we start out, zig-zagging  
through rice paddies, farm country,  
finally we wind up in a little wooded glen.  
Something

familiar about the place. A split-rail fence  
just like the one me and my grandpa built,  
and pine trees, swear to God, a cushion  
of pine needles on the ground here and  
I'm back  
in the woods  
on neighbors' farms  
we used to play Army in  
as kids. Guys used to make up  
stories back then: *The farmer who owns these woods  
is crazy, if he catches us sneaking through  
here, he's sworn he'll cut off our balls.*

I knew that probably wasn't too likely.  
It was always better to not find out.

The patrol leader, Pratt,  
is not a lifer type, in fact  
this is more patrol by committee.  
He's passing the Starlight scope around.  
After a time, he signals me over

and hands it to me,  
points to a small clearing.  
I look through the thing, seeing  
kind of a moonscape, unearthly,  
everything backlit in ghostly fluorescent green,  
and there are an old man and an old woman  
fooling with one of those bird-house looking  
shrines  
on a post. Patrol leader whispers to me,

"Your decision. Do we dust them or not?"  
I guess it was his way of honoring me,  
or was it a test?

I thought about it  
longer than you might think,  
you with nothing at stake.

I came here  
to save all the lives I can. Maybe  
they're praying to ancestors, maybe they're  
setting booby-traps that will kill  
tomorrow or the day next week  
when Rogers and Wilson will cease to exist  
leaving no descendants to pray for them.

The rule is, anyone out after curfew  
is enemy. Simple as that.  
What we're supposed to do is shoot them.  
They know that, mama-san and papa-san  
in my sights. They have to have  
a strong reason to take the chance.

*I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS!*

I thought for an eternity.  
If only I could have  
asked, "How am I supposed to decide?"  
"What the hell are you thinking?"  
I didn't know how. I couldn't break  
patrol silence. I could not look the fool.

I thought for an eternity.

"Let 'em go," I said,  
and we left.

I still don't know. ❖

*Ted Sexauer trained as a medic in the U. S. Army's exhaustive Special Forces medics' course, and served for 18 months in Vietnam in 1969-70. He lives in the town of Sonoma, California. He has participated in writing workshops with Maxine Hong Kingston, and in retreats for Vietnam veterans with Thich Nhat Hanh, and he visited Vietnam this year for the first time since 1970.*

# WATCHING THE BREATH ON THE SOIRAP RIVER

by Sherdyl (Charlie) Motz

I learned to meditate during my year in Vietnam, without even knowing it. In fact, if anyone had asked me if I meditated, or did anything else of a spiritual nature, I would have been very offended. You see, the macho, barbarian warrior I was trying to be couldn't love God or meditate.

I spent countless, seemingly interminable hours in the forward gun tub of my patrol boat on night patrol. The main river we patrolled was the Soirap River and it was two miles wide. We very quickly learned to stay right smack dab in the middle of the river. That way if the VC wanted to cross they had to deal with us. But if they wanted to ambush us, they would have to hit us from a mile away and that's about as good odds as you can get in any war.

So, except for the fear that came during and immediately after a fire-fight or a false alarm, of which there were many, things were pretty peaceful on the river. The river was my friend. Its soft, rippling flow was somehow comforting. Often I hummed the tune "Old Man River" to myself.

The sky was deep black. There were torrential rains during the monsoon season. And sometimes the lights of Saigon, 21 clicks away, lit up the sky, but mostly there was only starlight, moonlight, and the velvety, black caressing sky.

I came to love the Soirap River. I felt sorry for the poor suckers who had to roam around in the jungle at night, looking for trouble, setting off booby traps and running into enemy ambushes at very close range. For us, there was slow cruising on a fairly safe river, with many reassuring sights, sounds and smells. There were the soft flickering lights of the little villages dotting the shore and the darkness of the impenetrable jungle. There were three places along our patrol area where large pilings extended about 200 yards out into the river. Fishermen tied their nets up there. Technically they shouldn't have been out at night, as there was a strict dusk to dawn curfew, but as long as they stayed close to the pilings and didn't shoot at us or try to cross the river, we left them alone. God knows they needed to make a living during these war-ravaged years. Why should we add to their problems?

The sounds of our boat were also soothing to my spirit. There was the low, throaty pulse of the engines at cruising speed and the high-pitched whine of the

radar making its constant sweeps. Bird squawks and caws issued from the jungle. When we had our engine off and floated with the current, the waves slapped the hull rhythmically.

But the river's many smells were not all soothing. When it was hot and muggy the river had a very swampy smell. During the monsoon rains, the ozone bouquet was strong. When the Air Force sprayed agent orange to defoliate, we could smell that, too, along with the stench of rotting vegetation and dead fish and birds. The perfume of incense and cooking often drifted out to us in the early evening from the little villages along the shoreline. The sharp odor of fresh fish swept over us when a small fishing sampan came alongside for inspection. And then there was the occasional reek of a floater—a dead body. There was also the smell of artillery or bomb explosions, along with the red glare of napalm, or the cordite smoke that came from the barrels of our own guns.

Periodically I had to sweep the area in front of the boat with my binoculars, but mostly there were long periods of inactivity and I could learn to relax. The stars and moon became my good friends. I

became intimate with the cycles of the moon. I felt sometimes that I got moon burn from gazing so long at its beauty. The patterns of the constellations were etched in my soul. Their firelight washed through me.

I found myself wondering about their names and their mythology, and I spent long hours making up myths of my own about them. I imagined myself drinking deeply of a sparkling, healing elixir from the Big Dipper.

I didn't know then about the spiritual value of following the breath, in the Buddhist tradition, but I often did watch my breath: In. Out. Slowly. Gently. Sometimes I would draw the light of the stars deep into my heart on the in-breath and exhale its energy out through my body on the out-breath. These were times of inner peace and healing from the inhumanity of the war that was being played out around me.

You see, I went to war in Vietnam to learn how to meditate. ❖

*Sherdyl (Charlie) Motz was on a river patrol force in Vietnam in 1966-1967. He began healing from the trauma of Vietnam through journal writing and is a member of Maxine Hong Kingston's writing group for veterans. His spiritual work includes both Sufi and Tibetan Buddhist practices. He works as a graphic designer and lives in Albany, California.*

## Surrender

*Between each breath we take  
there is a well  
and a dipper*

— Judith Azrael



# WORKING WITH SUFFERING IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

by Phillip B. Ziegler

*Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.*

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

It is a fundamental spiritual principle, in fact the Buddha's Second Noble Truth, that suffering is an inevitable consequence of the tendency of the human mind to desire that things be other than they are. The Buddha's Third Noble Truth assures us that there can be an end to suffering if we move beyond the mind's seemingly unending interest in what it likes and dislikes.

That pain and suffering must be distinguished is well known to anyone who has traveled very far on the spiritual path. Pain is sensation. As with all things perceptible to our senses we can recognize pain because we recognize its corresponding opposite, pleasure. The Buddha does not promise freedom from pain. Suffering, on the other hand, is not a sensory event. It is the distress we experience when the mind determines that things should be different. We find some emotion, event or situation unacceptable. And by the way we work it over in our minds we turn trouble into suffering.

The arthritis in my hip is bothering me this morning as I write. I experience pain. Not terrible pain, simply a mild discomfort I have come to expect on cold mornings. So far no suffering. But when I begin thinking that life is unfair because none of my friends have this problem I open the door to suffering. I remind myself that this damned arthritis has limited my ability to train in Aikido with my former speed and fierceness. Envy and resentment arise over the better fortune of others. Sorrow over the loss of my athletic abilities and youthful vigor follows close behind. Suffering has entered the room.

If these thoughts dominate my waking life eventually I will grow depressed. I will exhibit irritation toward my training partners in Aikido and take it out on family and friends. Eventually this state of mind will shape my reality. I will think life grossly unfair, that I've been dealt a lousy hand. I'll be irritated most of the time and people will come to think of me as a grumpy sort of guy. A drag to be around. My reaction will have come to color my entire personality and destiny. Suffering has taken up permanent residence. The Buddha described it in the twin verses of the *Dhammapada*: Who we are is the result of what we have thought; we are formed and molded by our thoughts.

Most of the serious emotional and interpersonal problems people bring to therapy are rooted in their childhood experiences. Some of these experiences, such as incest and parental abuse, produce severe psychic pain—a complex of memories which perpetuate either recurring painful emotions or emotional deadness. Less destructive childhood experiences also leave scars. Growing up with parents who were inadequate to the task of child raising for one reason or another makes it hard for the child to master the challenges of childhood psycho-social development. As an adult, such a person comes to therapy because she can't get along with others or because she does not like herself. She complains of depression or anxiety. She has no enthusiasm for living.

Other clients come to therapy because their lives have been rocked by recent traumatic events—rape, the death of a loved one, the discovery that they have AIDS. They may be grieving, or overwhelmed with feelings of rage and fear.

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*Clients come into therapy because  
they are at war with their pain and wish  
to draw me into the battle as an ally.*

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Still other clients come to therapy because they are unable to feel much of anything. Over many years they have shut down against painful feelings, and the price has been the loss of the capacity to feel joy. These clients come for help in restoring aliveness and responsiveness. They will have to become familiar with the pain they have suppressed.

Whatever their specific situation or complaint, clients come into therapy because they do not want to feel psychic pain in any form. They don't want to be living as they are living. They wish to be free from the forces of past events or want an end to the crisis. They want life to be different. They want themselves to be different. They may want a better relationship. Another relationship. Freedom from an unsatisfying relationship. Or they want to be thinner, happier, more successful, less afraid, drug-free. They want a better sex life, or they want to have a sex life. They want less anxiety, higher self-esteem, more financial security. The list goes on and on. They hope I have some skill, knowledge, or even magic to apply in order to fix what is not

right. They are at war with their pain and wish to draw me into the battle as an ally.

And behind that hope is another, one that is rarely fully conscious. This second hope usually only surfaces when things begin to improve and the client starts feeling better about himself and life. What is this hope? It is the belief that once he is fixed he will be able to wrest from the world what he wants, that he will know how to get happy and stay happy. And this is the hope that separates the pain from the suffering. Whatever pain we are working with in our sessions, I am always listening for the emergence of this secret hope, and when I hear it I invite the client to explore the relationship between this hope and the perpetuation of his suffering.

I did not always work this way. For over 15 years in clinical practice I accepted, without question, that my job was to make the client more functional so he could get what he wanted from the world and from himself. After all, I was trying to do the same for myself. I employed Gestalt exercises, Reichian breath work, and other active techniques to bring about the desired changes—to make the client “better.” Most of my clients did get better: Those living below their potential returned to school or took other steps to improve their work lives. Men and women in destructive relationships found the courage and strength to leave those relationships and build new lives alone or with other partners. These are certainly worthwhile achieve-



Prudence See, *The back garden door onto Station Road*

ments, and I am pleased to have been in some way helpful in bringing about such changes. I do not wish to discount either my skill or the determination and bravery of my clients.

But the deepening of my own spiritual practice has led me to believe that therapeutic healing can and should be more than symptom removal, or helping the client to become a more effective consumer, better at getting the stuff he wants. I believe that an essential aspect of my work must include raising the question of whether getting more from the world will ever bring the client lasting joy or peace of mind. And if the client accepts the challenge of examining this question, she naturally begins to investigate the nature of suffering. Sooner or later she will discover, as do all who travel this path, that suffering is rooted in the mind's tendency to divide experience into what it calls pleasant and unpleasant.

Suffering is a two-edged sword—it can destroy or it can transform. As one who offers help I must bear this in mind when someone comes to me for psychotherapy. On the one hand suffering is real. Debilitating anxiety and overwhelming fear shouldn't be lightly dismissed as a product of weakness of character or a lack of spiritual perspective. Indifference to the pain and suffering of others based on a misguided New Age rendering of the theory of karma is not expressive of spiritual maturity. Equanimity, that quality of mind which is essential for those who practice psychotherapy, is quite unlike indifference. The challenge for those of us who bring a spiritual orientation to our work as therapists is to remain sensitive to the reality experienced by the sufferer while at the same time maintaining a balanced neutrality or calmness in the face of the client's predicament and response. When it is clear that a client can't contain the suffering or is being undone by it, we must do what we can to relieve the condition. With other clients, we can invite them to use the experience of suffering to develop insight and compassion. Again, we must be sensitive, drawing on whatever measure of intuitive wisdom we have developed, to determine the most helpful course of action under the circumstances.

I continue to make mistakes along the way. I don't like that fact. I might become impatient with a client who complains week after week about how terrible his job is. Sometimes I offer reassurance that things will work out when I can't really be certain. At other times I might hold back my comforting when comfort could provide needed support to the client because I am afraid of getting too close. I don't like making these mistakes. I wish I always got it right, and, in so wishing, I, too, suffer by wanting to be other than I am. To have done other than I have done. And at those times, my work as a therapist becomes the context for spiritual practice. My office chair becomes my meditation pillow.

I sometimes receive post cards from former clients saying life is better than ever and thanking me for

bringing them through the tough times. Naturally I feel gratified reading these messages. And yet, sometimes I am troubled. I wonder. Did I take something away that might have been valuable to this person? I think about my own life. About the fact that my own spiritual journey began in earnest during a period of great suffering over the deeply painful realization that I was a compulsive overeater.

I couldn't stop overeating. Nothing I had tried, including years of therapy, had freed me from this condition. I was obese and filled with self-loathing. I was desperate and ashamed when I went into a Twelve-Step Program for compulsive overeaters. I was also as skeptical as anyone who has ever crossed the threshold of a meeting room. The only thing greater than my skepticism was my pain. So I stayed despite incredible resistance, especially to the spiritual message of the program. I stayed in the beginning because I found hope and the compassionate understanding of others who shared my struggle. I avoided the spiritual aspects of the program as not relevant to my situation—the camaraderie and understanding were enough. In the beginning.

But eventually, the support of other compulsive overeaters was not enough and I began working the 12 Steps. These Steps called for meditation and selfless service. They set forth universal spiritual principles which, slowly and falteringly, I began to make the basis of my life. Principles like honesty, gratitude, forgiveness, and commitment to rigorous self-investigation.

Nothing short of the utter despair occasioned by my compulsive overeating could have moved me to turn inward in search of something as mysterious as a Higher Power. Had someone relieved my symptoms with a technique or a pill at that point in my life, they would have deprived me of this driving force—what I now think of as grace—which changed the course of my life. By entering the heart of my suffering rather than trying another diet or behavior modification technique I came to discover the root of my problem with food and with life itself in the very beliefs I held about myself and the world around me. Now I see the world less in terms of competition and more in terms of cooperation. I am slowly becoming more patient with myself and others.

And when I see such changes taking place in my clients I know we are doing important work together—what I call transformative work. I know changes are taking place in the depths of consciousness where thought arises. I have not prevented the client's suffering from being his or her teacher, from being the force that brings wisdom, insight, and compassion into human consciousness. ❖

*Phillip Ziegler is an MFCC in private practice in Oakland, California, and is the author of A Skeptic's Guide to the 12 Steps (Hazelden, 1991) in which he describes his own recovery and spiritual awakening. The ideas in this article were developed in dialogue with his wife, Tobey Hiller, also a psychotherapist.*

## PAIN, OR SUFFERING?

by Cheri Huber

Pain and suffering. We often hear the words together—so often that, in common usage, their meanings have become synonymous. But from the perspective of spiritual practice, they are quite different.

Pain is inevitable, a fact of life. There isn't a creature alive who hasn't experienced some kind of pain sometime and who won't experience it again—whether it's physical, psychological, or emotional. We know we can count on it, and yet we spend most of our time trying to prevent it.

Pain is not suffering. Suffering is our reaction to pain. Defensiveness, greed, anger, denial, repression, rejection, hatred, fear—to name a few—are all, at their source, reactions to pain—ego's reaction to pain. Ego takes pain very personally; pain reinforces its sense of separateness. Pain is a "something" to be gotten rid of or prevented. "I don't want this pain," "Get rid of this," "Something's wrong with me," "This shouldn't be happening"—are all things ego might say during a painful experience. Ego takes pain and adds suffering to it until the two are so intertwined that it's easy to see why we take the two words to mean the same thing.

The suffering we add to pain is often after the fact. I have a painful experience, then I try to figure out how I can arrange my life so that I don't experience that pain again. I am willing to make sacrifices for security, for control. For instance, I might stay with work I hate because I'm afraid of not being able to find something else, or afraid of being dependent—both painful experiences. Or having experienced the pain of an unrequited love, I now say good-bye to lovers before they can say good-bye to me.

We suffer when we are not willing to feel pain. We close ourselves off. We dig trenches. We put up barricades. We develop "sensitive" radar systems. And when provoked, we attack. All because we don't want to feel pain. All because pain frightens ego. Ego is vulnerable to being found out. Because when we stay with pain and don't add ego's suffering to it by closing ourselves off, we see that we are in fact equal to that pain, that we can "take it"; we see through ego's game of inadequacy. We see the wholeness and truth of our essential being. And we see that, like everything else, no one pain lasts forever. ❖

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*People who do good because they can't stand the pain of suffering are not going to do much, because the suffering is bottomless. You must be able to embrace suffering in yourself and be joyful even in the presence of suffering and then do what you do. —Ram Dass.*

# THE ROOT OF TRANSFORMATION

## *An alternative to New Age anti-suffering rhetoric*

by Polly Young-Eisendrath, Ph.D.

*"Times of growth are beset with difficulties. They resemble a first birth. But these difficulties arise from the very profusion of all that is struggling to attain form. Everything is in motion: therefore if one perseveres there is a prospect of great success, in spite of the existing danger."*

—from "Difficulty at the Beginning," *The I Ching*, Richard Wilhelm, translator

Suffering is the necessary ground of transformation, the root of new development, the daemon of creativity. But from what I see in *Time* and *Newsweek* and *The New York Times Magazine*, we are surrounded by anti-suffering campaigns. Only youth, success, romance and health are proffered as the path to growth and development. On the soft underbelly of these campaigns are the New Age and Recovery Movements with their illusions of control. They invite us to feel the constant energy and optimism of good health, to rid ourselves of the crippling effects of past lives, and to control our dependence on everything from substances to dysfunctional parents.

On the other side, scientific psychiatry and genetic engineering are the hard nose of anti-suffering rhetoric. The hype surrounding the newest success in psychoactive drugs—the antidepressants—rivals New Age promises. Psychiatrist Peter Kramer, in his book *Listening to Prozac*, claims that Prozac is "cosmetic psychopharmacology" that can make people "better than well." Prozac can bring us self-confidence and a warm glow *without* the effort required for meditation, exercise, or the ubiquitous New Age or Recovery weekend conference. Of course, Prozac is only the tip of the iceberg. There are genetic cures promised for most serious human defects and diseases. Popular accounts of genetic engineering predict that perfect bodies and perfect children are on the horizon. We'll substitute "good" for "bad" genes, erase or fix human afflictions, and clone the best and brightest of ourselves for repeated lifetimes.

In the meantime, we may forget that suffering is a necessary condition of human development.

But here you may ask: In a time when so many humans are suffering from overwhelming poverty, homelessness, devastating illnesses like AIDS, and

abuse, torture and incest, how dare I suggest that suffering has value?

It's not that I reject methods that may ease our suffering. As a psychotherapist, I have recommended various kinds of body work, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other 12-Step programs to my clients. I also refer clients for psychiatric medications, when necessary, particularly anti-depressants. But when the New Agers or the scientists talk about "cures" that *eliminate* suffering, they mislead us about the necessity and worth of suffering as a component of human development and change.

Why should we want—as Peter Kramer suggests—to be *better* than well? It's one thing to improve a debilitating mood disorder, but it's another to escape the ordinary problems of living. Kramer believes that Prozac can "transform" the self. He's using a different definition of transformation than I am. As he describes it, the Prozac transformation is a brightening of

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*Reducing a family member or friend to the dismissive label "dysfunctional" breaks the felt connection of a common humanity.*

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mood and a quickening of mind. Carried away by his enthusiasm, Kramer even allows himself a gender slur in advocating for the drug that erases everyday doldrums. His metaphor for the Prozac transformation is thoroughly cosmetic: "Since you only live once, why not do it as a blonde? Why not as a peppy blonde?" Indeed.

My own suffering has been a great teacher. From adversity in childhood, I came to understand something about what drives people to hurt each other. I also developed a keen ability to observe. My childhood wounds, and their traces in my character, still help me resonate with lost potential and unrealized dreams in others. I grew up in a working-class, interracial community where I learned that people surrender their dreams because they doubt the possibility of realizing them, not because of something more arbitrary or mysterious. Lack of education and skills deprives people of imagination and confidence, and of the possibility of seeing themselves as successful in the future. Particularly the mothers who "stayed at home" and "didn't work" were bitter and regretful that they could not use their intelligence in ways more complex and rewarding than housework. The fathers were also bitter, and after working long days in noisy, dirty factories they were usually just plain exhausted. Only the mothers talked about themselves and their lives. I heard how they felt regretful and nostalgic about youth, wishing

they had been able to be educated enough to believe in a life that was different from the stifling poverty of past and present.

Most of my childhood suffering was a witnessing of violence, aggression, bitterness, and fear in others. Sometimes I was the target, but not often. I felt lucky because I knew other children who were frequent victims. I watched and studied, and planned my escape from the aggression and drudgery through the “do good and good will come to you” formula. I found

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*The hype surrounding Prozac claims it can make people “better than well.” But why should we want to be better than well?*

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that the formula worked for me. Although my peers called me a “goody-goody” I steered my course self-consciously ahead, believing that I was laying a foundation for a brighter, better future. If I could master my inner hostilities, I would not enact outer ones, and would also avoid being the target for others’ attacks. This allowed more time and energy to pursue my studies in school (another aspect of “doing good”).

Through long years of study and personal development, I have never forgotten the lessons of my childhood suffering. Although I was deprived of a happy, emotionally secure childhood, I had enough resources available that my adversities could often be converted into knowledge and compassion. I am grateful that I saw so much about life so early. It gave me a jump-start on developing an analytic attitude—a certain restraint in accepting surface explanations of human misery.

But as I entered middle age, my early formula of control (“do good and good will come”) broke down along with my health. I had pushed myself relentlessly through every new life experience—travel, marriage, children, divorce, more education, greater financial and professional responsibilities—until I was confronted with the inevitabilities of aging. Two chronic illnesses forced me to change my life and to struggle against my own grandiosity: the belief that I had limitless energy.

Through my illnesses I found a new narrative. Being helpless to carry out ordinary tasks, I discovered the depth of my own dependence. As a psychoanalyst, I have developed this narrative into a kind of principle that aids me in doing psychotherapy. I call it the “principle of absolute dependence”: we are always dependent on others, our immediate loved ones and friends, and on all other forms of life that support our existence.

Most people come to recognize this dependence only through some kind of suffering. Because our society hypervalues individuality, we defend against the awareness of our dependence with an anxious, guarded “inde-

pendence.” This can lead to narcissistic defenses (feelings of being unique, ideal, very different, or very powerful) like my feelings of being exempt from physical limitations in adolescence and early adulthood. And such defenses obscure the meaning and worth of our relationships.

Connected to the principle of absolute dependence is the corollary of “essential control.” Chronic illness has taught me that I control a very circumscribed but essential part of my life. My own thoughts, feelings, and actions are under my control most of the time. They are vitally important to how I live my life in recognition of my dependence. If I want to change something, I have learned to start with my own attitude. Sometimes it’s all that I *can* change.

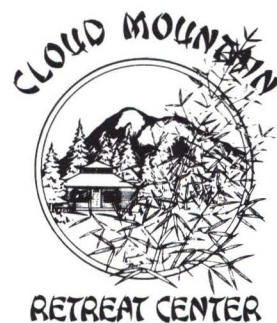
Buddhist practice has deepened my appreciation of the principle of absolute dependence on others, and its corollary of essential control of our subjective experience. Much of our suffering is the direct consequence of our own (often unacknowledged) beliefs and attitudes, as they are carried out in our perceptions and actions. To change our attitudes is to learn from our suffering and alleviate it. As a world religion, Buddhism offers perhaps the most developed account of human suffering and its meaning because the living Buddha, the founder of the religion, took as his central mission the alleviation of suffering.

Even a couple of years ago, I would have declined to write about suffering, seeing it as beyond my ken; suffering and its meanings have traditionally been the

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province of religious institutions. But I see people coming to therapy now with no appreciation of their suffering, no clue about how or why it might be meaningful. Too often in initial psychotherapy evaluations I hear people respond to my question "What was your mother (father) like?" with the dismissive "She (he) was an alcoholic." Reducing a family member or friend to the label "dysfunctional" breaks the felt connection of a common humanity. Many people believe that adversity in childhood boils down to a simple formula: if your parents aren't alcoholic or abusive, then you should thrive. Or the reverse: if you are not thriving, then your parents must have been dysfunctional. Sadly, this formula cheats us of the complexity and compassion that adversity can bring to our understanding of ourselves and others.

Recently I had the extraordinary privilege of interviewing a woman in her early thirties who had grown up in foster care from the age of three. Although she had endured many brutal physical attacks, she spoke fondly of a number of her foster parents because they had cared enough to provide decent food and clothing. In college now, she felt a responsibility for herself that I rarely encounter in an initial meeting. She stated clearly that she blamed no one, but that she was very confused about why so many of her relationships with men would eventually become abusive. We talked

about her tendency to provide care for men who appealed to her sense of charity. She had often treated them as she had wished to be treated as a child herself, with generosity and nurturance. She was curious about herself and her motives. I noted the dignity of her self-acceptance, as well as her appreciation for the love she had been given, although it met none of our standard ideals for parental love. She was neither self-pitying nor martyred. Instead, she exuded an appreciation for her life.

So the effects of childhood adversity, like genes, are never simple and straightforward. Depending on one's attitude, they may cause dumb suffering, or they may be the roots of one's psychological and spiritual growth. Suffering can teach us about the shape and boundaries of being human. It teaches us about our impermanence, our responsibility, our limitations and dependence, and the ways we are inextricably bound up with all life. Human life is designed in such a way that certain kinds of suffering are necessary and available for our development. They guarantee that life will be interesting. If we try to avoid them and their meaning, it is at our peril. ❖

*Polly Young-Eisendrath is a Jungian analyst, psychologist, and writer in Burlington, Vermont. She is a student of Zen Roshi Philip Kapleau.*

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## SUFFERING IN THE SMALL HOURS

*To wake, knowing one has slept: that is, for us insomniacs, an experience of grace.*

by Lenore Friedman

In one of her novels, Iris Murdoch wrote something like: "The deepest chasm dividing humankind is the one between those who sleep and those who don't." Immediately I knew Iris to be a sister insomniac. Only a non-sleeper could have formulated such a perception. And what a relief to read it! To recognize a fellow traveler through night's darkest hours, conscious and undreaming, seemingly alone.

"The whole world asleep but me" has to be one of the most tormenting of thoughts. And sleepless hours are ripe for self-torment. Other people's steady breathing and other people's snoring deepen the torment. Other people's twitches or sighs as they slide deeper into dreaming deepen it more.

Awake in the small hours, I feel outside the circle of light, excluded from comfort, from arms that hold me safe. I am left at the mercy of my mind, my egregiously unmerciful mind. It zaps me back to wakefulness the instant I start to fall. Oh to fall, to slide, to slip into unconsciousness, even for an hour—oh, an *hour!* To wake, knowing one has slept: that is, for us insomniacs, an experience of grace. Most people who sleep—there are probably exceptions—don't mark that moment. They've slept, but of *course*. Everyone sleeps. But everyone doesn't. I don't, quite a lot of the time. I don't fall asleep at all, or I sleep and waken, sleep and waken; or I sleep and waken and—at two or three or four in the morning—that's it for the night.

What do we insomniacs do? The intrepid ones among us get up and do something useful—write letters, clean the house, finish a hem, call someone far away. Some watch TV or read or call a late-night talk show. Ultimately most of us try to go back to sleep. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. When it doesn't, we lie there feeling like the man in Kafka's novel *The Castle*, who sat outside the gates of heaven, knowing he could not enter, watching everyone else go in.

*Why?* we wonder sometimes. *Why me?* I'm no more anxious or obsessive than X or Y or Z. There's nothing dragging me down or haunting me more than my neighbor or lover or spouse. Q is much more neurotic than I am—and sleeps at the drop of a hat! Is it genetic? (Mother was never a good sleeper, either.) Is it neurological? Nutritional? My meridians? My hormones?

Would homeopathy help? Massage? Exercise? Hypnosis? Many of us have tried them all. Sometimes they work, or work for a while. Sometimes they don't. Some go to sleep labs. Some take pills. Some give up.

A few years ago something happened to jolt my whole pattern. I was in upstate New York on a seven-day silent meditation retreat. When I'm away from home I always sleep badly. On the fourth night I went to bed early, exhausted, certain I'd sleep this time, as I often do after several bad nights. But I didn't. I didn't fall asleep at all. In the middle of the night, almost in a state of shock, I got up, wrapped a shawl over my nightgown, and walked barefoot to the meditation room. It was totally quiet and empty. The light was dim and comforting. I sat down on my cushion, looking out at the black night through the glass door in front of me. I sat a long time, about an hour, and then I walked slowly around the room past all the empty cushions and mats, the floor highly polished and cool under my feet. Then I sat down on my cushion again for a while longer. When I went back to my room and lay down on my bed, I had no expectations. I just needed to lie down. And I didn't fall asleep for an hour or more. At 4:30 AM, when the bell rang after I'd had no more than two or three hours of sleep, I got up for early morning meditation not because I *had* to, but because I wanted to. I felt fine. I felt fine all day. After breakfast I couldn't wait to get into the woods for a long walk. After lunch I tried to nap but didn't succeed. After supper I walked in the woods again. I kept thinking that by 2:00 or 4:00 or 6:00 I'd fall apart. But I didn't. At 9:00 I fell into bed and slept the whole night.

In the morning I knew something was different. All my ideas about sleeping or not-sleeping were blowing around my feet like fallen leaves. The next night, unsleeping again, I walked to the meditation room in my nightgown and sat again for an hour. This time, back in my room, I did fall asleep. But that's not what's significant. Nothing in particular is significant except it doesn't feel like a sentence or punishment anymore. How did this happen? I think it's that my identity as an insomniac has shaken loose, has lost its solidity. What's left is just what happens. I'm sure I sleep less than some people, more than others. It doesn't have the sting it used to have. I used to dread the exhaustion, the inability to keep my eyes open, the dragging of gravity on days after sleeplessness. Now I am weathering bad nights differently. I'm getting up early anyway, not routinely re-setting my alarm to compensate, not so often losing the morning hours I love. For the moment at least, I'm not feeling helpless against the whims of some capricious sleep-dispenser in the sky. ♦

*Lenore Friedman is a writer and psychotherapist living in Berkeley, California. She is the author of Meetings with Remarkable Women: Buddhist Teachers in America.*

# MY MOTHER-IN-LAW

by Meredith Stout

As students of Buddhist philosophy, we try to be aware of the extent of suffering throughout the world. We try to practice with a knowledge that suffering is a part of everybody's life. But surrounded as we are by so many poverty-misery people with acutely physical needs, and prodded daily by our advertising culture to believe that material accumulation is equivalent to joy, it is sometimes hard to remember that suffering does not know the boundaries of socio-economic class.

When I am lulled into thinking that if only I owned this or if only I achieved that I would be truly happy, I remember my mother-in-law.

She was a handsome woman with aquiline features, an erect back, and white hair with tints of subtle blue. I remember that she had a sharp sense of humor, that she never got grease on the fronts of her colorful silk shirts, and that her luggage always matched. She never finished boarding school (I think she went around the world instead), but she married a Yale man and was enormously well read.

Together they had an apartment in the city and a home in the country where they served daiquiris before lunch and kept their most expensive china in a lighted cabinet in the hall. I remember that the *Social Register* was a red book kept on a polished table near the phone, and that they gave beautiful, candlelit dinners served by Mooney, the Irish maid, who was devoted to their boys and who spent more time with them than their own mother did. I remember that my mother-in-law loved museums, volunteered at a hospital in New York, donated abundantly to charity, won national prizes for her watercolors of landscapes and lobster pots, and served on different philanthropic boards.

I remember other things: the lines around her smile when she came to visit us, and how stiffly she held her body inside my welcoming hugs. I remember how much she loved New York, but that later they stayed mostly in the country when he said the city had changed too much. (They took a lot of trips which she always said had been divine.) I remember glimpses of pain behind her eyes. I think she referred to an abortion once, but I can't really say for sure. The only time I saw her cry was when she told us that her youngest son had died alone in some hotel. There was an overdose of something, but no one mentioned suicide and it was never made quite clear.

I remember that much later her husband developed something they didn't call Alzheimers then, and that she had to put him in a home. She was already ill with cancer when she had the Remington paintings in her living room appraised and learned that they were fakes. As the

cancer grew, she called more often just to say hello, and I remember the lonely fear behind her voice that sounded a trifle slurred from too much drink.

It took me a long time to know I loved my mother-in-law. Isolated as she was by an affluent world of privilege, of keeping up a front, of never showing vulnerability, it was hard for me to open my heart to her when hers seemed to stay so closed. I can't imagine my mother-in-law telling me she hurt. I can't imagine her ever saying she was sad. It made it hard for me to say that I was too. How scared she must have been that the fragile structure of beauty, perfection, and control she had built around herself would tumble down if she should open up. Instead, I think it would have happened just the other way around. I feel so sad when I remember that I never went to sit with her and tell her that I loved her before she died. ❖

*Meredith Stout is a photographer and writer and an active BPF member living in Berkeley, California.*

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## Where You Were Running

in memory of Michelle Barros

*Zendo. Morning sitting.  
Chilled, you stand close to the heater  
and catch fire.  
Flames eat your clothes  
into your flesh  
you run  
into the street, across the wet lawn  
running  
blazing  
screaming your death song.  
Buddhist monks have died this way  
voluntarily: morning sitting, self-immolation.*

*Once I heard that the sun  
tore itself out of the Earth.  
That morning the sun tore out of you.  
You could have rolled in the wet grass  
or let others beat it out of you  
but you ran with it.  
They will say you panicked, ran in fear.  
But I picture you open armed  
running to meet your destiny.*

—Cassandra Sagan Bell



# POETRY AND AGONY

## *Finding the Middle Way*

by Cassandra Sagan Bell

The image of the suffering artist, tortured by inner demons, is deeply ingrained in our culture. Carl Jung, in his description of the healthy psyche, singles out "The Poet" (not the archetype, but actual persons) as the exception, suggesting that a certain level of madness is prerequisite to the cultivation of poetic sensibilities. Indeed my own artistic development was so strongly influenced by the examples of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Vincent Van Gogh, and novels such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* that not only did I romanticize psychosis and suffering, I considered them mandatory to becoming a writer.

And suffer I did. Despite the fact that I was engaged in benign spiritual practices, by the age of 24 I had been twice divorced and lost custody of both of my children. I was working the suicidal poet myth: high on wine and coffee and pot, having affairs, not eating, incapable of nurturing my children or myself, rapidly creating then destroying two families.

Painful, yes, but I was writing. I believed that the struggles, misery, and humiliation were necessary aspects of the work, and I was willing to endure whatever it took without question. Poetry was not a matter of discipline in my twenties; it erupted out of me, often hurting those in its path, the people closest to me. Within my first eighteen months as a poet in the world I had lost my family, concurrently produced a body of fiercely honest work, and had read alongside well-known poets.

At this point, personally devastated, I realized that I was beginning to attract an audience and I'd better have something else to offer besides my "delicately wrought images of suffering." My more compassionate sensibilities were re-awakened, and I became committed to poetry as a tool and source of healing and transformation. Yet even though I wrote, meditated, exercised, and ate well, I continued to suffer.

I had incurred an enduring legacy of suffering in those "lost years," and the same addictive patterns were working at subtler levels. I was profoundly ashamed that I was not raising my children. I made a meager living cleaning houses to support my "real" work as a poet, keeping myself in perpetually dire financial straits. I moved from step vans to tree houses, from yurts to school buses, and was romantically involved with a suc-

cession of maniac-geniuses who made me look like a sensible gal by comparison. I was either falling madly in love; enmeshed in a passionate, destabilizing relationship; or agonizing over the breakup of yet another love-gone-bad. Poetry continued to gush out of me; anything looks good written in blood.

Much has changed. At 40, I have achieved a significant measure of peace in my life. My healing has been slow and steady, accumulating over the 15 years since I hit bottom and lost my kids.

The crucial transition came at the end of my twenties when I attended my first vipassana retreat. The yogic, guru-bhakti practices I had previously been involved with had only reinforced my tendencies to abandon reason and struggle toward ecstasy at any price. Despite my honorable intentions, this path had been no less addictive and destructive for me than having crazy love affairs or abusing drugs. But with vipassana practice, my concept of transcendence went from "going beyond the mind" to "going beyond the mind while including the mind." Whereas before I wanted to rise above "the

mundane," I now endeavored to be fully present in life-as-it-is. Vipassana practice remains central to my life.

I no longer believe that excessive suffering is necessary for creative brilliance to thrive; ordinary day-to-day suffering provides grist enough for any mill.

But poetry no longer gushes out of me. The poems are fewer and farther between, the need to write them much less intense. At the same time, my life is more creative. For the past decade I have taught as a Poet in the Schools, helping over 10,000 children and adults to find the source of imagination and peace within. I perform and record original music for children, songs full, I'm told, of inspiration and fun. I am involved in my community. I have a wonderful marriage based on trust, friendship, and shared spiritual commitments. I have close relationships with both of my children.

I have spent the past several weeks sorting through boxes of old poems, preparing for the first time in 18 years to publish. I have been stunned by the sheer quantity, and by the raw honesty and urgency of the poems born of suffering. The problem with Pandora's Box (or "honey-vase," as the translators tell us) is not with what's in the box, but with how the one who opens the box responds. Many artists and writers refuse therapy—"I *need* those demons." Over the years, I

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*Poetry continued to gush out of  
me; anything looks good  
written in blood.*

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have been able to transform my most terrifying demons into fuel. I write fewer poems now, but these poems, I think, are fierce as well as gentle, touching the heart and offering hope or insight. Now, honesty often involves writing about my past without glamorizing it or hiding behind appearances. I feel like one of those reformed gang members or recovered drug addicts who talks to youth about the importance of self-esteem and community service. *You don't need to keep piercing yourself or burning images into your skin. Look around you: violence, environmental devastation, bigotry, unwanted children. You don't need to make anything worse in order to be an artist.* But what would I tell them that I had been addicted to? Passion? Or her Siamese twin, Suffering?

My husband, who played football for nine years and is now a Unitarian Universalist minister, pointed out to me this morning that Suffering used to act as my

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*You don't need to keep piercing yourself...  
You don't need to make anything worse in  
order to be an artist.*

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coach, driving me with its harsh demands to surrender myself completely to the work. Putting down my pen, quitting "mid-game," was not an option. Now I must find a new coach, one who uses more compassionate means, but who will motivate me with *the same urgency* that agony once did. This is no simple task. I know that the urge to breathe is a strong enough coach when one is drowning, but when breathing comfortably, can breath alone insist that I strive beyond the point of comfort, the point where I would ordinarily stop? Can discipline serve as a replacement for sheer, raw agony?

The saga of the suffering poet makes a better movie than it does a life. I have chosen the Middle Way, but I'm not enlightened. I claim that my primary interest is in *poesis*, the creative process itself, yet I still do not always accept my lower "productivity" as the terms of my own inner peace. I tell my students, "Writing is the thing itself. If you want to write, write. If you want to write poems (or stories or essays), write. If you don't feel like writing, write about why you don't feel like writing. It doesn't have to be good, and it doesn't have to make sense. *Just write.*"

Can I be as gentle with myself as I am with my students? Can I honor my breath without first almost drowning? ❖

*Cassandra Sagan Bell is a poet and songwriter. (A poem of hers appears on page 32 of this issue). She has taught privately and as a Poet in the Schools of California and Washington since 1984, and has a cassette, Jumping Over The Fence: Imagination Songs For Children. She practices vipassana and lives in Vancouver, Washington.*

## Against the Current

*Linda, a singer, now in her fifties, had an uphill year. A lump in her throat proved to be cancer of the thyroid. They said surgery might cut a nerve. She might lose her voice. She survived the surgery, the nerve intact, and radiation killed the malignant cells remaining.*

*Her older son, Peter, newly on his own, came home, addicted to cocaine. In and out of detox, he stole her money, stole her trust. The younger son, Steven, a drummer living in Nairobi, got malaria, came home to New York. Culture shock. A delicate balance shifted, he couldn't sleep, wandered around the city streets, mumbling to himself, was admitted to Bellevue.*

*I watched a salmon struggling upstream in Redwood Creek. From a pool at the bottom of a rock wall the fish leapt up and fell back, again and again. Undaunted, it kept reaching for the higher water. After the third try I couldn't bear to watch, but I believe the salmon succeeded and battled the currents all the way to its spawning ground.*

*Last week Linda called. She was about to return to her job teaching music. Her energy was streaming back. She could sing again. Peter had spent a month in treatment and was in a halfway house. Steven was out of the hospital, and drumming.*

*Linda singing, Peter healing,  
Steven drumming, salmon spawning.*

—Tova Green

# ON THE ROAD TO SAMBARA

*Working with illness and death on a daily basis is wearing in innumerable, insidious ways—*

by Pamela Weiss

*Coming around a hairpin turn on Highway One, I pull up short one car behind a head-on collision. People are milling about, looking confused. I walk onto the scene, dazed and strangely calm. A young man, maybe seventeen, is wailing, "I wasn't drinking. Really. Oh my god, I can't believe this is happening to me! Oh my god! Please, please, just don't tell my father." I find myself escorting him off the highway onto the side of the road. We sit down on the ground and I wrap my arms around him as he curls into my lap, sobbing. Soon an ambulance arrives, and then another. I leave him in the care of the paramedics and return to my car. Looking back over my shoulder as I walk away, I see a bright orange neon sign light up over the scene: "WELCOME TO SAMBARA."*

Samsara is the realm of suffering, described in Buddhist literature as the cyclic round of birth-and-death. When I drove onto the scene of this accident, I had just left several years of intensive meditation practice at Tassajara, Zen Mountain Center. Tassajara is nestled deep in the Santa Lucia mountains of California. The raw beauty, radical simplicity, and peacefulness of life there had cracked me wide open. Though shocking, this collision felt like an appropriate greeting back to the "real" world, where everything seemed too fast, too much, all wrong.

During my first months back, I rode a wave of fury. "Don't worry," well-meaning friends advised, "you'll adjust." "Why would I want to?" I snarled under my breath, seeing no reason to accommodate myself to the insanity around me. Repeatedly I was asked, "What's the hardest thing about being out in the world again?" It was not a question I was able to answer honestly without dissolving into sobs myself. So I would squint and say, "Too many reflective surfaces; too much glare—" meanwhile fighting the urge to shut my eyes completely.

But as predicted, after a few months I had more or less adjusted. I bought a new pair of sunglasses, and watched from behind my tinted lenses as the wall between me and "not-me" reasserted itself. The deep, internal clenching in my body returned. My anger dropped into exhausted resignation. I was ready; determined to find my way along the path of practicing in the world. And so, Bodhisattva vows in hand, I returned to the realm of samsara to "join hands with all beings and walk with them through birth and death" and head-on collisions.

Now, two years later, I work as the Volunteer Coordinator at the Women's Cancer Resource Center (WCRC) in Berkeley. The WCRC is a small, grass-

roots non-profit organization committed to providing information and support to the growing numbers of people whose lives are touched by cancer. It isn't easy work. I hate cancer. It's a nasty, horrible disease. Working with illness and death on a daily basis is wearing in innumerable, insidious ways. And this is compounded by the endless frustrations familiar to most underfunded, understaffed non-profits: a fax machine that only works when it wants to; a donated printer that only prints the left side of the page; phones that won't stop ringing; not enough hands to do it all...

What makes it possible to live and work in the midst of so much suffering? How does Buddhist practice help? Are there skillful ways to navigate through samsara?

I continually turn these questions. One approach is to integrate specific practices into my day. I meditate in the mornings, bow, recite passages from favorite texts, remind myself to take a breath before I pick up the (forever ringing) phone...And all of these help. They serve as punctuation, as ways of creating pause, places to rest briefly and regroup, before diving headlong into the next thing. Yet for me, none of these practices ever quite satisfies. Too often they become forced or mechanical, another thing to *do* in the midst of a busy day. And when I impose such practices onto my life, I risk missing the opportunity to discover the practice that arises naturally out of it.

Grappling with these issues has brought surprises. Without my particularly looking for them, the practice of the Buddhist precepts, the cultivation of awareness and the teaching of interdependence have each revealed themselves smack in the middle of my life, naked and unadorned by Buddhist language or rhetoric.

## Precepts

The WCRC is an almost entirely volunteer organization. With a staff of only three, volunteers are the lifeblood of the agency, constituting a wonderful, diverse community. On a recent staff retreat, my co-workers and I spent several hours discussing guidelines to help maintain a stable, healthy community. And in its own organic way, our conversation led us directly through the precepts. We discussed the importance of not lying, not slandering, not abusing sexuality or power, not harboring resentment...As we talked, we easily came to unanimous agreement about the kinds of behavior that prevent discord and create harmony. What is the best way to deal with potentially difficult situations? *Be honest and kind. Stay flexible. Respect the opinions and expertise of others.* There was no need to impose these as rules and regulations from the outside. It was obvious.

## Awareness

The volunteer training I lead at the WCRC includes a section called "Values Clarification," where volunteers participate in exercises to help them identify their beliefs and preferences regarding cancer treatments. The premise is that we all have assumptions and preferences, and that having them is neither good nor bad. The idea of the exercises is not to judge or in any way attempt to get rid of beliefs and preferences, but rather to make them conscious.

Because there is no single, absolute cure for cancer, each person faced with a cancer diagnosis must make difficult choices about her course of treatment. And the choices made are often very different. For some, the decision includes surgery followed by radiation and chemotherapy (frequently referred to as "slash, burn, and poison"). For others, it means foregoing conventional treatment altogether, and instead relying on alternative treatments such as acupuncture, or a strict macrobiotic diet. For many, it includes some combination of both. The task of volunteers is to provide information that helps empower clients to make informed choices, and then to support them in whatever choices they make.

Most volunteers agree with this in theory. But when faced with a particular situation, even a hypothetical one, many are surprised to discover the passion with which they defend their point of view. After a recent training, a volunteer who had had a mastectomy herself several years before, confessed her amazement at the fear, panic, and anger that arose when confronted with a fictional client who refused conventional treatment. "I thought it was OK with me to let others choose for themselves," she told me. "I had no idea I believed so strongly that my way of dealing with this was *right*."

My intention in designing this part of the training was purely pragmatic. I created exercises to increase volunteers' awareness of their assumptions and leanings because I felt it would be an effective way to decrease the likelihood of their "dumping" these assumptions on clients. Based on my experience with meditation practice, I felt that the more volunteers became aware of their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, the less likely they were to get pushed around by them, or to push others around with them. Whether we do it on the cushion or in the context of our interactions and relationships, cultivating awareness is powerful; it allows us to respond rather than react.

## Interdependence

The truth of our deep interdependence and interconnectedness is the essence of what the Buddha taught

some 2500 years ago as *paticca samupadda*. The Buddha's realization that all things arise dependently was the content of his awakening: "Because of this, that arises; because of that, this comes to be." In recent years, the holistic health movement has drawn ample attention to the connection between mind and body. Less attention has been paid, however, to the connection between our personal bodies and our planet's body.

It would seem obvious that the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat affects our health and well-being. Yet the WCRC is one of the few cancer organizations to point to the environmental causes of cancer. In fact, this fundamental connection is consistently ignored or denied by giants in the cancer industry such as the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute.

We are facing a veritable cancer epidemic in this country. Billions of dollars a year are spent on research seeking a cure for cancer. Yet incidence rates continue to rise. In 1960, the rate of breast cancer among women in

the United States was 1 in 20. By 1990, it had increased to 1 in 7. And it continues to spiral upward. Despite what the American Cancer Society would like us to believe, we are losing the war against cancer.

While there is no "hard" scientific data to prove the connections between cancer and envi-

ronmental toxins, there is ample evidence to suggest that environmental toxins pose a significant cancer risk. Take the example of organochlorides. Organochlorides are a chemical found in pesticides, dioxin, many household cleaners, and as a by-product of bleached paper. Those with higher-than-normal exposure to organochlorides have been shown to have an increased risk of cancer. Women with breast cancer tend to have higher levels of organochlorides in their breast tissue. And in Israel, where the government aggressively phased-out pesticides between 1976 and 1986, the breast cancer rate among Israeli women fell by approximately twenty percent—in sharp contrast to significant increases in breast cancer rates among women in every other industrialized country during that time.

Maybe none of this counts as "hard data." But when it's your body and life on the line, who's counting? At the very least, information about cancer and toxins should be more available, with or without a scientific stamp of approval. And certainly, even this "soft" data seems provocative enough to warrant further exploration, particularly when conventional research efforts keep coming up empty-handed.

Yet in 1993, the National Cancer Institute, the largest cancer research organization in the U.S., allocated only 15 percent of its budget to exploring environ-

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*Those diagnosed with cancer continue to be blamed for causing their own disease, by eating french fries, not exercising, and thinking negative thoughts.*

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mental issues. Meanwhile, although only a small percentage of all breast cancer cases are thought to be inherited, research seeking the elusive "breast cancer gene" races ahead. And those diagnosed with cancer continue to be blamed for causing their own disease by eating french fries, not exercising, and thinking negative thoughts. What we eat and what we think clearly have an impact on our minds and bodies. But that's only part of the picture. It also seems clear that if we keep pouring toxic chemicals into our air, water, and food supplies, increasing numbers of us will continue to get sick.

In order to comprehend the limited attention paid to the environmental causes of cancer, it is important to recognize that cancer is big business. Cancer is a highly profitable industry, dominated by some of the world's largest corporations.

And interestingly, many of the same corporations that profit from the sale of cancer drugs and treatment technologies are also responsible for the production and release of chemicals suspected of producing cancer.

For example, the Zeneca group, which markets the cancer drug tamoxifen, also produces the herbicide ace-tochlor, a known carcinogen. In addition, Zeneca has been named in a lawsuit by state and federal governments for dumping organochlorides (DDT and PCBs) into Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors.

Similarly, General Electric, which makes more than \$100 million a year in the sale of mammography machines, and Du Pont, which produces the film used for these machines, have both been cited for having among the highest number of EPA Superfund hazardous waste sites in the country.

As I listen to story after story of women whose bodies and lives have been irreversibly scarred by cancer, the relationship between cancer, the environment, and the economically driven politics of the cancer industry becomes increasingly clear. This is the shadow side of our interconnectedness. We are as connected by our greed, hate, and delusion as we are by our generosity, compassion, and wisdom. And though it's disturbing to draw these connections, it's also empowering. It helps me wake up and make informed decisions about

how I take care of myself.

As I have naturally uncovered the precepts, the cultivation of awareness, and the truth of interdependence in my work life, I've learned that there is no need to mechanically insert Buddhism into my daily living. It is already there. Integration is not about squeezing the seemingly disparate parts of my life into a contrived union. It is about waking up to what's already happening—opening, accepting and embracing it—even when it's painful.

So does Buddhist practice help make our life less painful? Does it teach us how to navigate through the realm of samsara? Yes and no. Practice is not about removing pain and suffering from our lives. It is about allowing suffering to be suffering; allowing our life to be our life. It is not so much about trying to fix things as it

is about providing space to unravel our assumptions and expectations, making room for the surprises that rearrange us.

*Coming home from work across the Bay Bridge, I pull into the tollbooth. The toll taker points and says, "The woman in the car in front of you paid your toll. And she asked me to wish you a happy day." Is this for real, I think to myself? I've heard rumors of this kind of thing happening. But still I am startled, even slightly cynical. I pull out of the tollbooth and speed up, half expecting to find, "Practice Random Kindness and Senseless Acts of Beauty" plastered across the rear*

Davis TeSelle

*bumper of my benefactor's car. Instead, the bumper sticker says, "Honk if you love God." As I peer into the old blue Dodge, I see an older woman with bleached blond hair and a bright stripe of rouge painted high across the cheekbone. Oblivious of me, she is hunched forward, staring out at the highway, shrouded in a thick cloud of cigarette smoke. My cynical smile breaks into a grin. And as I speed away, the collision on Highway One flashes through me. We never know what awaits us around the next hairpin turn, or at the next tollbooth. Samsara continuously bursts forth in all shapes and sizes, welcoming us. ♦*

*Pamela Weiss is a Zen practitioner and the Volunteer Coordinator at the Women's Cancer Resource Center in Berkeley, California.*



# WORKING WITH PAIN

by Gavin Harrison

Pain in the body is an obvious kind of suffering, more tangible than emotions, which can seem vague and indistinct. As we deal with physical pain in a meditative context, we develop a foundation that makes it easier to work with difficult emotions and interpersonal reactions. The flexibility we learn while practicing the lessons of the body goes out with us into the world.

To work with pain in the body, true awareness is essential, unmediated by concepts or images. As we attend to a strong physical sensation, we come to understand that all that happens in our bodies arises and eventually passes away. No pain is fixed or unchanging.

What strategies do we use to deny pain? Suppose you are meditating and feel a sudden pain in the back. The first strategy is usually to deny that anything is going on. You may try to stay with the breathing or whatever else you are giving attention to—*anything* but the back pain! The thought may arise, “It’ll go away.” You avoid paying attention to the pain, clinging to another object and hoping that the backache will evaporate.

But the pain endures. So now, out of the corner of your eye, you give the pain a sideways glance, as if some minuscule dose of attention will cure the problem. You give the pain a few of those cursory glances: still it does not respond. So you decide to bargain with the pain: “OK, I’ll give you some real attention, and *then* you must go away.” You may bring awareness to the back pain, but in truth your heart and mind are saturated with the idea that you are doing this to get rid of it. This idea is a thinly disguised manifestation of aversion and dislike. But you do not experience the aversion clearly and are actually further than ever from a true awareness of the sensations arising in the back. In all likelihood these mental efforts to push the pain away will only exacerbate the situation. Not only does the aversion increase the total portion of unpleasantness that you experience, but often the physical pain seems even more intense.

Finally, after the denial, after the bargaining, there eventually comes a letting go. You surrender to the pain. There arises a willingness to simply be present with what is there. This is the birthing of equanimity. You do not interfere. This is a sacred moment of great possibility, for the power of this surrender can be taken out into the world. It is a rare and precious strength.

Paradoxically, once we are willing to work with pain, we feel that it is not all bad. Pain is a riveting object of attention; to paraphrase Samuel Johnson, it concentrates the mind wonderfully. If we direct attention to whatever physical sensation is in the body, the mind doesn’t tend to wander very much. There can be a joy

that arises with this concentration. We are not scattered; the mind is happily focused.

My own HIV-positive diagnosis was really a dual diagnosis: a physical diagnosis and one of fear. With this virus come the collective terrors and irrational phobias of a humanity that lives in deep dread of anything it can neither understand nor control.

This whirlwind of collective terror can strike at the slightest pain, cough, bump, or blemish. Examining some bump, my fear may easily escalate to a level of unbridled panic. Legitimate concern blooms into fear of things I’ve had before, fear of things that have happened to friends, fear of what I’ve heard or read about or even invented in my mind. Simone Weil has accurately described this state of mind:

“When thought is obliged by an attack of physical pain, however slight, to recognize the presence of affliction, a state of mind is brought about as acute as that of a condemned man who is forced to look for hours at the guillotine that is going to cut off his head. Human beings can live for 20 or 50 years in this acute state. We pass quite close to them without realizing it. What man is capable of discerning such souls unless Christ himself looks through his eyes?”

The challenge is to let a cough be just a cough, an ache an ache, and a blemish just a blemish. Then I can respond with wisdom and tenderness rather than in terror.

On a recent retreat I experienced excruciating pain in my belly. Hell 101! day after day. Several things came clear in the light of continuous awareness: The resistance to the pain was itself in the belly; the fear was centered in the gut too, along with the tightness of aversion to the fear. This exacerbated the pain.

One day, in the midst of this pain, it felt as though my heart broke with immense compassion for all this suffering. For the remainder of the retreat I directed lovingkindness and compassion into my belly, which has endured so much conflict. Opening to pain is a persistent practice, and at this edge I learn much.

It is vital to touch discomfort with forgiveness, acceptance, and love. At each level of pain, I explore the possibility of finding a space that can hold and surround the pain. This means I’m no longer overwhelmed, no longer a victim, but rather an active participant in what is going on. Often it is difficult to be calmly present with the sensations of burning, tightness, stinging, and heat. At these times, a soft mental note, silently spoken in the background of my mind, helps to stabilize awareness and bring out clearly the components of the episode of pain: “Breathing. Heat. Heat. Fear. Tightness. Tingling. Heat. Breathing in...out. Aversion. Heat. Heat.” I simply label whatever is predominant, whether it is a sensa-

tion or a thought or an emotion. It's important to keep the label very quiet, so that it helps rather than hinders me from giving full attention to what is happening.

Another strategy is to allow the mind to rest in a state of vast, open awareness. Into this awareness appear different objects of experience: thoughts, emotions, smells, sounds, and bodily sensations. Perceiving that intense pain arises and disappears into this open awareness creates less identification with and attachment to the sensations. Furthermore, sounds, thoughts, and other impressions often arise concurrently with the bodily sensations, thereby diluting the intensity of the experience.

It is always true that pain becomes rigid if it is surrounded with concepts. To say, "I have peripheral neuropathy, I have muscular dysfunction, I have gastrointestinal dysbiosis," is dangerous, for these bleak self-descriptions etch the pain in stone. In truth, the pain is changing always. Sometimes it feels better. Sometimes it's worse. If I do not hold gently to the truth of change, I ignore the possibility of transformation and healing. Perhaps the pain might disappear altogether. It has certainly happened for some people. Perhaps there will even be a cure.

A while ago I had shingles, which produced the most intense physical pain I have ever known. The suffering was aggravated by sleeplessness and despair. Too exhausted to do anything, I let go of all meditation forms. Painkillers and sleeping tablets only seemed to render the experience more dull and exhausting. I fought and finally I surrendered. I let go into the truth of the shingles. The disappearance of conflict was a blessed relief. I still feel the shingles sometimes, but now I use them as a reminder to stop fighting, to be a friend to pain and not a soldier at war with myself.

I don't want to give the impression that I'm always able to deal with pain in a noble and valiant manner, for that would be far from the truth. Working with pain is a moment-to-moment practice. It is humbling. Sometimes I am able to find an inner space of serenity. At other times, peace is elusive. When times are especially hard, there is a margin of peace in just feeling OK about being overwhelmed. Feeling that pain is unworkable and opening to despair are part of the process of being present to experience as it unfolds. My task is not to alter that process, but to bring a careful awareness to the truth of what arises in my body from one moment to the next.

\*\*\*

### Guided Meditation

#### Bringing Lovingkindness and Compassion into Areas of Pain

- Allow your eyes to close gently.
- Center attention on the breathing.
- Move awareness now to a part of the body where there is pain or discomfort.
- Rest there.

- Be aware of any sensations.
- Allow whatever you find to be OK.
- No fight.
- No struggle.
- Be with truth, with acceptance.
- Continue attending to the breath. If possible, breathe into and through the pain, as if this were actually the place where the breath enters and leaves the body.
- Direct the following phrases quietly to the area of pain (or use your own meaningful phrases). Allow the words to echo within you.

"I welcome you into my heart."

"I accept you."

"I care about this pain."

"I hold you deep in my heart."

"I accept what is happening right now."

"May I be free from fear."

"May I be happy, just where I am."

"May I be peaceful with what is happening."

- You may wish to lay your hands gently on the area of discomfort.
- Allow feelings of lovingkindness and compassion to flow through the body. If there are no feelings of compassion, that is OK also.
- Continue repeating the phrases.
- End by returning to the breath for a short while. ♦

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# THE PULSE OF HEALING

## An Acupuncturist's View

by Barbara Wilt

As I feel the pulse, I'm listening to patterns of energy flowing in the body. My training as an acupuncturist tells me that these patterns are reflecting habitual mental and emotional impulses that the mind beams to every cell.

The incessant chatter of the mind actually creates electro-chemical impulses that communicate with the intelligence of the immune system, digestive system, respiratory system, endocrine system, and all the other systems in the body. Western medical research, especially in the field of psychoneuroimmunology, is now discovering the actual chemical mechanisms of this internal dialogue.

Most traditional healing systems—Chinese, Tibetan, Ayurvedic—emphasize the prominent effect of emotions on physiology. The Tibetan medical texts state very directly that the mind is the cause of and determines the course of any illness. I want to acknowledge that these ancient healing systems did not have to account for the very recent impact of chemical toxins and radiation on the body; nevertheless, it's still true that how we perceive and interact with our suffering can strengthen or weaken our innate healing powers.

Western medical models of what sickness and suffering are about have generally increased our fears and misunderstanding of the healing intelligence of the body. Many of the immune system's responses to illness, such as fevers, swollen glands, diarrhea, and skin rashes, have been dismissed as part of just being "sick." Instead, we could look at these immune functions as the body's healing intelligence in action, its remarkable if uncomfortable way of ridding itself of unhealthy amounts of viruses or bacteria.

For example, a certain degree of fever is effective in reducing viruses. And swollen glands are a sign that viruses and bacteria have been destroyed by the immune system and are on the way out via the lymphatic system.

I've had the opportunity as an acupuncturist to work with people with HIV, AIDS, and cancer. They have taught me that our interpretation of and response to suffering has a great influence on the course of illness.

As an example, AIDS patients' fear has been exacerbated by Western medicine's reliance on T-cell counts as a main measure of the disease. When people's T-cells were 200 or lower (1,000 to 1,200 is the normal range), physicians heavily pressured them to take AZT, a chemotherapy that eventually destroys bone marrow. Many of our blood cells originate in the bone marrow, making it part of the foundation of the immune system.

Ben and Tim got the news that they had HIV about the same time 12 years ago. They were best friends and had been through a lot together, but they did not share the same emotional struggle when they began to deal with their diagnosis.

After Tim received his HIV diagnosis, his doctors recommended strongly that he take AZT, which he decided to do. At that time, about 10 years ago, much greater doses of AZT were prescribed than at present. Each time Tim had to get his T-cell count checked, he described himself as "worried sick" about the results. His T-cell count fluctuated between 200 and 700.

Tim's anxiety was palpable in his pulses, and this anxiety put another burden on his already stressed immune system. According to traditional Chinese medical theory, fear is the emotion that weakens the kidney and adrenal glands. The kidney and adrenal glands nourish the bone marrow. Thus for Tim, not only did the AZT itself weaken him, so did his relentless anxiety and fear.

Tim's anxiety was heightened when he began having night sweats. He told me he would tremble with fear when he awoke in the middle of the night drenched in sweat, convinced that this was a sign that he was about to die. Certain Chinese herbs and foods seemed to calm the night sweats, but no amount of acupuncture or herbs could keep Tim's mind from terrifying him. Even when the night sweats calmed down, Tim would go to bed anxious about their return. His internal dialogue was consistently fearful. He was unable to concentrate on his work as an accountant and had to quit his job because he was making so many errors. His capacity to engage with ordinary life diminished, not so much from his physical problems as from the anxiety of dealing with his illness.

Tim died of pneumocystis (an opportunistic infection of the lungs) five years after his initial diagnosis. He was terrified to the end, and I believe his unrelenting fear hastened the progress of the illness.



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Ben, a dancer, had never really taken medication before his HIV diagnosis, and he was quite skeptical of AZT. Ben's immediate and sustained response to his diagnosis was that he trusted his body's ability to fight off the disease if he did not deplete it with the use of AZT. Against his doctor's advice he decided not to take the drug. He continued his daily exercise and learned more about the nutritional needs of the immune system. He also took Chinese herbs and received regular acupuncture treatments.

Ben had cultivated a capacity for being present in his body through the discipline of dance. Even though fear overwhelmed him periodically, he had distinct physical and emotional sensations of peacefulness and well-being while dancing and during acupuncture sessions. As he described these states of mind, it was clear to me that he was experiencing a meditative process.

Ben was required to have his blood tested every few months to check his T-cells. His T-cells went from 300 to 1200 in the month in which he received a special award for a dance performance. During the next few months, his T-cells settled around 700 to 800. At the end of the year, Ben was honored for his teaching abilities by the state of California, and again his T-cell count went up to 1500.

As the years have gone by, the emphasis on T-cell count has subsided. Ben gets his blood tested a few times a year, his T-cell counts are stable and he has shown no AIDS-related symptoms. He is happy and is doing the kind of work that challenges and fulfills him. He is "healthier" than most of the people I see in my practice, both physically and emotionally.

Just as the body produces debilitating chemicals when we are fearful, angry, and depressed, it also produces healing impulses when we laugh, dance, sing, cry, and feel loved. May we encourage each other to turn to the essential healing capacities of our bodies.

Buddhist practice consistently reminds me to "get out of the way," to put aside the notion that I am doing anything. This leaves more of an opening for me to simply be present with the suffering that I touch in the pulses. Acknowledging and describing people's suffering assists them in listening to their own knowing and lessens the power of their fearful states of mind. This allows for a more healing relationship with the body. I am also helped by the constant reminder that compassion is possible. As I am becoming more compassionate with myself, I am more clearly able to offer that to my patients. ♦

*Barbara Wilt, L.Ac., began studying acupuncture and meditation in 1979 while living in Japan. After her two-year stay there she traveled in India, Thailand, and Nepal, and studied Tibetan medicine in Kathmandu. She has been practicing acupuncture in the Bay Area since 1987.*

## Over Bones

*Today I cannot say I am alive.  
I don't know. I stepped out of line  
and rounded a corner as the traffic  
thundered. And there I saw her  
huddled hugging the sleeping babe.  
And sobbing, but softly to herself.  
Why I couldn't bend and ask the simple  
question, hold out my hand clutching  
some money, or say the proper thing—  
no, I strode on, eyes down. I can't  
take it, I tell you. I walk and walk.  
That's what is left for me, I think.  
Sometimes, yes, you'll find me on  
hands and knees. I can crawl. I can.  
I have. I shall again. I walk on.  
Until I stop and drop on all fours.  
Please. No more pronouncements  
over my head. Enough preaching.  
Every foot of the way is a stepping  
over bodies, over bones.  
I cross against the light,  
clenching my fists, then remembering,  
open them wide.  
I pass the sullen stares, holding  
my body erect, muttering prayers.  
I hear myself chanting: Coca Cola Coca Cola  
and turn away where you and you  
step forward to be counted.*

*And too late I notice I am trampling  
the dust where yesterday her tears  
made their silent descent,*

*and walk on. Later I drop to all fours.  
Later bang my head on the floor.  
And when I'm sure you are far off  
I take my body in my arms  
and sway and offer up little moans  
against the wall.*

—Daigan Lueck

# If Jews and Germans Can Embrace at Auschwitz . . .

## *Portraits of Reconciliation*

by Paula Green

*"I am Jewish, I am Buddhist, I am Muslim, I am Christian. There are no walls, no separations. Lift the veil of illusion. The time is NOW. We cannot wait."*

Sasamori Shonin, Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist monk, lifts his prayer-drum to commence the day's chanting. Behind him, wrapped in blankets, disciples recite the first "Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo," giving birth to a sound that will echo all day in the icy wind of a grey Polish December.

Where Sasamori Shonin and his band of international, multi-faith followers are sitting is significant: the selection platform at Birkenau concentration camp, between two sets of train tracks that end right here. There was no exit from this selection platform except to death in one of the four smoking crematoria, or to a slower death by misery and exhaustion in the work barracks. On this spot the Nazi commandant pointed his finger at each person spewed forth from the cattle car, selecting their means and moment of death. It is 50 years since the ovens were silenced at Auschwitz-Birkenau. But the camp remains unchanged: a stark hell realm, the supreme monument to greed, hatred and delusion.

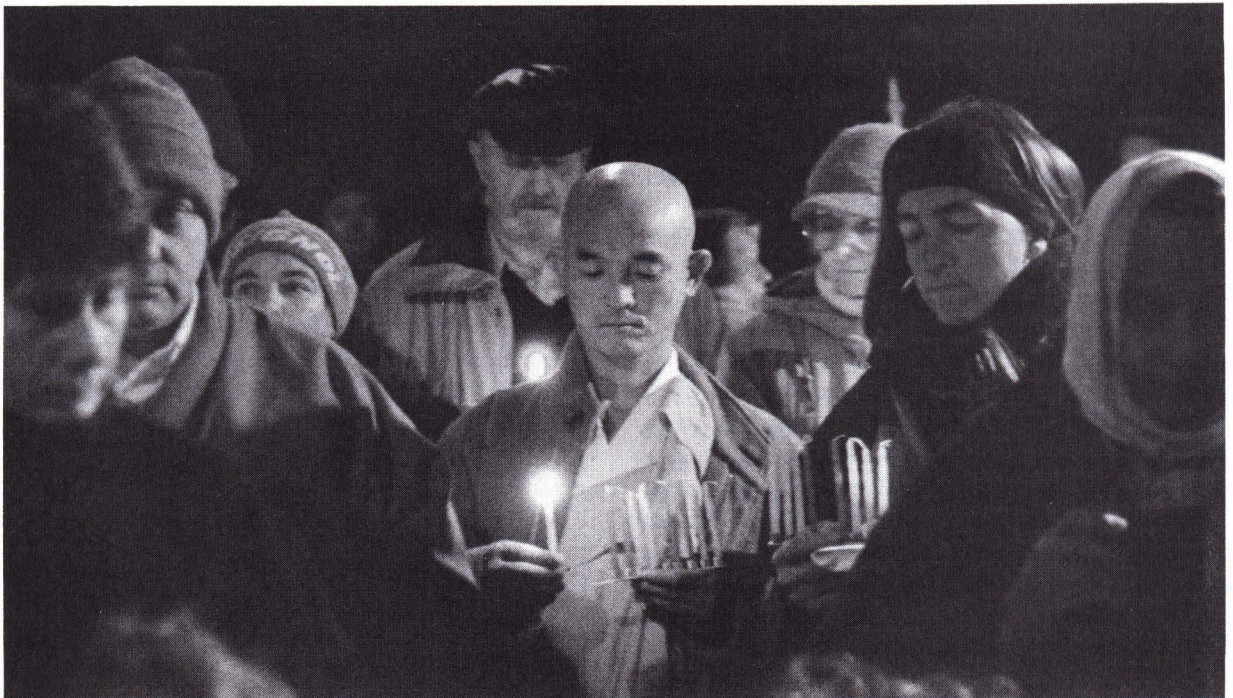
Sasamori Shonin and the others drum, pray and fast continually for eight days, satisfying neither hunger, thirst, nor desire for warmth and solace. Their prayers are met by the vast silence of our surroundings: crematoria and tracks, barracks and barbed wire as far as the eye can see.

Sasamori has been here before to fast and pray. In the past he came alone, slept in the guard tower, and steadily focused his mind to remember the dead.

Close to two million people were murdered here, 90 percent of them Jews. Sasamori Shonin is a Japanese Buddhist. No matter. He comes to mourn the dead, to seek repentance, to find the path to sustain peace and human connection.

This time the monk is not alone. Two hundred people have gathered at Auschwitz for a Convocation that will inaugurate the "Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life 1995," an eight-month peace walk Sasamori will lead from here to Hiroshima. And so the participants come, each compelled by a piece of this history, all searching to repair the heart shattered by Holocaust.

The first night of the Convocation is the last night of Chanukah, the Jewish festival of lights that we celebrate in this dark place. We make menorahs, small candleholders for nine candles each, for 200 people. In

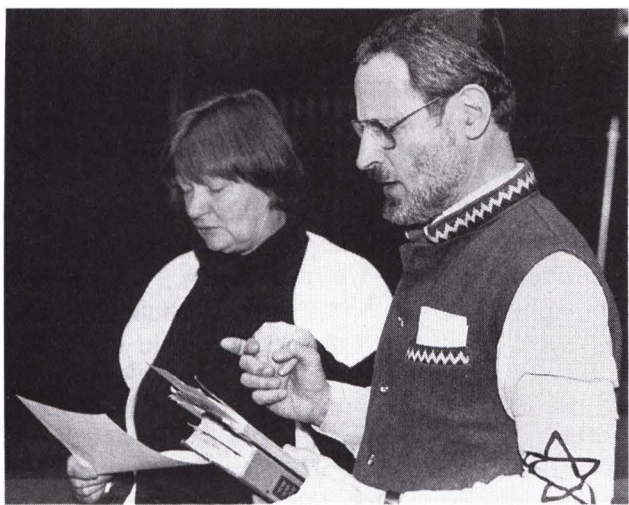


Daniel A. Brown

*Chanukah at Auschwitz gate*

silent procession, we march from the German International Youth Center to the gates of Auschwitz. We sing and chant Hebrew prayers, while each of us places our lighted menorah near the barbed wire of the concentration camp gates. All of us in the falling snow, bearing light, bearing witness.

Powerful melodies arise from Julius, an African-American convert to Judaism, accomplished author, musician, and educator, whose Jewish great-grandfather migrated from Germany to meet and marry a recently freed slave. Julius knows more about Judaism than most of us assimilated American Jews, and embraces it with an unfamiliar passion. His command of Jewish liturgical music is stunning; his large voice once sang freedom songs with Pete Seeger and now leads ours on this Chanukah night.



*Helga Muller and Jim Levinson lead prayer service*

Father Herbert plays a magic flute to ease the pain of disclosure. But that is not all. He brings a portrait of a broken-hearted Jesus, painted by a Nazi soldier after the war. After the war, this soldier carried his image of Jesus throughout Germany and Poland, begging forgiveness for his sins.

Father Herbert is German, a member of Pax Christi. He had hesitated when I invited him to come: Would he be scapegoated and blamed for Germany's sins? Could he bear the pain? But he trusted me and sensed the potential of this multi-faith gathering. I could not know his yearning for healing until, standing on the selection platform, he lifted the suffering Jesus portrait to his chest, and spoke of his own father, a Nazi soldier.

Father Herbert had never known Jews, never lit a Chanukah menorah nor chanted wordless Yiddish melodies. On the final night of the Convocation, an American rabbi took the German priest by the hand and led him in the dances of the Jewish ghettos.

A woman named Rosalie speaks. Her mother survived Auschwitz; her father is a survivor of Dachau. She tells us about the crippling childhood she endured

at the hands of her traumatized parents. She sings for us in Yiddish, first the lamentations of the dying Jews, later the upbeat rhythms of klezmer that set feet stamping and bodies moving. When she performs her original "We Are Here," we grasp what it means to be here together in this conference hall built in Oswiecim, the Polish name for Auschwitz. Now. Alive.

Rosalie is a founding member of "One by One," whose members are children of Holocaust survivors or children of Nazis. For two years, the group has been meeting, facing this ultimate "other," recounting stories, discovering commonalities as the children of victims and persecutors. Overcoming barriers of fear and guilt, One by One testifies to the power of reconciliation.

Unlike the other members, Otto is not the child of persecutor or victim. Now in his 60s, he was himself an SS soldier. A brave man, he risks censure at home in Berlin, where most want to forget the war and blot out the Holocaust. Otto cannot forget, indeed will not be silenced as he travels to schools, churches, and community gatherings to recount his experiences, to repent, however belatedly. We are hushed as Otto stands before us—a crying, gray-haired elder, begging forgiveness.

Bina is from England, here to honor the memory of her father, murdered in Birkenau. An accomplished and dignified woman, now fragile and elderly, she steps forward amidst the concrete rubble of a former crematorium that was blown up by the Nazis as they fled the advancing Russian liberators exactly 50 years ago. She lights a candle as Rabbi Sheila, from the United States, says Kaddish, the Jewish prayer in honor of the dead. Friends hold her trembling hand. As a young woman Bina lost a father she could never bury or immediately mourn. This journey to Auschwitz, her first, marks a completion for her. And for the long-deceased father, a daughter's candle burns where his own flame was extinguished.

Others follow Bina, first naming relatives lost to the Holocaust, then universalizing, offering candles to Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Burma, Native Americans, women, people with AIDS, all those ravaged by sorrow and war. We join together arm in arm for silent procession through Birkenau. Together. Jews and Christians, Germans, Japanese, Italians, British, Americans: "enemies" from World War II.

Bill is an American, veteran of the war against Vietnam. Looking at the guard towers that housed the soldiers who participated in the daily brutality, he reminds us that they also suffered, that they are most likely lifetime victims of post-traumatic stress disorder, their psyches distorted by perpetual violence and death. Bill tells us of the deaths he caused in Vietnam. He seeks repentance, needs our forgiveness for his healing. Someone reads Thich Nhat Hanh's poem: "Please Call Me By My True Names." We are *all* victims and perpetrators, bound to each other in endless cycles of birth and death.

And finally, *this* remarkable human connection: Helga, the German daughter of an SS Nazi officer, and Jim, an American of Polish-Jewish descent. During her childhood in the 1950s, Helga was told her father was a kindly man who had died suddenly. As an adult, Helga sensed she was surrounded by secrets and lies, and she determined to unravel her true family history. It turned out her father, along with many other Nazi officers, had been issued false passport papers and smuggled to South America. He had been a brutal killer responsible for the deaths of the entire Jewish community of Lodz, a large Polish city. He not only ordered the deaths, Helga learned, but murdered ruthlessly himself.

Jim stands up, telling us that his extended family



Daniel A. Brown

#### *Maha Ghosananda with peacewalkers in Birkenau*

came from Lodz and had been wiped out by the Nazis, evidently—directly or by order—by Helga’s father. As all 200 of us gasp collectively, not knowing what the next moment will bring to sobbing Helga, Jim steps forward and embraces her. All day they sit together, bound in the cocoon of this unfathomable drama, unwilling to separate until healing overtakes them. Through Jim’s persistent forgiveness, Helga is finally able to claim herself as separate from her past, not guilty of her father’s crimes.

If Germans and Jews can embrace at Auschwitz, if we can dance together the rhythms of the destroyed ghettos, if we can see in each other the ancient Jew, the suffering Jesus, the broken soldier, the victim and perpetrator, then all healing is possible, even the complete healing of our broken world.

*Paula Green created and directed the Convocation at Auschwitz. She is a long-time member of BPF and the Director of the Karuna Center in Massachusetts.*

BOOK REVIEW—

### *Essential Zen*

*Edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Tensho David Schneider*

Harper/San Francisco, 1994, \$18.

Reviewed by Alan Senauke

*The more we sit like this, the more we realize the strength of human ignorance. There is no reason why we create this terrible situation, but we do constantly . . . This is pretty hard, because the more we taste and chew real peace, the more we realize human ignorance. But the more we realize human ignorance, the more we cannot stop teaching real peace, living real peace.* —Dainin Katagiri

Is there anything like *Essential Zen*? Is Zen, or for that matter, Buddhism, a consistent universal teaching that might be contained between the covers of a book? Or is the “truth” shifting, not quite definable, and somehow located within the very cultures it inhabits? Kaz Tanahashi and David Schneider’s new book, *Essential Zen*, strongly suggests the latter, carrying us back and forth in time and in the words of our teachers and fellow students to touch on the fundamental issues of Zen practice, all the while keeping in mind, as David Schneider suggests in his introduction, “The essential Zen, in book form, would more likely consist of blank pages; a reader fills them in. Or not.”

What is new and valuable about this elegant little volume is the way it puts ancient and modern Zen teachings on the same page: Gary Snyder and Ikkyu, Dogen and Toni Packer. The language of ancient and modern is different, of course, but sometimes surprisingly so. The new words, like Katagiri Roshi’s above, remind us that we are not just custodians of a rarefied tradition, but that the present, future, and even the past are in our hands. The old words (at least in these excellent translations) are vivid in ways that transcend time. From Ikkyu:

*Under the trees, among the rocks, a thatched hut:  
verses and sacred commentaries live there together.  
I’ll burn the books I carry in my bag,  
but how can I forget the verses written in my gut.*

I read *Essential Zen* from cover to cover, which is not what most people will probably do. Now I’m going to leave it around the house to dip into for refreshment. Such is the strength and weakness of anthologies. It’s also worth noting that the preponderance of excerpts are from men. One can feel the editors striving to find a balance. But, to date, the history of Zen has largely been defined by (and for?) men. I think that is changing in our own time and place. Soon enough we’ll doubtless see an anthology of women teaching Zen, but that’s a different task. *Essential Zen* marks another ground, another way of seeing the interpenetration of old and new. And for that it is well worth the price of admission. ❖

# A VISIT TO KAMAULI

by Fran Peavey

Dust flying, the jeep bounces through the streets and over the back roads. Bump, bump. Four merry workers are off to visit Kamauli, a village outside of Varanasi, India, made sick by a newly built sewage treatment plant.

Varanasi and Kamauli are on the Ganges River, known as *Ganga* in India. Two years ago, the Dinapur sewage treatment plant began treating the sewage of Varanasi, a city of over a million people, with the promise that no longer would their raw sewage flow into the holy river. But due to inappropriate design and bad management, the sewage exits the treatment plant almost as poisonous as when it entered.

In the jeep are Shukla, the driver; Dukhi Tewari, a worker at the Dinapur Sewage treatment plant; Vipul Mishra, a resident medical intern; and myself, social change worker. We all work in the Sankat Mochan Foundation, a non-governmental organization (NGO) composed mostly of engineers, professors and teachers, which has been working to clean Ganga for 13 years.

It is early on a Sunday morning, with sunny weather for what we anticipate to be a tough day. For an hour and a half Shukla drives us around broken-down trucks, between rickshaws, bicycles and cows, until finally we stop at a concrete channel filled with a brackish liquid speeding from the sewage treatment plant into Ganga. We walk along the channel, look, smell, but do not touch. It smells foul. From tests already carried out in our laboratory we know that the effluent leaving the sewage treatment plant is barely better than that entering the plant. Several years ago we had such high hopes for this sewage treatment plant and felt our job of cleaning this most holy and beautiful river would be that of watchdog once we had a treatment plant in place.

But slowly it came to our attention that sewage was backing up into homes, that where the effluent joined Ganga the water was very high in fecal coliform and BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) as well as COD (Chemical Oxygen Demand). Then we heard about

the sad plight of the people of Kamauli and we knew that this plant was a massive exercise in mis-design, mismanagement, and a slavish following of Western pump machine technology.

Kamauli, a village of about 3000 people, is one of the poorest I have seen in India: mostly small grass huts with only a pile of straw and a quilt. Nobody wears shoes. Lovely art adorns the few solid buildings: white drawings of flowers, people, and other symbols on the mud exterior. There is no poverty of spirit in this place.

Close to the houses, smelly sewage water stands in the barrow pits created by the channel construction. Here the land is low enough to allow seepage of sewage from the channel carrying the "treated" effluent from Dinapur.

Vipul and Dukhi introduce themselves softly to the few men who approach us as we get out of the jeep. Through a short series of exchanges, a spokesperson,



*Sewage pipe in the Ganges River*

Jalandhar Prasad, steps forward. Vipul asserts over and over again that we are not from the government but from a private organization concerned about the condition of their water.

We are taken on a tour of the village's four wells. "This used to be some of the best water in the region," one man tells us. "When this area was first settled, hundreds of years ago, this was the first well and people used to travel here for good water. Now we feel ourselves prisoners with no way to return our ground water to its former state." The wells are above ground, round structures of brick with wooden pulleys overhead. At each well a bucket is brought up for us.

Vipul touches the water, scoops up a handful, jiggles the water slowly in his hand. Like a doctor feeling the

belly of a patient, he moves the water gently, watching, listening with an inner water ear. Polluted water does not have the intricate vibrations of clean water. Clean water has many patterns on its surface when it is jiggled. This water looks clear but the wave action is sluggish, almost as if it has been drugged. Vipul brings the water to his nose. Inhales. Drops the water to the ground. Pulls a handkerchief out of his pocket to wipe the poison away.

Neighbors gather at each well, eager to tell their stories. They show us their infected scabies, their babies with sores and rashes. I am sorry to have to say that about 70 percent of the villagers in Kamauli have horrid sores. They point to their stomachs and talk about the invisible wounds, about the children made orphans, the deaths in the village.

"Until four years ago we did not have these problems. But then the Dinapur Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) was built and we noticed changes. First the water level in our wells rose. Previously we needed a rope over 30 feet long to reach the water level. Now we only need a rope about 16 feet long to bring up the water. Also we have noticed other changes. Sores, stomach pain, hepatitis, a decrease in health in general. And our farms suffer. No one will buy our potatoes, they are so hard and tasteless."

Another man steps forward and says that he depended upon a mango tree for his income but now the tree is dead. What can he do?

The social costs in Kamauli are also great. "Now word has spread of our misery and no one will marry our sons and daughters. What will become of us, our families, our village?"

Hearing of this suffering, we must ask ourselves many questions. For instance, scabies is not a water-borne disease. It is caused by unhygienic conditions. But if one must clean with dirty water, how can one clean? Doctors say they can treat the infected scabies in two months, but the diseases will reappear if the water is not clean. "The real medicine is clean water," Vipul asserts.

Another question which naturally comes to mind is "What shall we do?" Vipul tells the villagers that we will have a clinic once a month. He will ask friends who are also doctors to volunteer for the clinic and to fight for free medicines. Health education and testing of the water will also be a component of the new clinic.

But there is an impulse to do something right away. "Let's go to the pharmacy in the neighboring town and get some medicines," Vipul says. Prasand, the village spokesperson, comes with us and takes great care to find out how to apply the creams and anti-itching pills.

Later, at the foundation, we begin to develop a strategy on how to force the Dinapur STP and the city government to build water tanks and bring clean water to Kamauli in trucks. "It is as if those people live underneath the toilets of Varanasi," Dr. V.B.Mishra

says. "This suffering is intolerable."

Within days Vipul has been to the district health officer to get permission to have a clinic, he has found some medical students to help, gotten some drugs donated, and found a couple of people to help do research on the exact nature and quantity of the suffering at Kamauli. This data will help in our overall campaign to force the government to build an adequate

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*Vipul jiggles the water slowly in his hand.  
Like a doctor feeling the belly of a patient,  
he moves the water gently, listening with  
an inner water ear.*

---

sewage system and resettle the villagers.

At the formal opening of the clinic, four volunteer doctors joined Vipul, members of the Sankat Mochan Foundation, and technicians from the water testing laboratory run by the Foundation. Over a hundred villagers, including schoolchildren, attended the opening ceremonies. The first clinic was held in the primary school, and over 60 patients were seen by the doctors, most of them suffering from worms, diarrhea, or infected scabies. Later, it turned out that this school was "in the territory of a higher caste" which meant it wasn't accessible to the whole village.

The second clinic, three weeks later, was held on the banks of the sewage channel. Vipul had chosen this as a place equidistant from both castes, owned by no particular group. The symbolic value of having the clinic within 10 feet of the very cause of many of their illnesses was not lost. Villagers went into the sewage plant's pump house and took out a chair for Vipul and a small table for him to write on.

The other two doctors who were scheduled to come to the clinic that particular day had to cancel at the last minute. One was suffering from diarrhea—it's not only the poor and uneducated who suffer from waterborne diseases in this area. So Vipul ran the clinic alone. There was a representative from the Foundation there to add some legitimacy, an education worker/economist, and the ever-present water testing technician. The education worker went around to the villagers' homes, asking questions about the water, about diseases.

The lab man walked from well to well gathering water samples in sterilized bottles. We would learn later that there was a dangerously high fecal coliform count in the water, except in the deepest well. And more significantly there was a lot of nitrate, which can cause blue baby syndrome and infant death.

Then there was me, an almost useless appendage to the project. Not speaking Hindi very well, I could not talk with villagers; not being a medical worker, I could

not help on the medical side. But when I noticed Vipul struggling to separate the pill packets into appropriate dosages, I offered to help. I squatted next to Vipul and he oriented me to the variety of medications he had brought in two cardboard boxes. I tired of squatting and simply sat on the ground. To my surprise, everyone laughed appreciatively. This large American woman joining the earth of their place—that meant something to them. They talked about it all day.

So I became the nurse, counting out pills, finding the medicines Vipul called for, taking care of the paperwork.

Witnessing illness and pain in a way I had never known I was capable of. I usually find it difficult to look at sores, injuries, infections. Physical suffering makes me feel creepy inside. But here on the banks of the sewage channel I found in myself a fresh response to suffering. I had a role to play, a way to participate in the healing process. And to participate one must look. One must attend to the suffering if one is to help.

So that was our team and our task. To research, to diagnose, to treat, to educate. And for about four hours we did all those things with care. A crowd gathered around Vipul's little table. He would call out the name of the next person to be seen, and they would come forward. He listened as they described their complaint, touched their stomach, looked at sores. I looked, too. I must learn all this. It is part of the whole picture.

The villagers' suffering is a direct result of inappropriate technology. "If we had been less trusting of the government engineers we would not have allowed this plant to have been built without a more careful study," said Dr. V.B. Mishra, himself an engineer.

"We couldn't believe in our wildest imagination that such blunders would be committed by engineers. Now this village is at the receiving end of the toilets of Varanasi and the wells are full of stinking water."

But now the village is economically dependent on the Sewage Treatment Plant. As several of the villagers put it, "Please don't close down the channel. It brings us more water to irrigate our crops. Yes, it is true that the potatoes are small and hard. It is true that some trees have died. But other crops are more abundant. If

you close the channel, how will we make a living?" It's the old jobs-versus-environment story all over again. And those who have died of waterborne diseases don't have a voice in the discussion.

And it is not even that simple. Some of the suffering is not waterborne but born of poverty and lack of educational and health services. The interest on World Bank loans for the sewage technology has drained away government resources which could have been used for more direct services.

One young boy has a bulge in his left eye caused by

Vitamin A deficiency. How does one have a vitamin A deficiency in a region that grows fine carrots? He will probably lose the sight in that eye. We have all been watching this young man, as he appears to be the most seriously ill person at our clinic. His suffering has been at the edge of our awareness all day. When his name is called everyone comes closer to see what can be done.

Vipul asks me to

find the bottle of Vitamin A in the box. We are all pulling for this boy. Villagers pitch in to hold papers, pour out a liquid. Vipul carefully writes down the name of the district health center where the boy should go. His parents agree to take him there. But will they be able to give him the carrots he needs regularly? Can they afford not to sell them? We don't know.

After everyone who comes to the clinic has been seen, villagers offer us delicious fresh milk. Vipul expresses appreciation for everyone. A good-natured crowd sees us off. "Please come back again." We will. ♦

*Fran Peavey is a social change worker and one of the founders of Friends of the Ganges. Turning Wheel readers may also remember Fran as a member of the team that worked in 1994 with Yugoslavian women. She and her partner Tova Green are planning to return to the Balkan region to research new work in May, 1995.*

*Donations to clean up the Ganges and support the Kamauli clinic can be sent to: Crabgrass (marked Ganga), 3181 Mission St., #30, San Francisco, CA 94110. Fran adds, "If you have warm, clean children's clothing I will be happy to take it to the children of Kamauli next winter. They were so cold this year."*



*Dr. V.B. Mishra, Fran Peavey, and S.K. Mishra of the Sankat Mochan Foundation*

Nanao Sakaki is a Japanese poet, anti-nuclear activist, wanderer, scholar, sculptor, mountains-and-rivers man, founder of community. His friend Gary Snyder says, "His poems were not written by hand or head, but with the feet."

This poem, in Sakaki's own handwriting, is about Monju, a huge nuclear energy facility built recently next to a community of fishing villages in Japan, and named after Manjusri, bodhisattva of wisdom.

"VENERATE THREE TREASURES"

"BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI  
DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI  
SAMGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI"

"WE VENERATE BUDDHA  
WE VENERATE DHARMA  
WE VENERATE SANGA"

This year, this autumn  
To save all sentient beings  
Buddha Shakyamuni sends Bodhisattva Manjusri  
To Prince Shōtoku's country Japan.  
To Wakasa bay, north of Kyoto.

"WHO ARE YOU?  
WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM?"

15 billion years ago	Big bang
4.5 billion years ago	Creation of the Earth.
3 billion years ago	Life begins.
0.5 million years ago	Peking man
2557 years ago	Buddha Shakyamuni.
1994 years ago	Jesus Christ.
1442 years ago	Prince Shōtoku
49 years ago	Hiroshima bombing.
7 years ago	Chernobyl disaster.

"HOPELESSLY SQUATTING,  
YOU, BIRD-MAN IN THE CAGE.  
WHEN COULD YOU BE LIBERATED?"

This year, this autumn  
To save all sentient beings  
Bodhisattva Manjusri  
Comes to Japan, comes to Wakasa bay.



Now standing on the beach of Wakasa bay  
Boddhisattva Manjusri  
Takes the place of a fast breeder reactor  
Extinguishes the hell's flame of Plutonium  
With his own blood & tears,  
And illuminates the gloomy world  
With his boundless compassion.

Therefore Boddhisattva Manjusri's fast breeder reactor  
Produces no radioactive contamination  
Produces no nuclear explosion  
Produces no atomic bomb.

Illuminated by Boddhisattva Manjusri's compassion  
Human beings together with all sentient beings  
Repeat their birth & death  
& keep their lives happy & in peace  
In the coming century & beyond it  
Until planet Earth's last day.

Though ... red blood & black tears  
Trickling from the ringed skulls of  
Hiroshima, Nagasaki & Chernobyl  
Will tint the horizon  
Until planet Earth's last day.

This year, this autumn  
To save all sentient beings  
Boddhisattva Manjusri  
Comes to Japan, comes to Wakasa bay.

" WE VENERATE BUDDHA  
WE VENERATE DHARMA  
WE VENERATE SANGA "

" BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI  
DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI  
SAMGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI "

Oct 1994. Nameo Sakaki.

Sakaki's notes:

- 1) Prince Shotoku (572-621 AD) introduced Buddhism into Japan.
- 2) The title of the poem comes from the first constitution of Japan which was proclaimed by Prince Shotoku.
- 3) "WHO ARE..." & "HOPELESSLY..." are age-old children songs of Japan.
- 4) Who knows why the fast breeder reactor was named after Bodhisattva Manjusri?

## *The Healing Path* *A Soul Approach to Illness*

by Marc Ian Barasch, with a foreword by  
Bernie S. Siegel, M.D.  
Tarcher, 1993, \$11.95.

### Reviewed by China Galland

Whether we are blessed with good health or struggling with a fatal illness, Marc Barasch's book brings us good medicine. Taking us with him on his own journey into the world of cancer, he makes the irrevocable decision to have his cancerous thyroid removed, a decision he regrets with poignancy and without self-pity. In the course of determining his own choices, Barasch illumines the landscape of today's cancer epidemic for everyone.

From Korean Zen stories to the powerful story of the prayer healing of a Montana farmer, Barasch gives us a balanced journey, his own and others', full of the contradictions and complexities that only come in a genuine encounter—the faith healing that failed, the surgery that saved—showing us that there are no simple answers to our illnesses, only an honest struggle met with grace and a fierce commitment to live with dignity.

This book is *the* book I give to friends in a crisis of healing. Of all the books I've seen on the subject, it is the most eminently sensible, down-to-earth, well-written, and compassionate. Buy this book, and look for his new one on spontaneous remissions, *Remarkable Recovery*, just out from Putnam's Riverhead Books (\$23.95). Barasch is a *must read* on this subject. ❖

*China Galland is the author of Woman in the Wilderness, and Longing for Darkness: Tara and the Black Madonna. She is currently at work on a new book on the Sacred Feminine.*

## *Burma's Revolution of the Spirit: The Struggle for Democratic Freedom and Dignity*

by Alan Clements and Leslie Kean

Aperture, 1994, \$35.

### Reviewed by Alan Senauke

This is a book of strong images and clear context, the best all-around perspective on the tragedy of Burma that I have seen. For most of us, the stunning, sometimes difficult photographs (by many different photographers) are images we have not been allowed to see, due to censorship by a brutal dictatorship and the curious unconcern of the international press. As Burma endures its seventh year of military rule, and its fiftieth year of civil war, new images are continuously taking shape. Only two weeks ago on the Thai/Burma border a few of us from BPF were witness to the perilous lives of people driven from their land at gunpoint. Weeks or months from now, these several thousand

refugees may be driven to another makeshift camp, with the world outside never knowing a thing.

Alan Clements (whose earlier book, *Burma: The Next Killing Fields*, is a good primer on Burma through 1991) and Leslie Kean have woven their words together with compelling pictures. I was particularly moved by photos of the democracy demonstrations and fierce repression from the summer of 1988, and of Aung San Suu Kyi's grassroots campaign during the aborted election of 1990, a beam of light and hope that was quickly extinguished.

The book begins with an eloquent foreword by the Dalai Lama and brief commentary from a brace of Nobel Peace laureates, including Desmond Tutu, Rigoberta Menchu, and Oscar Arias. But the last word is given in an essay, "Towards A True Refuge," by Aung San Suu Kyi herself, Burma's 1991 Nobel laureate who is still enduring house arrest in Rangoon, unable to connect with a people who urgently need her leadership. She challenges us, "The dream of a society ruled by loving kindness, reason and justice is a dream as old as civilized man. Does it have to be an impossible dream?"

A word of warning. Some of the photographs contain images of violence that are disturbing. There is no glamour, no swelling soundtrack here. Just a painful truth that will likely stay in your mind's eye. But such pictures can take us beyond revulsion, and nurture compassion and action. The people of Burma can use our support. ❖

## COORDINATOR'S REPORT

I've been back about a week from Thailand, and my body is at last nearing the California coast after days of jet lag limbo. I was in Thailand for three weeks, mostly at Wangsanit Ashram, northeast of Bangkok, where I attended the annual conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). The weather got steamier day by day as the hot season came on. But the time with distant friends was precious—talking, meditating, walking in the almost-cool evening, sharing our concerns for life and Dharma. The images are still clear in my mind.

On the way I stopped in Hawaii—my first time there—to spend a day with Aitken Roshi before traveling on with him to Thailand. I arrived in time for late evening zazen and a good night's sleep at Palolo Zendo, where Roshi is living and practicing. The center is well away from town, at the far end of a valley in a wonderfully wild and green place. I was happy to see him in good health, good spirits, ready for his first INEB gathering. Once settled in Thailand at the Ashram Roshi was accessible to everyone, willing to discuss large questions and matters of personal practice. His steadiness and his spirit of open inquiry were inspiring.

The INEB conference, only three full days this year, was larger than any previous gathering. A hundred and twenty of us represented Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, India (including Ladakh), Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, U.S., Canada, U.K., Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands. There were twenty nuns this year—almost as many as monks—which speaks to the organizing work that has been going on in the ordained communities.

We tried to keep the conference structure as open as possible for networking, while honoring the fact that many people had come a long distance to present their concerns to the whole group. Those of us who have been coming to INEB for several years seem to have gotten more skillful at striking this balance. From what I could see, connections were made, people felt heard, and we Westerners were more mindful about speaking slowly and clearly.

Our first night together we held a moving ceremony of repentance and renewal, inspired by our friends from INEB-Japan, who read a prepared statement asking for forgiveness for Japan's crimes during W.W.II. Their initiative expanded into a ceremony in which many of us spoke for ourselves and for our nations, taking responsibility for past and present acts that bring suffering to many.

Following the conference, Sue Moon and I traveled by bus and minivan to the Mon region of the Thai/Burma border, near the Thai town of Sankhlaburi. The Mon people are an ethnic minority in Burma who have been fleeing the abuses of SLORC [the State Law and Order Restoration Council], the military junta that rules Burma. SLORC has been cutting a swath through the jungle where the Mon people live, displacing villagers and conscripting laborers, in order to build a gas pipeline and sell the gas to Thai and Western companies like Unocal and Total.

Last year, through the graces of the Kaiser Family Foundation, BPF funded a small grant for mobile medical teams along the border. In Sankhlaburi Sue and I met with Dr. Nai Shwe Thein, who administered the grant in the Mon region. He heads the medical branch of the Mon National Relief Committee and runs a training program for medics in several Mon refugee camps along the border. He was our tireless host and teacher for two days, taking us around the large Mon community in Sankhlaburi, including an audience with Ven. Uttama, a "royal" monk, whose eighty-fifth birthday was the occasion for a three-night festival. (These were the same three nights we stayed in a guest house across the lake, wondering *who* was dancing all night

long to the amplified rock music from the temple.)

One day Nai Shwe Thein took us on an unexpected adventure to Payaw Camp, some seventy-five kilometers down an unbelievable dirt road into the jungle—along deep rutted tracks, over and through running streams—in a four-wheel-drive Toyota pickup carrying thirty-five suddenly intimate people and a goose. It was an exhausting and unnerving trip (especially for the goose), but remarkably, throughout the four hours each way of rattling and hanging on to each other, everybody on board kept up good spirits.

Payaw Camp has a ragged, makeshift quality, but people seemed relatively healthy. It has a monastery, a Christian Church, a clinic, a school, a teacher training program, a women's vocational training center, and,



Alan Senauke

*Mon kids at Payaw Refugee Camp*

when we arrived, a wedding party was in progress—the bride and groom were both medics trained by our friend—and we were invited to partake of the wedding feast under a string of pink balloons.

When the rainy season begins in June, the road becomes impassable, except to elephants, for nearly six months, and the camp is cut off from supplies of food and medicine. Malaria, respiratory infection, and diarrhea—all of which are easily treated with proper care and medication—carry off many of the children and elderly. A second, perhaps worse, difficulty is that the Thai government wants all the Mon camps, all Burmese refugee camps, in fact, off Thai territory. Thai authorities have already forcibly relocated the much larger New Halockhani Camp back inside the Burma border after the original camp was torched by SLORC late last year. It's only a matter of time before they do the same at Payaw, which will put the population at risk of attack by SLORC, caught in a vise between two unfriendly forces.

I was moved by the Mon people we met, particularly by their open spirit in the face of such hardship. I hope BPF can continue our medical support, sustain

our political and educational work, and live to see a democratic Burma in the near future.

The friendship of other BPF members was again a very rich part of my journey. Donald Rothberg and Aitken Roshi came for the Dhammic Society meeting that preceded the conference, along with Gillian Coote of Australia BPF, and Greg Mello and Keith Melton from Santa Fe. Sue Moon joined us at the conference after her trip to Cambodia. Together we were able to pool our knowledge, and share tasks that would have been impossible for any one of us to do alone. We were honored by the company of four of BPF's International Advisory Board: Aitken Roshi, Sulak Sivaraksa, Maha Ghosananda, and Rev. Mamoru Kato of the Leverett Peace Pagoda.

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What else is happening? By the time you read this, our first six-month BASE program will have begun. Most BPF members probably know a little about this project. More about it in the next issue. We are planning our third summer institute, "Meditation in Action: Transforming Violence," June 29 to July 2 at Land of the Medicine Buddha in Soquel, California. Nelson Foster, Joanna Macy, David Grant, Fran Peavey and Tova Green will offer their skills and training, and we will provide a strong program for children. In August a BPF delegation will join the Nevada Desert Experience's observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thich Nhat Hanh will spend September leading retreats and teaching in the U.S. It will be a busy six months and we hope you will join in one or more of these events. Call us for details. See you around. —*Alan Senauke* ❖

## CHAPTER & BUDDHIST ACTIVIST NEWS

### Yellow Springs BPF

Most of Yellow Springs' energy has been going towards supporting the new ecumenical Yellow Springs Dharma Center. The chapter has also been working in conjunction with Antioch College's Tibet Action Group to distribute information and provide financial support for the Peace March from New Delhi to Lhasa. A chapter member organized a fundraising event which benefited a local homeless shelter and food kitchen.

### Karuna Center

The Karuna Center was instrumental in the creation and coordination of the Convocation at Auschwitz which was the opening event of the "Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life 1995" from Auschwitz to Hiroshima. [See article, p.42.] In Spring 1995, Paula Green of the

Karuna Center, is going to Rwanda, Zaire, and Uganda to offer seminars to encourage dialogue, community rebuilding and the restoration of hope. She'll be working at the invitation of the local Christian Churches and applying the teachings of engaged Buddhism. Other international trainings in engaged Buddhism will be occurring in 1995 but specific places are not yet confirmed.

### San Diego BPF

A memorial for the ninth anniversary of the meltdown of Chernobyl is being organized by the San Diego chapter. They will be gathering materials for the children of Kiev who are still hospitalized with radiation injuries. They are asking people to bring sheets, warm clothing, toys, and picture books to the memorial which will be held at 7 PM on April 26. For more information call Judith Gilbert at (619) 592-1577.

### Portland BPF

"Ring Down For The Species," an informative and educational vigil, is being held on April 23 to bring mindfulness to the issue of endangered species. A bell will be rung for each species that has gone extinct in the bioregion of the North West. It will be a time for communities to come together and pledge to do what they can for the threatened species of this area.

### Cape Cod Witness Day

BPF members in Cape Cod held a 12-hour witness for peace and compassion in January. Over 200 people attended this day of witness that included walking meditation, bells, silence, and ten presenters who spoke about different aspects of violence. Chuck Hotchkiss writes, "Going directly from the raising of difficult issues to a meditation which gave us a place to take these troubles, there was calm and centeredness, all in a wonderful context of silence and bells. Many people have spoken of being deeply moved, of a refined awareness of our inter-relatedness, of a renewed sense of community."

### L.A. BPF

Members of the Los Angeles Chapter spent two days over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in conversation and study at Manzanita Village. This was a time to get to know each other better and create a basis for action. They are working towards having a retreat in 1996 that will be centered on "nonviolence as a way of life and action." Also they are addressing the topic of "the First Precept and the problem of violence in Los Angeles." ❖

### Personal Mastery Education

BPF is administering a \$10,000 grant from the Teaching Peace Foundation that has been received by Alan Oliver, Bay Area BPF member. The grant will be used to develop educational materials to help kids find their own spiritual resources. Alan Oliver welcomes suggestions. Contact him at (415) 267-6970 or 2261 Market St. Box 438, San Francisco CA 94114. ❖

# ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

## 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.

## BUDDHIST PRISONERS at

Calipatria State Penitentiary, in southern California, are searching for a Dharma teacher or Buddhist monk to come for talks. Contact: Owen Reed, Recreation Coordinator, P.O. Box 5001, Calipatria, CA 92233; 619/348-7000 ex. 7614.

## 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.

## SUPPORT INMATES with literary

materials. Please send to: Prison Library Project, 976 W. Foothills Blvd. #128, Claremont, CA 91711.

## MINDFULNESS IN THE JAILS

welcomes your financial support of its meditation and yoga classes in the San Francisco County jails. Please send donations (with a note in the memo) payable to: Jail Psychiatric Services, 984 Folsom St., San Francisco, CA 94107.

## SUNBOW 5, WALK FOR THE

**EARTH:** On **June 23, 1995**, a coalition of peoples from the Americas will begin a walk across North America at First Encounter Beach, on the shores of Cape Cod. There are many opportunities to participate in this coming together of people whose concern for healing this land surpasses any racial divisions. Contact: Sunbow 5 Foundation, 280 Bank St., Harwich, MA 02645; 508/432-8969.

## CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT:

two-day conference on the Global Ethic (a continuation of the work begun at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago) on **June 20-21, 1995**, in the S.F. Bay Area. Organizations the world over are planning to celebrate the "Nine Weeks for the Earth," between the 25th Anniversary of Earth Day on April 22 and the celebration of the 50th

Anniversary of the U.N. on June 26. Many of the spiritual and secular leaders at these events will participate in an interfaith service at Grace Cathedral; President Clinton, Vice-President Gore, and U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali are expected to attend.

## JOINING HEAVEN AND EARTH: A Shambhala Celebration.

In Halifax, Nova Scotia. **May 12-21, 1995.** 800/442-8809 for info.

## ZIGAR DRUKPA KARGYD

Monastery seeks sponsors for ten young Tibetan Refugee monks. Contact Tinley Gyaltso, C/O P.O. Rewalsar 175023, District Mandi, H.P. India.

## 50th ANNIVERSARY OF HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI

Join BPF and Nevada Desert Experience and many survivors/victims of the nuclear age for a massive gathering and witness at the Nevada Test Site

**August 4-9, 1995**

Contact the BPF office for registration and information: 510/525-8596

## KARMAPA INTERNATIONAL

Buddhist Institute of New Delhi, India needs funds to improve its library to meet the most basic needs of its culturally diverse student body. We need to raise \$10,000 (over two years) to bring the library up to accreditation standards. Donations may be sent to: K.I.B.I. Library Fund, c/o 11952 S. Kedvale Ave., Alsip, IL 60658, USA.

## ECOPSYCHOLOGY: Healing Professions & the Ecological Crisis.

Residential trainings held in Colorado (**Sept. 1-9, 1995**) or California (**Oct. 29-Nov. 5 1995**) at Shenoa Retreat Center. Holotropic breathwork, new paradigms in science-psychology-ecology, wilderness solos, Earth-based ritual, & sustainable community. Will Keepin, Ph.D./Johanna Johnson, M.A., 1704 B Llano St., Ste. 200, Santa Fe, NM 87505; 505/466-3406.

**NEEDS OF HOMELESS** women and children: Help people in need by donating personal care items: tooth-

brushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and hand lotion; and cereal or soup bowls, to the Women's Daytime Drop-in Center in Berkeley. To make a donation or for information, please call 510/548-2884, or 510/524-2468 to arrange to have donations picked up.

## INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST

children's relief program seeks sponsors for needy children in Sri Lanka, India, and Chile (\$16/month). Contact them at 1511 Alencastre St., Honolulu, HI 96816, 808/593-6515.

## 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.

## BODHI, the Benevolent Organization

for Development, Health, and Insight, is a non-profit dedicated to sustainable improvements in health care, education, and the environment in the so-called Third World. Contact: Scott Trimmingham, BODHI USA, P.O. Box 7000-GRD, Redondo Beach, CA 90277. Tel: 310/378-0269; Fax: 310/378-6518.

## GAY BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

publishes a monthly newsletter, with information about its activities in the S.F. Bay Area and articles on topics of concern to gay Buddhists. \$15/year. GBF, 2261 Market St. #422, San Francisco, CA 94114; 415/974-9878.

## PEACE ACTION, formerly

SANE/Freeze, will hold its annual National Congress: **June 23 -25, 1995** at Drew University in Madison, N.J. Contact: Dee Rossman, Congress Coordinator, c/o N.J. Peace Action, 89 Walnut St., Montclair, NJ 07042; 201/744-3358.

## Classifieds

**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.

**SOUTHERN DHARMA** Retreat Center is seeking a *couple* to assume the position of co-managers. Southern Dharma is a meditation & retreat center that sponsors teachers from various traditions, and makes its facilities available for private retreats as the schedule allows. To start **Aug. 1, 1995** or earlier. Call Nadine at 704/622-7112.

**RETREAT WITH** Zen Master George Bowman in the Colorado Rockies **May 11-14, 1995**. Families invited! Contact Pam Sherman, at 303/444-0622.

**THE HARBOR SANGHA** is a small Zen group located in San Francisco. Our teacher, Joseph Bobrow, received permission to teach from Robert Aitken-Roshi in 1989. We offer weekly zazen every Monday evening, as well as periodic retreats and other special events. Beginners are welcome to attend. The opportunity to practice more intensively and do koan study with Joe is also available. For more information, contact the Harbor Sangha at 415/241-8807.

**THE INFLATABLE ZAFU** is actually an inflatable beachball inside a fine quality zafu cover. Lightweight-Convenient-Guaranteed. Colors: Plum, Burgundy, Navy, Royal, Green, Black. Cost: \$22 postpaid. Meditation supplies. Free brochure. Carolina Morning Designs, Dept. BPFN, P.O. Box 2832, Asheville, NC 28802. 704/683-1843.

## Gratitude

*The Buddhist Peace Fellowship gratefully acknowledges financial contributions above membership between November 30, 1994 and February 28, 1995.*

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Fax: 510/525-7973

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43 Richfield Road  
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**Int'l Network of Engaged Buddhists**  
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Ongkharak Nakhorn Nayok  
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**Interracial Buddhist Council**  
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- ❖ To raise peace, environmental, feminist, and social justice concerns among Western Buddhists;
- ❖ To bring a Buddhist perspective to contemporary peace, environmental, and social action movements;
- ❖ To encourage the practice of nonviolence based on the rich resources of traditional Buddhist teachings;
- ❖ To offer avenues for dialogue and exchange among the diverse American and world sanghas.

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