



TURNING WHEEL

Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Summer 1995 \$4.00

Is it our fate to devour ourselves?

CONSUMERISM

*Creating edible
schoolyards*

*Hoarding
chocolate in
the monastery*

*Eating marmot
in Mongolia*

*Living with
Chemical
Sensitivity*



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William Clark, *Hungry Ghost*

Plus: Portraits from Cambodia
Robert Aitken on Shunning and Sexual Misconduct

FROM THE EDITOR

"You can't always get what you want, but if you try, sometimes, you just might find, you get what you need." —Rolling Stones

I went to Cambodia last February, on my way to the International Network of Engaged Buddhists conference in Thailand. On the plane I leafed through the *Shopping by Air* catalogue. With a flick of my charge card, any of the following could have been waiting for me when I deplaned: a gumball machine for pets, a Star Trek light globe, a tyrannosaurus rex telephone, an automatic foot rinsers, an imitation leather doggie bomber jacket, a framed etching of the heroes of golf, or a trigger-operated remote control device shaped like a revolver. The ceiling light bulb changer, \$45, would have been useful for my porch light, but I thought it would be awkward traveling around Southeast Asia with a six-foot pole. Actually, what I *really* thought was that I was above all that consumerist nonsense.

I was met in Phnom Penh by Liz Bernstein, an American friend of BPF, and we took a hair-raising four-hour cab ride across the Cambodian countryside, missing bullocks and bicycles by inches. I'd been traveling about 36 hours when we reached the temple where the conference on reforestation was to be held. I was shown to the open-air building where the women would sleep and told to make myself at home. The idea was to take one of the extremely thin grass mats from the pile in the corner and unroll it on any unclaimed piece of the concrete floor. So I did. Later it turned out that the bright fluorescent light right over my spot was never turned off.

"You brought mosquito netting, didn't you?" somebody said. But I hadn't. My heart sank: I would be sleeping here—or failing to sleep here—for the next four nights. I was *afraid*, actually *afraid* of being uncomfortable. But I was so exhausted that when everybody else went to dinner, I lay down and fell asleep. I was awakened later by the gentle ministrations of Liz and a Cambodian nun as they tucked a mosquito net around me. They would share one between them.

I *was* very uncomfortable. My bones ached all night long, and the fluorescent light bothered me. (If only I'd bought that ceiling light bulb changer!) But I didn't get mosquito bites and consequently I didn't get malaria.

On the second day, in a kind of epiphany, I realized that it didn't *matter* that I was uncomfortable. I wasn't going to die from the hard floor. I had uncovered an assumption in myself, a kind of cultural entitlement: the idea that while I'm quite ready to live without a Star Trek light globe (maybe even *because* I'm ready to live without it), I have a constitutional right to a nice mattress. I noticed that the Cambodian women didn't make this assumption, even though they probably slept on comfortable beds at home.

It was a liberation—this letting go of comfort. (Only a four-day liberation, but still...) How boring and self-centered it is, to be focused on one's own comfort. How much more interesting to pay attention to the concert of laughter and water splashing as women bathed at the well. Or to the stories of other people's lives. (See "Portraits from Cambodia," page 30.) Experiencing myself in the web of sentient beings, I was able to give an elderly nun my drugstore reading glasses.

We live so high off the hog. And how disconnected we are from others because of it. ♦ —Susan Moon

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*:

Fall '95: A Buddhist response to fundamentalism—

Radical right: enemy or teacher? What are our differences? What are our similarities? Is there a Buddhist fundamentalism? Right-to-lifers, the Christian Coalition, Islamic fundamentalists—What are we all looking for? What are we all afraid of? Can we talk? Send articles, interviews, ideas for this issue to Denise Caignon (guest editor), at the BPF office, or via e-mail, to: Compuserve: 73130,420, or from the Internet: 73130.420@compuserve.com **Deadline: August 7.**

Winter '95-'96: Family and extended family practice—

Children, aging parents. What *is* family, anyway? **Deadline: October 15, '95.**



TURNING WHEEL

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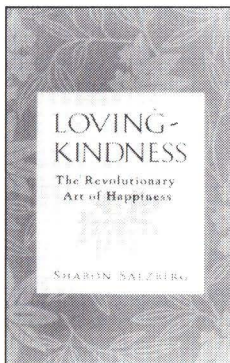
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Rebecca Sutherland

Shambhala

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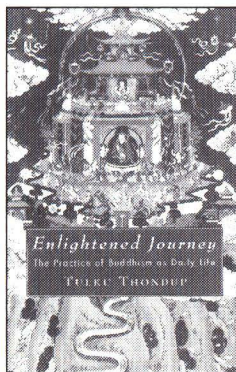
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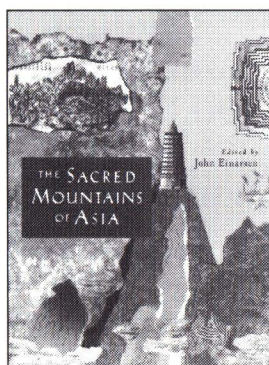
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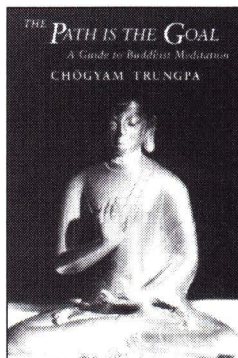
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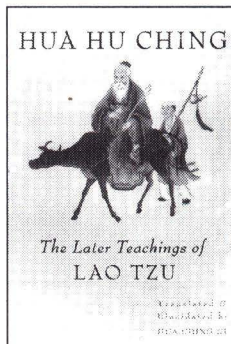
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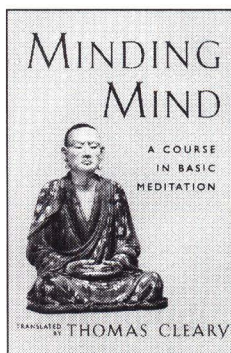
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LETTERS

[*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.]

The Nondual Sangha: Inside Prison and Out

Thank you for the gift subscription to *Turning Wheel*. I cannot begin to express the sense of belonging it provided me.

Back in '88 or '89 I came across two small Zen books here at the prison and that was all I had. No fellow meditators; no support from the free world. So for the first five or six years I simply sat zazen. I sat in the mornings; I sat in the evenings; and on days when the prison was locked down I sat the entire day.

Then I recently came across a few addresses, and the Rev. Kubose of the American Buddhist Association wrote to me about BPF. It was so neat, reading the Spring '95 issue of *Turning Wheel* from cover to cover, to discover that there are people out there describing things I have experienced, to learn that others are concerned about the same things I care about. The sense of kinship, oneness, and community is awesome.

—Wally Szymanski
Green Bay Correctional Institution,
Green Bay, Wisconsin

I read Jarvis Masters' article in *Turning Wheel* last week and he has been in my thoughts ever since. Where he is, who he is, and what he said made me see things anew. I went outside and saw a eucalyptus tree—and really saw it. Sometimes I get into a funk, but I have no right to. We have a right to be grateful, to go inside, to love. What Jarvis says is both painful and beautiful. We cannot avoid suffering, but we can transform it into light, into color.

During the day, I work as a teacher at a community college, and I am also a writer. The kind of books I write are for immigrants trying to find their way. Writing, groping for what to say and how to say it can make me miserable, but also gives the finest delight. I'm sure Jarvis has experienced this.

—Nina Rosen
Los Angeles, California

So what does it mean to be a Buddhist in this chaotic and emotionally troubling time? It means we all have to be like Jarvis Masters, transferred to the lower depths—the prison's cells for the mentally ill—hanging on to our humanity, hanging on to hope, transcending the suffering as best we can. So when we read about Jarvis Masters, and how his turbulent childhood left him facing a death sentence, and we learn he is still being a writer and a Buddhist, and is continuing to transform his life, then his courage flows out through the bars of that place and into all our lives. Unconsciously, we say to ourselves: If Jarvis

can do that, if he can remain human and sane, then I can pick myself up for one more day, one more week, face whatever suffering life is dishing out and treat myself and others with compassion and mercy.

But I'm not trying to set Jarvis up as an example without acknowledging his suffering. I'll never forget some of the comments people made when they visited me in the joint. They remarked on my courage and how well I was doing, when in reality I was often dying inside and wanted to tell them so. Only a very few people were really able to hear how much I was suffering. Most people wanted to hear how courageous and strong I was. For a long time, I was cynical about this, thinking only that they were dreaming me up as a hero because they couldn't bear to have their own lives upset by my suffering. But now I realize that while that was true to some degree, it was also true that they needed me to display courage so that they could have some courage, too.

And I think this is also a meaning we can give to the word *Sangha*. The way Jarvis handles his suffering gives me energy to handle mine. He inspires me, and I inspire him, and we all support each other in this journey. No one has to suffer alone.

—Jim Cronin
Washington State

[The preceding two letters were originally sent to Jarvis Masters and excerpts are reprinted here with the permission of Jarvis and the authors. —Ed.] ❖

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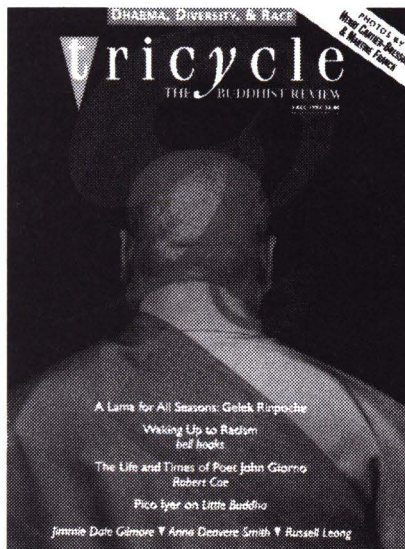
Public Lecture at the Berkeley Community Theater
Tuesday, September 26, 7:30 PM
call 510/525-8509 for information

Thich Nhat Hanh will also give public lectures in New York City, on October 9 (212/501-2652); and in Washington, D.C., on October 12 (301/270-3923).

For info about his schedule of retreats in Vietnamese, please call 408/848-1548, or 619/631-1689.

READINGS

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U.S. Involvement in East Timor

The people of East Timor, a small independent nation East of Indonesia, have been experiencing brutal violence partly as a result of U.S. policy. In 1975, troops led by Indonesian dictator Suharto invaded East Timor. These troops were armed by the U.S. government, led by U.S. trained officers and aided by U.S. diplomatic support. The U.S. was, and continues to be, involved because of a long-standing relationship with Suharto, including the U.S. policy of selling arms to Indonesia and exploiting the region's rich natural resources and cheap human labor.

During the past 20 years of fierce military occupation, one third of the civilian population of East Timor has been murdered. For the survivors, intimidation, imprisonment, starvation and torture have become a way of life. East Timor has been described as the world's largest prison camp, where men suspected of being sympathetic to independence for the country are being tortured, and where native women are subject to a systematic campaign of sterilization. Yet the people of East Timor have not surrendered and continue to struggle for freedom and self determination.

Throughout these 20 years of terror the U.S. has supplied Indonesia with financial aid and arms. Now the Clinton administration is asking Congress to renew military aid and increase arms sales to Indonesia. These non-humanitarian policies must be stopped.

Bishop Carlos Belo said, "It has never been worse here. No one can speak. No one can demonstrate. People disappear. East Timor is an island of total fear and terror. We ask the world to understand this and never forget that we are struggling for life every day."

✍ Please write letters requesting an immediate ban on the sale of all military supplies to Indonesia. Send to: President Clinton, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC 20500 or your Senator at Senate Office Bldg., Washington, DC 20510.

Peace Pilgrimage Through Cambodia

The Venerable Maha Ghosananda, sometimes called "the Gandhi of Cambodia," and approximately 800 participants have joined with the Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life to make the dangerous trek across war-torn Cambodia. The Interfaith Pilgrimage, commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II, left Auschwitz, Poland in December of 1994 and will pass through 15 countries before completing its journey in Japan on August 6th to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Cambodian leg of the journey is especially hazardous due to the ongoing civil war and the prevalence of land mines. Maha Ghosananda has said that he will "walk until Cambodia has peace" and will accompany the Interfaith Pilgrimage to Vietnam.

Numerous pre-walk sessions have been held throughout Cambodia for nonviolence training and mine awareness training. Throughout the walk, prayers will be offered for all victims who have suffered from war. Aims of the "Pilgrimage of Truth" are: to advocate for a non-violent resolution in all international and domestic conflicts; to call for a total ban on the use, production, trade and sale of land mines, and for further support of demining efforts; and to plant trees along the route as a symbol of renewal and an end to the war on the environment. There will also be exhibits of the effects of land mines displayed in each host temple along the route. The pilgrimage enters Vietnam on May 31 and will pass through the Philippines before arriving in Japan in August.

Update on the Tibetan Peace March

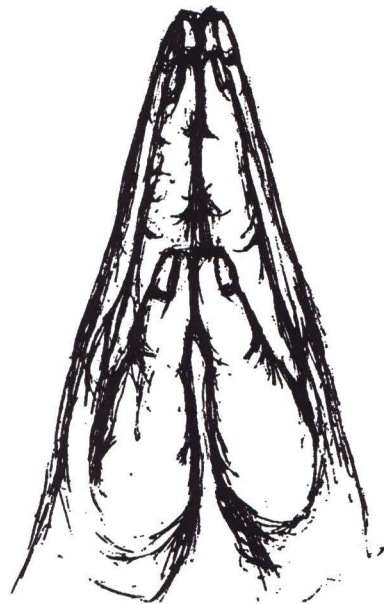
The March 10th peace march that was planned to go from New Delhi to Lhasa changed its route so as not to go inside Tibet, as a result of pressure from the Chinese, Indian and Nepalese governments and the advice of the Dalai Lama. The march was organized by Tibetan exile organizations and was to be a demonstration to mark the anniversary of the 1959 uprising of Tibetan people against Chinese control. The demonstrators were ready to face possible arrest, beating, or death in their quest to free Tibet. Many farmers and students living in Tibet were also ready to rise up in support and posters were put up calling for young

Tibetans to demonstrate and for older Tibetans to hunger strike. But the Dalai Lama, fearing that this would lead to another wave of "merciless repression" inside Tibet, urged the demonstrators to postpone the march. Instead, over 500 Tibetans marched from Dharamsala to New Delhi and supporters demonstrated in India, Nepal, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and throughout Europe and North America.

Court's Decision on Sulak Sivaraksa's Case

In April of 1995 the Thai Criminal Court acquitted social activist Sulak Sivaraksa of *lese majeste* (defamation of the monarchy) charges. This case between the Military Junta known as the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC) and Sulak Sivaraksa came after Sulak's public talk promoting democracy entitled "Six Months of NPKC: The Regression of Democracy," given in 1991 to the students of Thamassat University. Several days after the talk, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, Deputy leader of NPKC, pressed charges of *lese majeste* and defamation of himself. As a result of these charges Sulak left the country and lived in exile. In 1992, following the pro-democracy demonstrations, the NPKC relinquished power and Sulak was then able to return to fight the charges. Sulak's recent acquittal shows that the court understood that his remarks were aimed at raising students' awareness and teaching self-reliance. This landmark verdict was seen by Sulak and his supporters as a "morale booster for people struggling for democracy and the country."

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Sulak is a great friend to BPF. He is on our advisory board and was instrumental in starting INEB (International Network of Engaged Buddhists).

An Officer's Attempt to Uphold Human Rights in Haiti

Captain Lawrence Rockwood, a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism and a counter-intelligence officer with the U.S. Army, has been court-martialed for his efforts to protect human rights in Haiti. Rockwood, after hearing President Clinton's statement to the U.S. public citing human rights abuses as the top priority in authorizing military intervention, felt it was his moral duty to investigate the brutal prison conditions of the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince. Rockwood repeatedly asked his superiors to take action, but found that the U.S. Army was choosing to do nothing and was simply supporting the Haitian Army and police. He visited the prison on his own and saw numerous prisoners wasting away, suffering from tuberculosis, hepatitis and torturous conditions.

Rockwood was arrested and charged with disobeying

orders, leaving his place of duty, and behaving disrespectfully to a superior officer; with a possible sentence of 10 years in prison. It's clear that the military's main objective was not to uphold international laws to protect lives and human rights, but to conceal their own "negligence and dereliction of duty" by court-martialing Rockwood.

Ramsey Clark, Rockwood's lawyer and former U.S. Attorney General, said in his closing statement, "The whole world knows Capt. Rockwood was right about prison conditions at the National Penitentiary. If you pronounce what he has done a violation of law, you're telling the world the U.S. Army has no duty to protect human rights violations."

On May 13th Rockwood was found guilty and his sentence was dismissal (equal to dishonorable discharge). He said: "I am not entirely relieved by the sentence of no confinement. As a soldier, I always considered dismissal the most adverse penalty. But the sentence is not surprising: it is consistent with my command's desire to conceal their inaction as far as inspecting Haitian prisons is concerned." ❖

MAEZUMI HAKU'YU TAIZAN ROSHI—A MEMORIAL

During the recent Western Buddhist Teachers Conference in California, we received news that my old friend and mentor, Maezumi Taizan Roshi, abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, had died suddenly in his sleep, apparently of a heart attack or stroke, while on a trip to Japan. He was 64.

Roshi and I met in 1956, in the dojo of Senzaki Nyogen Sensei, during the last year of Sensei's life. I was teaching at the Happy Valley School in Ojai, newly married to Anne Hopkins. She and I had driven down to Los Angeles for a visit with Senzaki, and there in the background was the young Maezumi, quietly helping the old man with his leadership responsibilities. This was the beginning of our long friendship, which ripened in the 1970s, when he was especially helpful and supportive during my first uncertain years as a new teacher.

Like all Japanese teachers of Zen Buddhism who have settled in the West, Maezumi Roshi was marginal by nature. That is to say, he was not mainstream Japanese; he was quite resistant to convention. His father's surname was Kuroda, which naturally would be his name, too. However, he was one of seven sons and had no sisters, so he took his mother's name, Maezumi, to honor her.

The son of a prominent Soto priest, he was ordained at age 11. As a young man, he studied both Rinzaï and Soto Zen, and when he was 25, he accompanied his father to Los Angeles to assist him with his duties as

bishop of the Soto sect in North America.

Soon, however, he struck out on his own, worked at very ordinary jobs, and started his own Zen group. In 1969, he founded the Zen Center of Los Angeles.

Quite remarkably, Maezumi Roshi was a dharma heir in three Zen traditions: Soto, Rinzaï, and Sanbo Kyodan; having received transmission from his father, Kuroda Bai'an Hajujun, from Osaka Koryu Roshi, and from Yasutani Haku'un-ken Roshi, respectively.

Maezumi leaves a number of strong dharma heirs and teachers in America: Jan Chozen Bays, Bernard Tetsugen Glassman, John Daido Looi, Charlotte Joko Beck, Dennis Gempo Merzel, and others. The first three of these teachers are particularly committed to engaged dharma work in the world. Among the many other things they do, Chozen works with abused children, Tetsugen with homeless people, Daido with prisoners.

Maezumi Roshi was instrumental in ensuring a smooth and meaningful transition of Soto Zen Buddhism to the West, and he recently led a month-long seclusion at Green Gulch Zen Center with Western leaders that was specifically designed to facilitate this process. It was a successful event, and with his many Dharma heirs firmly established, his work reached a point of culmination, though his life was still too brief. Sadly, he leaves a wife, Ekkyo, and three young children. ❖ —Robert Aitken



Maezumi Roshi

Family Practice Column—

ROCK SHADOW

by Patrick McMahon

Buddhism, or any other practice of mindfulness, will take us to an understanding of the equality of life forms as tao, as dharma...How could Buddhist parenting not make this very clear? We, and all sentient beings with us, are currently undergoing a suffering peculiar to our time—total environmental peril.

Sandy Eastoak, "Wider Family, Deeper Sangha"

In attempting to share Buddhism with children, clarity has always eluded me, as I experienced once again early this spring, while leading a small party along a watercourse in California's coast range. It had been an unusually wet winter, the stream was full, and frogs were heard once more in the hills. Thankfully. Last fall I'd learned that amphibians, especially vulnerable to environmental toxins, have been rapidly disappearing around the globe. The croaks of the frogs and the shouts of children seemed a promise.

I was put in mind of my own childhood, rich in praying mantises and lightning bugs, tarantulas, and walking sticks (twig-disguised bugs), horny toads and Gila monsters, wild asparagus and prickly pear cactus. As I called up my old comrades, I realized with a start that it'd been a long time since I'd seen a praying mantis or a firefly. Were these going the way of the amphibians? My reflections darkened another shade: the family of all beings is in danger of dying out; we all feel it, but our young most keenly. Their birthright of prickles and slime, grit and mud, has been traded in for surfaces slick and shallow as a TV screen, their playfellow flattened to the video likes of "Streetfighter" and "Mario Brothers."

With the barest hint of hope, then, I watched the kids cluster around a girl holding a small frog in her cupped hands. But as I heard one say, "Let's take it home," my gladness gave way to panic. I wanted to intervene, to say, "Put her back. Look but don't touch." But wouldn't I just be contributing to the problem, adding distance to the gap between us and all beings? I felt keenly the dilemma: how to encourage the children's drive to explore their wider family at a time in the planet's history when to explore is to trespass?

Wild shrieks called me back from my ruminations. In a slippery flash the captive had regained the water, where she lopsidedly kicked her way to the shelter of an overhanging rock. Apparently in her fall, or in the clasp of small hands, she'd been injured. I was sick: awareness of the dilemma had only paralyzed me. The children were in a tizzy of regret, not just at having lost

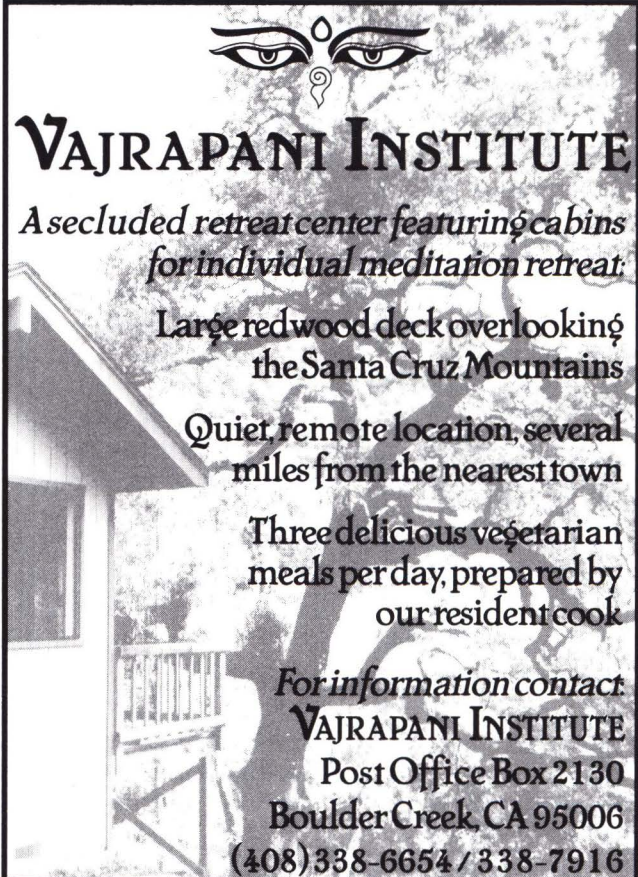
their treasure, but at having hurt it. "Let's just be quiet awhile," I said. "If we're very still, perhaps she'll come out again, and we'll see if she's OK."

We sat by the stream, letting water soothe us. A butterfly fanned wings on a waterslick stone. Whirlpools formed and disappeared. The frog family, recovering from the capture of one of their own, started up its chorus. At length a browngreen nose tentatively poked out from under the stone, and, one leg trailing in the water, our cousin reappeared. Perhaps, I told the children, she would recover. Perhaps, I told myself, she would not.

Returning from our expedition, the enterprise of teaching children the "equality of all life forms as dharma" seemed to me more tangled than ever; regaining our place in "the wider family, the deeper sangha" we walk a zigzag path, wounding as we go, imperiling while we protect. Even as we strive to keep the first Bodhisattva vow of saving all beings, we destroy those very beings. Perhaps we'd do well to simply sit by water awhile. Who knows what might move out from under the rock's shadow? ♦

[Readers may be interested in a book edited by Sandy Eastoak: Dharma Family Treasures: Sharing Mindfulness with Children, North Atlantic Press, reviewed in TW, Winter '95.]

Patrick McMahon teaches at Spirit Rock Meditation Center's Family Practice Days.



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LISTENING TO OUR SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS

by Stephanie Kaza

There's a lot of talk these days about "sustainability"—sustainable environment, sustainable development, sustainable culture. International conferences from the 1992 Rio Summit to the upcoming women's gathering in Beijing are raising issues of consumption and population, pointing the finger with increasing frequency at the industrialized nations. Yes, yes, we've heard the paralyzing litany: the U.S. has only 5% of the world's population, yet we consume 25% of the available energy resources. In two weeks the Pentagon alone uses as much petroleum as the entire U.S. public transport system uses in a year. To support our lifestyles and perpetuate the addictions of militarism we depend on consuming the resources of others.

Now *Turning Wheel* readers may not be extravagant buyers of teak from Thailand or silk from China, but we might consider the sustainability implications of what we consume for breakfast. Coffee, for example, is a major cash crop in Central American countries, grown best in the cool highlands. As espresso shops multiply fiendishly in Oregon and Washington, tropical forests are just as quickly torn down to make room for coffee plantations.

Thousands of cords of wood are burned to make charcoal to fuel the local roasting operations. I have seen the awesome piles of fallen trees in tin shelters, the necessary accomplices to that delicious, refreshing morning brew.

Or take bananas, another tropical agribusiness, this one suited more to the humid lowland forests. Acres upon acres have been cleared by Dole and other fruit companies for planting and processing the easy-to-grow banana. Have you ever wondered why all the bananas in the store seem to look about the same size? It's because U.S. trade regulations set very specific standards (much more stringent than Europe's) to please consumers. Single bananas or bunches which are too short or too long are thrown over the side and discarded. Easily half the harvested bananas go to waste during processing. Sterility from pesticide poisoning is now well documented among plantation workers in Costa Rica.

The politically correct antidote to these rather unsustainable pleasures is to eat locally, organically, and seasonally. This seems almost in the realm of the possible to me, at least in California—vegetable and fruit basket of the West. But I am stumped much more by our complicated consumption of the ozone layer. I've been told by those who know that if you calculate the number of jet miles which can be sustained by the atmosphere without causing serious ozone depletion and then average that out per person on the planet, our allotment would be one airplane trip per person per lifetime!

As an environmental missionary, I have rationalized my jet travel to conferences, board meetings, book readings, celebrations, and guest lectures as necessary to the transition from the Technozoic to the Ecozoic Era. And certainly my frequent flyer miles amount to nothing compared to those of salespeople for the computer industry, or military and arms service personnel, for example. But there is no question: I am way beyond my allotment of one plane trip for this lifetime. On whose back do I ride?

The fundamental lessons of interbeing are not difficult for Buddhists to grasp; we can see the many relationships which are mutually interdependent. What is required now is fierce research into the complexities of each act of consuming. The injustice of many of these acts is all too apparent to our southern neighbors. As Buddhists, we can bring our scrutinizing attention to the economic arena and ask hard questions about who suffers as we consume. ♦

*Don't eat so fast.
When you use your sticks
like scissors
you frighten the rice*

from *One Hundred Butterflies*, by Peter Levitt

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CONSUMERISM IN THE MONASTERY

My first few months here I hoarded boxes of Lindt dark chocolates . . .

by Meg Jeffrey

In December I was sitting on the steps of my cabin going through a stack of mail-order catalogs when a priest and long-time Zen Center resident passed by. "So it's come to that," he said, smiling.

"Christmas presents," I said.

"Oh. Just wait till you're here long enough. After a while people pick up a catalog, look through it, and then put it down and say, 'Ah, that felt good.'"

I've been puzzling over this information ever since, wondering if for me it really will come to that. But come to what?

Several months ago I moved to *Zenshinji*, otherwise known as Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. About 45 students live sequestered in this deep valley at the end of an often impassable 14-mile road in the heart of the Ventana Wilderness near Big Sur.

Even here we can't help but consume. Our Bodhisattva vows obligate us to protect and sustain all life, but as Robert Aitken has put it, "At the same time, we are, all of us, eating each other." While we try to live simply, we're really as dependent as anybody on the global economy and transportation network to meet our basic needs for food and supplies. The Tabasco in the chili last night came from Louisiana, the bananas I sliced for dessert from Ecuador.

Although we're always consuming, the monastic forms help us do so as mindfully as possible. Before every meal we chant, "Innumerable labors brought us this food. We should know how it comes to us." As others have pointed out, we can consume with the desire to consume even more, or we can consume in order to give and serve. Here when we receive food we try to clearly remember our intention: "We eat to support life and to practice the Way of Buddha."

Consumption, as distinct from consumerism, is inevitable. Tassajara does provide a small haven out of the loop of consumerism. When we consume too much we place a strain on the environment and ourselves. Monastic life offers the space to observe our desires and to become aware of the impulse to fill a deep sense of lack with something outside ourselves. Except for the occasional newspaper or magazine and the odd company slogan on a box of produce, we live free from advertising. No TV, no radio, no billboards. Given the pervasiveness of advertising in modern society, I find myself continually grateful for this clear space in which to live and work.

Here needs become clearer, fewer, and more easily met. The communal and rural spirit of Tassajara encourages the basic values of share, borrow, give, or make.

With well-established communal facilities, a maintenance shop stocked with tools and materials, a library, and a "goodwill" closet filled with clothing, books, and other items left by the many students and summer guests who pass through, we can easily meet many personal needs without money. Because we live in such a small, closed community, the usual ploy to gain social approval by collecting money or possessions doesn't work. When we're not wearing our black robes, clothes are simple and functional. Cars, usually a symbol of status, sit unused and unnoticed outside the gate. If we do buy something, we have to find a place to put it, not a small consideration when living in a one-room cabin.

Since I've been here I've been learning to trust that the universe will provide. Two weeks after ordering a new pair of gloves (and enjoying the small thrill of seeing a box with my name on it in the mail room), a nicer pair appeared in goodwill. Things that I thought of buying but didn't, later came to me on loan or as gifts, including a kerosene Aladdin lamp, a very warm wool under-robe, three Buddha images for my altar, numerous pairs of wool socks, a shawl, a rug, and a large collection of long underwear. Yet still I find myself grasping and hoarding. Going through a new pile of clothes on the goodwill shelf I want to take things I know I don't need now, just in case I do later; if I just leave them there someone else is sure to take them.

More than the gathering of possessions, the consumption of food seems to dominate life here. The joke that Tassajara is a center not for Buddhism but for "Foodism" has been going around for a while. With most other sources of comfort denied, we zero in on what is available. The impulse that drives me to buy something I don't really need is the same as the impulse that makes me take an extra piece of gingerbread with powdered sugar and whipped cream on day-off dinner. Both are bids for pleasure, for some distraction from being fully aware of whatever is going on in my body, thoughts, and emotions. My first few months here I hoarded boxes of Lindt dark chocolates, the little squares with the smooth dark filling inside that I had brought with me. After a morning of meditation I came to depend on one or two to get me through the long afternoon of work. As an addict I hid my habit, indulging secretly. I live cleaner now that the chocolates are gone, having made a vow to eat only what is given to me, without requesting anything extra from the outside. It feels less like a giving up than like a letting go, a trusting.

Over-consumption functions, at base, as a distraction and an intoxicant. The monastery provides a space where we can take our seat, minimize distraction, and just sit

upright with ourselves and everything else. That includes sitting with the urge to hold onto something solid. By shoring up my sense of self with tangibles such as my car, my cabin, my Polartec jacket, I myself seem more solid, less subject to change. But, as Suzuki Roshi said, "Renunciation is not giving up the things of this world, but accepting that they go away." As I accept impermanence and renounce my clinging to external things, bit by bit, I pare down until I glimpse the core: self-clinging and the insecurity and fear that surround it. No amount of things labeled "mine" will solidify this self on which I want so desperately to depend.

The first *paramita*, giving, represents the other side of getting and grasping. Along with a basic acceptance of change comes a sense of the fluidity of material things and a new joy in giving things away. Things of which I was particularly fond—a certain silver necklace, a Japanese wall hanging, things that I thought of as particularly defining "me" to others—no longer seem quite so important. As the need to define and present ourselves diminishes, so do possessiveness and acquisitiveness. Eventually we may come to see that the experience of possessiveness itself rests on delusion. Something is mine only if it is not yours. Yet if we can see that there's no me apart from you, as well as no us apart from the phenomena of the world, the idea of ownership begins to lose its meaning. Fundamentally there can be no acquisitiveness, for nothing is lacking.

As for the practical matter of how a monk should relate to possessions, Eihei Dogen Zenji, the 13th-century founder of Soto Zen in Japan, speaks clearly on the matter: "Students of the Way should be thoroughly poor." He advises, "Do not store up even what you have been given, nor run around searching for things." He also says, "Since monks do not possess any other property except for three robes and one bowl, and never worry about where to live, nor are greedy for food and clothing, they will obtain benefit as long as they devote themselves to learning the Way according to their capacity. This is because being poor is being intimate with the Way."

None of the monks here possess only three robes and one bowl. While some people at Zen Center do have limited resources and depend on the small monthly stipend offered, many others have savings as a supplement. Some financial self-sufficiency is encouraged and even expected. Suzuki Roshi once said American Zen students were not quite laypeople and not quite monks. Often we seem to be laypeople experimenting with being monks, American consumers set down temporarily in the relative austerity of a monastery. Unlike traditional Theravadin monks, we take no vows prohibiting the handling of money and we interact freely with the world of commerce. The great majority of students come to Tassajara only for a few months or at most a

few years, leaving possessions and bank accounts intact and the road back to the marketplace well-paved.

Tassajara monks aren't unique in their ties to the world, however. The question of consumerism and personal possessions in the monastery brings up the question of what modern monasticism itself is and should be. Much has been said about the growing laicization of Buddhist practice as it takes root in the West. With less emphasis on perfection through ascetic isolation and more on living a fully engaged and committed life in the world—an aspiration which often includes having a family—it doesn't make sense to give up all possessions and financial security. In the model that seems to be emerging, the monastery functions as a temporary training center, a place in which to clarify and renew one's faith and intention before returning once again to work in the world.

Living with this model forces us to go down to the roots of our aspiration. Renunciation remains fundamental, but

not necessarily renunciation in the literal sense. When I queried one teacher about my interest in literature he said simply, "You have to give it up." Then he added, "You have to give up golf, too, but you can still play golf." So we have to give up our bank accounts and family and cars and chocolate, but as long as we've truly renounced all that we can still have it.

That, at least, is the idea. It's a good idea, but it can be used as a convenient excuse by those of us who aren't ready to give up everything and would really like to have it all. The practice of literally renouncing all possessions and family obligations is ancient and powerful; the long-term strength of Buddhism in the West—without the foundation of communities of monks committed to such a life—remains to be seen.

So, it's spring now, and a few colorful catalogs are tucked between the books on my shelf. Although I haven't ordered anything from them, I have to admit that sometimes I'm relieved by the knowledge that I could. Flipping through the pages, I lapse comfortably back into the hope that things can make me happy. My thoughts drift to leaving Tassajara, getting going on my career, making some money (that's a good clear goal), getting a nice apartment (my parents would be happy), taking a vacation. I consider the things that tempt me today: a set of Monet note cards from the Metropolitan shop, a new down comforter from Land's End, a small meditation bell from Dharma Craft.

Yet even if I do pull out the credit card, make the phone call, and a box arrives with my name on it, I know I still have to go sit on that black cushion in a few hours. And whatever's in the box won't help me there. ❖

Meg Jeffrey has been practicing at Tassajara while on a year's leave of absence from the University of Texas. She plans to return there in the fall to finish a master's degree in American literature.

*Renunciation is not
giving up the things of
this world, but accepting
that they go away.*

AN UNLIKELY TEACHER

by Charlotte Shoemaker

I discovered Buddhism and I became chronically ill at the same time. Both turned out to be teachers for me but, of course, I didn't know that then. I didn't even realize I was as sick as I was; I thought I just had a flu that kept recurring and that I was having a bad winter as a result.

I was actually delighted two years later when I discovered why I had felt so lousy for so long. The illness I had, commonly called Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, or Environmental Illness, sounded to me like a non-contagious, non-fatal form of AIDS. I was so pleased to have left my limbo of mysterious pain, isolation and exhaustion that I didn't care what the diagnosis was—at last I had found a place from which to begin healing.

The processes responsible for my body's detoxification had become overwhelmed and could no longer function effectively, causing systemic poisoning and malfunction. Years of exposure to the plethora of synthetic chemicals which permeate our culture had accumulated and created this overload. I now use the term Chemical Injury, which feels more accurate. My problem is not sensitivity per se, but that my body has been too damaged by its cumulative exposure to these chemicals to tolerate any of them any longer. Our environment itself is not toxic, the synthetic chemicals in it are. My continued ill health is a micro expression of our planet's injury and resulting sickness. There is no "cure" for this illness. In order to function I must nurture my health as much as possible and avoid anything that stresses my weakened system; the same is true for our environment.

I began to learn about synthetic chemicals. This first phase of my education led to a much greater knowledge about the consumer products that had always been a routine part of life. I thought, at first, I would have an easy time avoiding chemicals because I wasn't the "average American consumer." I already shopped in second-hand stores, preferred natural fabrics and ate healthy food. But as I began to read packaged food labels, I could see that much of what I thought was healthy wasn't. (If I couldn't pronounce the name of an ingredient, I decided not to ingest or breathe it.)

As I read books and asked questions, I discovered that some products, such as perfume and the fragrances in laundry products and personal care products, are almost totally made from synthetic petroleum compounds such as benzene derivatives and aldehydes—known to be toxic and sensitizers.) Other products, such as cotton clothing, start with a natural material which is then treated with chemicals. Cotton is one of the most heavily pesticided crops. Frequently it is treated with formaldehyde, a car-

cinogen, and other chemicals, to give it a "nice finish," and to prevent wrinkles and stains. Older products are often made with healthier materials and, in any case, they have had a chance to outgas much of their chemical content. I treasured my old mended clothes; like Japanese pottery, which increases in value if someone takes the trouble to repair its breaks with care, they had a history and, even more important, they were safe. But I could no longer go to my beloved second-hand stores, because their merchandise is often sprayed with pesticides, or dry cleaned to make it "good as new."

I didn't want to know about all this toxicity. I resented the fact that I couldn't continue to live as I had always done, like my friends. I felt overwhelmed by all the changes I needed to make. But as I began to make them, gradually, my efforts were rewarded with improved health. I accepted that I needed to go to the trouble of being mindful of everything I ate or used. Making careful choices became a way of life.

I was surprised to discover that some chemicals which didn't affect me in any obvious way were also a problem. The combustion by-products from the gas space heater in my loft were a constant in my life, so my system adapted to them without any acute symptoms, but my body ached and I was exhausted all the time. My "bad winters" turned out to be caused by my brand new, state-of-the-art heating system rather than the flu. This was why I felt better in the summer. When I invested in electric heat, my body recovered from the constant debility of this particular chronic poisoning, and my general health improved considerably.

But my body had passed the point of no return; it could no longer tolerate even tiny amounts of synthetic chemicals. I experienced severe headaches when exposed, even briefly, to the chemicals I found everywhere. I had to avoid gas heaters in my friends' homes, disinfectant in most public bathrooms, or any cigarette smoke and the residue it leaves in furnishings, clothing and even library books. New books, magazines and newspapers were often a problem, due to the petrochemical extenders and lacquers in their inks (including many soy inks). I could function now, but only if I stayed within a chemically clean environment.

I experience in a very practical way just how interconnected we all are. When I smell the residue of perfumed laundry products emanating from someone's clothes, those petrochemical molecules are actually inside my nose. They are entering my lungs, and I feel the particular headache in my left eye which signals liver stress. I cannot delude myself into thinking I am separate.

Yet for years I felt extraordinarily alone because so few people even acknowledged the existence of this ill-

ness. The major media and the medical profession still, for the most part, deny its existence. (The former are owned by big business and the latter is intertwined with the drug companies which are, after all, in the chemical business.) This denial is slowly beginning to change as more and more people become sick.

I had created a physically healthy home for myself but I couldn't control my neighbors, or any of the places where I needed to go. The schools where I taught, the retreat centers where I was nurtured, and the theaters and restaurants where I enjoyed myself—all vitally important to my life in community—had become too toxic for me. I gave up a job because my body couldn't tolerate the building's recent renovations. I felt enormous fear about how I would continue to support myself when the addition of a new carpet or a perfumed co-worker could make me unable to function. I left one retreat the day after it began, feeling bereft, because the rugs in the meditation hall had just been dry cleaned and the teacher thought that removing them would be "too much trouble." At great financial sacrifice, I gave up an apartment because I wasn't able to seal the floors against fumes from the pesticide that was applied monthly in the grocery store below. I stopped going to public performances when they became more about avoiding perfume than they were about music or theater.

I have habitually defended myself from fear by withdrawing, but I had reached the point where avoiding all risk would leave me unbearably isolated. So I began to speak out. At first I was filled with righteous anger and I blamed others, but I didn't like the instant karma of the responses I got: my anger came back to me. I began my current journey of learning to connect with compassion when I feel separate, angry and afraid.

I had already learned in meditation retreats that when my mind entertained even the most trivial judgmental thoughts—"Doesn't he realize just how dumb those shorts look?"—I felt lonely and wanted to leave the retreat. Those thoughts didn't separate me just from the person I was criticizing but also from myself and from all other people; they separated me from the flow of life.

When I could stay in my body and in the moment during a physically (or emotionally) toxic exposure, I could see the same limiting process. Sometimes I could let the judgment go in order to stay with what I was actually experiencing, which was generally not as painful as my angry reactions. Paying attention has often given me the space to experience my feelings and then to choose my actions. Unexpected solutions grow out of this openness.

I have come to see that whenever I blame, I inadvertently place myself in the role of a victim who is injured and excluded. Once I perceive myself to be "one down," I can very easily feel justified in "getting even" by using judgment and anger to become "one up." Then I close my heart which compounds my pain and limits my life.

The see-saw of dualism that results from blame limits my functioning as much as toxic chemicals do.

When I had a severe relapse seven years ago, I felt totally discouraged. I had been ill for seven years and had been meditating for that long. I had worked so hard physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I had become stronger as a result. I expected to continue in this direction, but I couldn't.

I found myself writing to a friend that my illness had become my teacher, an unrelenting one, giving me constant opportunities to learn acceptance. At first I thought I was just adopting a more bearable way to view my ill health than as the curse I really felt it to be, but what was important was that I was finally listening inside for direction rather than seeking it from an outside "authority." Even though I had found insight from looking within, on some level I was still expecting someone else to give me answers and approval. There were no methods for how I could learn from this constant presence in my life—all I could do was listen. Very gradually I grew to trust myself. In my physically weakened and emotionally devastated state I could no longer tolerate the harsh rules with which I had "kept myself in line" all my life. I began to learn gentleness and openness. That has led to honoring people, situations and processes which increase my limited energy and to letting go of the ones which diminish it. I have become my own friend.

The people who have been the most supportive of my situation are the ones who have been flexible. These are the people who did not become defensive when I could not remain in their homes and who met with me on the porch instead. These are the people who were willing to do something differently, like my acupuncturist, who didn't let his professional propriety prevent him from giving me treatments in the public hall of his building for two months while the new paint in his office outgassed. These are the organizations that asked their members to refrain from wearing scented products to their meetings in order to make them accessible to more people.

Most painful has been the feeling that there was no place for me. When the participants in a workshop went to some trouble to change rooms in order to continue to include me, I felt I had experienced compassion; there was, literally, room for me. Obviously, we learn more deeply and rapidly within a supportive environment than when we feel isolated, but I have found that people often forget this.

I did not involve myself with the Spirit Rock community because I'd learned that the existing meditation hall is toxic, so I protected my body and my feelings by staying away. Last fall I was delighted to participate in a possible solution. A group of chemically injured people and a consultant on healthy building materials were invited to offer suggestions about how these buildings can be designed, built, furnished and maintained so as to be ecologically sound and accessible to chemically

injured people. This means they will have less impact on the land and will be healthy for everyone who uses them. So few people consider these issues when building that this is a unique and very positive step. In order to be effective, this level of awareness will be necessary in each of the thousands of decisions the building process entails. I hope that financial limitations will not result in the Spirit Rock community making decisions—all too common in our society—to save money now at the expense of future planetary and individual health.

I am appreciative when people accommodate me out of compassion. Better yet is when they make changes because they realize that the chemicals which are toxic for me must also be harmful to them and to Gaia. And the spread of this awareness may ultimately lead us all to create a healthier culture.

Bhopal and Love Canal are not isolated tragic incidents. They occur on a less “newsworthy” scale every day throughout the industrialized world. They are the inevitable result of the unquestioned use of synthetic chemicals either to “improve” or to replace natural materials we have used throughout human history. Many of the products we apply to our bodies and from which we build our homes could be legally disposed of only in a toxic waste dump. Most of the synthetic petrochemicals which are now used in nearly every industry and consumer product have only existed for the last fifty years. Many were originally developed as a result of chemical warfare research.)

Approximately 70,000 synthetic chemicals are in use worldwide and nearly 1000 new ones are added each year. Little is known about the health effects of 80% of the 48,000 chemicals listed by the EPA, and only 500 of them have been tested for their long-term health effects. We know from the few tests evaluating the synergistic effects of chemicals that their toxicity can increase in combination, but since they are generally tested in isolation, we don't know their effect in the real world. Nor have we tested synthetic chemicals for eco-toxicity. We are seeing all sorts of negative data, however: epidemics of cancer and other auto-immune diseases, cross-species genetic and reproductive abnormalities, acid rain, the destruction of the ozone layer, etc. The short-term profits and the apparent convenience of this modern way of life are so seductive that we deny the possible links between this negative data and synthetic chemicals.

As part of a pro-business agenda, the U.S. House of Representatives has just passed a bill (HR 9) which completely guts our existing environmental laws by making them unenforceable in various ways including prohibitive costs and/or lack of funding. It also contains several provisions which will enable businesses that damage environmental and individual health to avoid both regulatory constraints and legal responsibility. It is due to be voted on by the Senate (as S 343) in June, at which point it could supersede our existing protections

and prevent the creation of any new ones, unless it is vetoed by President Clinton.

I am terrified by our culture's continued denial of these problems. For many years I felt overwhelmed by my everyday experience of the toxicity of the synthetic chemicals in our environment. Yet from my isolation I have found ways to connect. Before I began to meditate, I tried to avoid pain by running away. I am still amazed to discover that when I sit with pain, anger or fear, the feeling shifts, and I learn. I only become stuck in pain when I resist it. I am learning to soften, to open and listen, to let my actions grow from the space that emerges. I am learning to trust the moment to guide me. ❖

The statistics and technical information in this article came from several sources: *Nontoxic, Natural & Earthwise* by Debra Lynn Dadd; *Toxics A to Z* by John Harte, Cheryl Holdren, Richard Schneider, Christine Shirley; *The Healthy Home* by Linda Mason Hunter; and *Neurotoxins: At Home and the Workplace*, a report by the Committee on Science and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, Sept. 16, 1986. Report 99-827. For further information on specific products and sources of healthy ones, see any of the books by Debra Lynn Dadd (also called Debra Dadd-Redalia).

Charlotte Shoemaker speaks out on behalf of environmental health, makes sculpture out of healthy materials, and gardens organically.

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PRISON GARDENS & EDIBLE SCHOOLYARDS

by Alice Waters

Alice Waters was instrumental in starting the “edible schoolyard” project at King Junior High School, an idea she describes in the following article. At BPF, we feel a particular connection to the project, because our office is on the grounds of the school, in what was once a “portable classroom.” Outside our window is a vacant lot belonging to the school. Kids have built a clay oven heated by wood, and the other day, we saw a group of junior high students baking pizza in it.

The following article is based on a talk Alice Waters gave at a benefit to kick off the edible schoolyard project.—Ed.

The *New York Times* Sunday magazine ran an article called “America’s Best New Buildings” a few weeks ago. Next to pictures of brand-new, gleaming institutional facilities were contrasting pictures of public schoolrooms. Beside a spacious, brightly lit weight room was a crumbling public school gym. A clean, well-stocked law library was juxtaposed with a decaying school library that had a leaky roof and peeling ceiling paint hanging down in strips above damaged, empty bookshelves.

The captions informed us that the new buildings were federal and state prisons. The irony may have been heavy-handed, but the question remains: How can we expect children to even *want* to learn in this kind of run-down environment?

For me, the most neglected schoolroom of all is the lunchroom. In many schools, a bank of vending machines is the main attraction, where kids fill up on Cokes and snack foods. If there is a cafeteria, it usually fails to meet the minimum guidelines for nutrition developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And worst of all, in most schools mealtime is squeezed into half an hour; in many, kids take less than ten minutes to stuff themselves with fast food or a processed hot lunch.

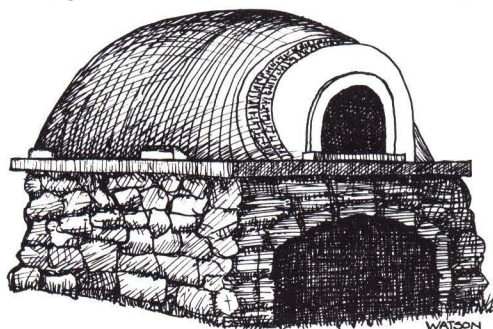
Many parents seem to have given up on the elementary education of their children’s palates. Over and over again, I hear people say, “My kids won’t eat anything except x, y, or z,” or, “All my child wants to eat is a peanut butter and jelly sandwich every day.” So that’s what they give them. The kids get their familiar, salty and sugary foods. Then they never outgrow these addictions, because their palates are dulled. When they taste foods that are outside the range of the salty and sugary things they’re used to, these foods taste very strange to them. When these kids grow up, they never learn to be

curious about good food. Even our President has this unhealthy relationship to what he eats. Here’s what he said about the White House chef appointment: “I’m afraid I’m a traditional and limited male. It’s not my deal. I’m an indiscriminate eater. Not that I don’t enjoy fine food. But I don’t know anything about it.” (On the other hand, we recently had the President as a guest at Chez Panisse, the restaurant I own in Berkeley. The blackberry ice cream attracted his attention first, but when I offered him a plain, fresh, Gravenstein apple, I watched him eat it right to the core!)

We teach our children that eating quickly is something of value. That no mess, no fuss, no preparation time—these are the good things. But we’re missing the point. One of the few truly worthwhile pleasures in life is not getting *away* from work, but doing work that means something. Tomatoes I grow myself in my backyard have a different value than the ones from the supermarket. They taste better. They mean something to me and I pass on that enthusiasm at the table so they mean something more to my guests. The pride you feel from doing something like that is exactly the kind of self-esteem children need to feel.

How can we teach this kind of pride to our children? Just changing the food on the plate won’t work. Just giving them nutritionally-sufficient meals, with plenty of vegetables, won’t work. If our only goal is improved nutrition, and we start to give kids such meals at schools, they may not eat them. But if we start to educate them early, if we bring all their senses into play, teach them to name and discriminate among flavors; if we teach our children at school, from an early age, how to garden; and if they are able to eat what they have grown—this could transform the moral education of our children!

About five years ago, a woman named Cathrine Sneed called me up at the restaurant. Would we be interested in organically grown produce from a local garden, she wanted to know. Of course we said yes, and that’s how we were introduced to the Garden Project at the San Francisco County Jail. The inmates in this program—Cathrine calls them her “students”—learn organic gardening at the jail, and the fruit and vegetables they grow are taken to the homeless centers in San Francisco. The first time I went to the garden, I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the produce and the dedication of the students. I met a 22-year-old guy who had been in and out of jail for seven years, who said: “I don’t know if I should really be talking about



Clay oven at King Junior High School

this garden; this is only my first day here. But so far, this is the best day of my life.”

When prisoners who had been trained in the horticultural program at the jail started to be released, many of them told Cathrine they wanted to go back to jail, just so they could keep on gardening! This really compelled her to find a garden for them on the outside. She took over a vacant lot in South San Francisco about four years ago, and an urban garden was started. Where once there were piles of rubble and garbage, now there are flower beds and row on row of vegetables, with brick paths between them. For lunch, they cover a table with checkered tablecloths, big bowls of lettuce, perfectly picked radishes, and bouquets of fresh-cut flowers.

After lunch one day, the students spoke to me about what the garden had meant to them. Cathrine announced that she might run out of funding, but all the gardeners said they would keep coming and working anyway. They had found something they needed and wanted to do.

The Garden Project incorporates everything that is important about food: digging in the ground, planting, husbanding, harvesting, cooking, preserving, putting it all on the table, serving it to your friends and family, and sharing it with them. There’s a sense of completion missing from programs that teach just one aspect of how to garden, or how to cook. The only way it makes sense is when you put it all together. And it must be done with beauty, with honesty and integrity. When you are feeding someone else, you should be thinking about their nourishment, not about manipulating them or selling them something. Food is not a commodity, it’s the most important thing we can give each other. Feeding one another is the most basic, fundamental part of healthy and moral living. Offering people things that help them grow, physically and spiritually—that’s what parents and teachers should be offering our children.

I often drive by Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High, a school in my neighborhood with extensive grounds and buildings that look very neglected. I began to wonder what it might look like if there were a garden project at the school...the school grounds covered by edible landscaping—orchards, grape arbors to sit under, groves of oranges and lemons, herb and vegetable gardens, all producing food that could be used at the school.

I learned that the school has a large, abandoned kitchen and cafeteria that has been replaced by concession stands where they serve reheated burgers and fast-food snacks. I began to think: *Let’s turn that kitchen into a bakery.* A good loaf of bread is something irresistible to everyone: the way it smells, what it feels like to handle the dough. You could start teaching about bread from different cultural angles. Students could

bake tortillas on the *comal* and loaves of sourdough bread in the brick oven, learn to make pita bread and Indian pappadums.

Imagine the rewards of such a program! Children would not only learn how to bake, they’d get a valuable lesson in cultural diversity. They’d learn mutual respect from sharing meals, self-respect from learning how to prepare them; and they would learn to respect the planet by growing food in an ecologically sound way. Most importantly, they would learn responsibility to each other if they actually had to help feed each other. School would be more digestible in every way.

Why should we settle for less in the education and nourishment of our children? ♦

Alice Waters is the owner of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, a restaurant renowned for its creative use of fresh, whole foods.

Guidelines for Conscious Eating

Use eating to educate your senses. If you settle for food that’s processed, wrapped, and refrigerated, you’re depriving yourself of the wealth of information that comes from sensual stimulation. Eating food is the best way to open up these pathways; it’s something you do every day. So pay attention to what you’re eating. Choose food that is aromatic, with rich colors and varied flavors; your senses will be stimulated in ways that enhance your consciousness—and this will improve your ability to communicate, not just about food, but about everything.

If you choose to eat mass-produced fast food, you are supporting a network of supply and demand that is destroying local communities and traditional ways of life all over the world—a system that replaces self-sufficiency with dependence. And you are supporting a method of agriculture that is ecologically unsound—that depletes the soil and leaves harmful chemical residues in our food.

But if you eat fresh food in season—and only in season—food that is locally grown by farmers who take care of the earth, you are contributing to the health and stability of local agriculture and communities. When I buy food from farmers’ markets, the food is alive, and it is irresistible. If we demand fresh, nourishing food, we help erase the stigma of elitism that is attached to good food in this country. All Americans, not just the rich, are entitled to wholesome, honest food. —A.W.

FINDING SOFTNESS

While asking hard questions

by Michelle Rae Walker

I went to New York City last week for a trade show. I go there several times a year. I do most of the buying for my clothing boutique at these trade shows.

The first thing I'm aware of as I enter the show is STUFF. Tons of stuff. The show is as it always is—a wholesale market. Stones, gems, strands of pearls, strands of plastic beads of every color, tens of thousands of leather cords with little charms on them. New fashions, new colors, new shapes, new styles. There are booths glistening with sequin-beaded gowns, booths with the rainbow colors of Guatemalan importers, Indian importers, Chinese importers, Indonesian importers, Nepalese, Thai, Moroccan, Kenyan, and Lithuanian importers of garments for Westerners.

Where is all this stuff coming from and where is it going? Do we need any new stuff at all?

There is a fever at the show—trading fever—buying and selling, the faster the better. There's not enough time to be warm and friendly; it's not the objective, anyway. The sellers say the same three lines about their products thousands of times each day, like machines.

I'm walking around in a daze. I hear people saying there's nothing really *new* at the show, nothing to satisfy the ever-insatiable appetite.

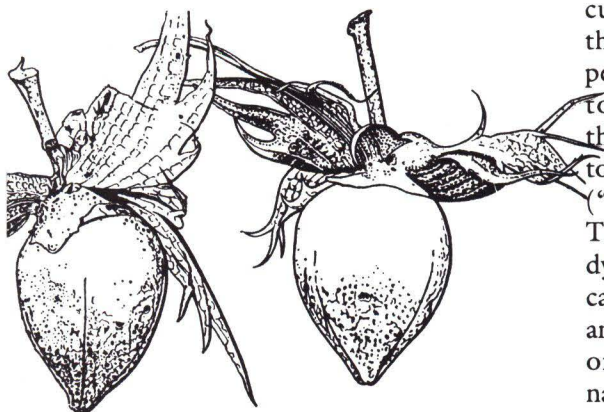
In my own business I employ several women, and we all work together towards a deeper understanding of community, and of how to communicate our most intimate selves in the work realm. My intention is to create a place of beauty where people—both customers and employees—can come and nourish themselves and find products that express both functionality and spirit. But walking around the trade show I wonder if this is enough, given the powerful reality of consumerism.

Exactly what do we need, anyway? How much non-essential consumption happens at the peril of ourselves and our larger body, the earth? And who can be the judge of what is essential and what is not?

I used to think the products I sold in my shop were relatively benign. I compared myself favorably to friends in the electronics industry, where there are blatant issues like the toxicity of the manufacturing process,

military contracts, exploitation of cheap labor in Third World countries, and few safety regulations. In my own business I have tried to educate myself about the working conditions of those who make the beautiful things I sell in my shop, and I try to get trade information from the companies I do business with. I make an effort to support socially responsible businesses.

But I recently found out that cotton is one of the most heavily sprayed crops in the world—with herbicides, pesticides and defoliants. I learned that while cotton amounts to only 3% of the world's crops, its cultivation consumes 26% of the world's total tonnage of pesticides. And once the cotton is harvested, it goes through chemical processing to achieve the desired texture ("stone-washed" for example). Then it is bleached. Then it is dyed with highly toxic chemicals to produce brilliant colors and prints. I used to be proud of the fact that I carry only natural fibers in my store, but now I see that a lot of toxic elements go into the creation



Cotton Bolls (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1932)

of "natural" fibers. I wonder now about all the purple in my closet.

A woman selling a line of organic cotton clothing tells me that the toxic waste from common garment dyeing in the U.S. is one of the major contributors to groundwater contamination in 35 states.

I was thrilled when I discovered organic cotton garment manufacturers. They use organic dyes, or "low-impact" dyes, which are still somewhat toxic but not nearly as bad as ordinary dyes. Such garments are presently in limited supply, and expensive, but I believe the prices will come down in time. I now support these companies as much as possible.

One of these companies put out a superb media kit about organic cotton. I was disappointed to discover that the company is owned by a huge corporation in the fashion industry, but perhaps the market must be opened by companies with a lot of resources, because of the expense of moving into a new market area.

On isle 35 I talk to a clothing manufacturer from India. He tells me that because there are no firm regulations in India, it's common practice for garment makers to pour their toxic waste right into the public sewer system, a waterway which some people use to wash in

or even to drink from. This man has been developing organic dyes for the past seven years, and has recently been able to bring a few lines to market that are organically dyed. He's interested in developing production processes that are not only organic but sustainable, that give back to the earth as much as they take away.

We are grossly ignorant as consumers. Things come from stores; that is often all we know. Let's take a pair of running shoes. Where were they made? Where does their packaging come from? How much non-renewable energy is used in their production and transportation? What is the toxicity inherent in their production, the toxicity left behind? What is their life span? Where will they go when I'm done with them? How are the people treated who contributed to the production and delivery? These are questions we could ask about everything we buy.

Not so long ago, people knew where their food and clothing came from: local vegetables, local artisan, local cow. Economies were regional. But now we have a highly complex world market. I eat food that comes from halfway around the world, and it's hard to find the answers to all those questions.

I felt a lot of pain at this show. I felt the pain of our earth being stripped to satisfy our greed. And I added pain to that pain. I made myself wrong for taking part in the system, for desiring material objects, for consuming.

After a few days of being unrelentingly judgmental of myself, I realized this approach was not entirely useful. These questions are much larger than I am, and to expect myself not only to have all the answers but to be implementing them already is to do violence to myself. Patience is necessary in order to investigate right living.

I have much to be grateful for in my life. I have a warm cozy bed to climb into every night, delicious whole foods to eat every day, loving relationships, hot running water, heat in the winter, full use of my body, time in nature, time with friends and teachers. I can feel either guilt or gratitude. I shut myself down with guilt; I open up to spirit with gratitude. The choice is mine. Meanwhile I keep asking the questions. ❖

Michelle Rae Walker lives and works in Belfast, Maine, where she practices applying her Vipassana training and the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh to her business and everyday life.

Where Once I Took Pleasure

by Rory Bled

There is space in my closet now—light between each jacket and blouse, shirt and slacks. They hang loosely, wrinkle-free, fewer than last week, many fewer than last year.

I'm not in the habit of making New Year's resolutions, so when I began 1995 with a strong desire to unburden myself of unnecessary possessions, I thought of it not as a resolution but as an intention. The feeling came to me as I woke up, in a kind of small epiphany: *My closet is too full.*

I have taken to separating my clothes into three groups—those I must keep to be presentable and warm, those I will give away, and those I will sell, the money invested in my future. But I don't really sell clothes for the money; I sell them because I don't need them anymore. I need the space, the emptiness.

Once I took pleasure in a closet crammed with clothes, all hung on padded hangers, categorized by formality and by color. I had an entire closet built just for my wardrobe—high bars for my coats and evening clothes, lower ones for my skirts and pants, lower still for my jackets and blouses. I had low shelves for my shoes, higher for my purses, higher still for my boots. And I filled them with enthusiasm, folding silk scarves into specially made drawers, hanging belts on a rack made just to accommodate the wide ones that showed off my waist. These clothes, like so much that I collected, told me I was successful. I viewed them with pride.

Now I spend my time emptying those shelves, bars, and drawers, relieved of the burden of needing so many things. I still dress well, but it is with more simplicity and less frivolity. And I am more at ease.

It has taken me thirty years to understand that I don't need to accumulate. This understanding has come from seeing waste around me, from noticing that the wisest people I know may be complicated on the inside, but they are more often than not simple on the outside. I rarely remember what they are wearing, because I don't need to. I remember instead how they have made me think.

This year, I have told my friends, I don't want gifts for my birthday. I know I'd receive wonderful presents, as my friends are thoughtful, creative, and generous. But I don't want any more belongings to worry about. Instead, I'm considering giving each friend something of mine when I celebrate. Or maybe I'll ask them to bring something of theirs to my party that they can give away along with me. Because freedom from wanting is one of the greatest gifts I can imagine. The *Tao Teh Ching* says, "The Sage does not take to hoarding. The more he lives for others, the fuller is his life. The more he gives, the more he abounds." I am in no way a sage, but I'm learning that everything I can give away makes me that much richer and wiser. ❖

Rory Bled is a teacher and writer who lives in Berkeley, California with her family.

BOODOG

Cooking in the Skin

by Denise Lassaw

In 1993, three Mongolians walked from Ulaan Baatar to the States to honor Bruce Lee, who is buried in Seattle, and whose martial arts style they follow. I met them in Anchorage and helped organize their journey south. On their return trip they stayed with me in Alaska for a month over New Year's in 1994. They said, "Come and visit," and I did.

During the month of August, 1994, I traveled with my friends in northeastern Mongolia and with the Mongolian Women's Federation on a trip to the south Gobi, (to give money to poor women to buy sheep), and I also spent many days exploring the city of Ulaan Baatar. This is the story of an overnight berry-picking trip near the Siberian border.

The last light of a speckled August day was mirrored in the shallow river. I wandered downstream from the marmot skinning feeling very unhappy and chanting *Om Tare Tu Tare*, the Tibetan Buddhist chant to Dolma (Tara), the Goddess of Compassion. I wanted to protest that the marmot had died a cruel death. I wanted to refuse to eat him, to make my friends feel sorry for his suffering, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't speak Mongolian, and my translator wouldn't have understood my views. Also, I was a guest in their country, and they were making a generous effort to include me in their everyday life. Isn't that what I had asked Dendev to show me? So here I was—with flickers of blue sky between dark rain clouds, the happy voices of friends floating through the air, and the grassy sweet smell of the sheep-dung fire. I squatted by the smooth water pretending to study the granite rocks.

The Kerulen, the Onon, and the Tula Rivers flow into the steppes of the Hentii Mountains (Tov Aimag) of northeastern Mongolia. The mountains are rolling patterns of dark fir trees and light green valleys. Sweet and tangy-smelling wild flowers—purple thistle, wild pink rose, fireweed, Siberian blue iris, wild geranium, and eidelweiss—mix with the prairie grasses. In lapis-colored lakes white swans and blue cranes dance, while fat green and brown Mongolian ducks waddle in the marshes, and large rainbow trout flash their tails in the three rivers. The steppe lands are dotted with black and white sheep and goats, and the hillsides flower with stocky bay and spotted horses. In a boxed-in valley I saw the tracks of brown bears, moose and roebuck.

There are no paved roads here, only gravelly or muddy tracks and the vast expanse of grasslands, where Mongolians travel by horse or car, but never on the same path twice. Yesterday on the storm-flooded steppe we spent three hours working to dig the jeep out of deep sticky mud. Traveling to the secret black currant patch, our jeep was covered in tall grass and large purple thistles which, beheaded by the bumper, came flying back into the windshield like a blue-purple rain of flowers.

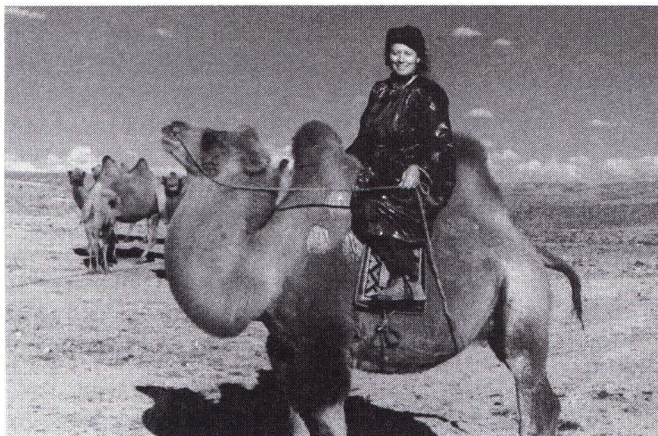
In these magnificent gardens Genghis Khan grew strong on the bounty of the rich earth. His descendants, the people I was traveling with, live in portable round *ger* (yurts) moving their homes along the rivers and valleys for fresh grass for their animals. In the winter they live in the village of Mongonmer't, where the children go to school.

We were returning to Mongonmer't from our camping place a day's travel deep in the hills. Ten people fit snugly in our old Russian army jeep, loaded with three aluminum



Two hours south of Ulaan Baatar on the "international highway" to China, where we were stuck for five hours

milk cans full of sour berries, a large worn army tent, blankets, sleeping bags, hip boots, cooking pots, dried sheep meat, fat and flour, dried cheese, green tea, extra clothes, tools and five gallons (maybe only two by now) of *airag*, fermented mare's milk. As a guest I had the honor of one of the front seats, shared only with Rinchen Dorje's slim young daughter. The driver, a huge man wearing a light brown *del* (traditional Mongolian costume, like a Tibetan robe) with an orange sash, shared the other front seat with a young man in a brown suit, our hunter. I nicknamed the driver Yamataka (the wrathful bull-headed form of Manjusri) because of his reckless spirit and the bull-headed Yamataka flag hanging from the jeep's mirror. In the small back seat sat my friend Dende, who had walked from Mongolia to Alaska in '93; Rinchen Dorje, the tall mayor of Mongonmer't; Yamataka's hard-working wife and the mother of six children; a middle-aged school teacher in a flower-print *del*; and a blue-jeaned woman and her ten-year-old son, visiting from another community.



The author with camel herders in South Gobi

On the way out to the secret berry patch, my friends had been dreaming of marmot meat. Actually, ever since Dende and I boarded the train for the four-hour trip from Ulaan Baatar to Baguur, he had talked about eating marmots. For each marmot we saw from the train window Dende gave a little sigh of longing.

Yamataka and Mayor Dorje had met us at the train and we had driven 60 km through the starry night to Mongonmer't, stopping only to drink vodka and find the river fordings. After a few days in the village, we traveled 80 km from Mongonmer't into the mountains, passing marmot dens on every rocky rise. But the hunter had no luck on the trip into the mountains, even missing roebuck twice, and now, on the way home, there was a collective desire not to return without tasting marmot.

All along our route, on every hill, dozens of marmots sat sentinel by their dens, facing the wide view but with one wary eye on the sky. Everyone's thoughts were concentrated on marmots, but our hunter had so far failed to shoot one, and his hunting skills were being loudly dissected by the women in the back seat. I knew this because Dende, who sat on Rinchen Dorje's lap, and for lack of space leaned over into the front seat, would translate the best parts in my ear. He was my only link into the richly toned language, but his English vocabulary was not very large, so he sometimes used French, which I am not fluent in. I was learning Mongolian

words and cultural body language as fast as I could.

These golden-brown thick-furred marmot fellows were shiny and fat, and looked friendly to me. I thought of them as the guardians of the steppes. They were slightly larger than my cat Jigme, and I would have liked to hold one, except they were wild and the Mongolian government warned that they carried the black plague. They made hill villages with burrows no more than twelve feet apart. Wherever I saw marmots the sky was rich with eagles.

We were traveling at a snail's crawl from marmot hole

to marmot hole, even trying tricks like passing a den and doubling back. Each time we stopped and sat quietly waiting for the shot, I silently recited *Om Tare Tu Tare*, focusing my mind on Dolma's active compassion and protection of all creatures, and each time the hunter missed. Then Yamataka's wife teased him sharply. He was such a poor hunter, she said, that he should give her the gun and *she* would do the

shooting. At least she could hit what she aimed at! There was a loud infectious ring of women's laughter and I just naturally joined in. I didn't need Dende's translation this time. I was delighting in the sassiness of this strong woman proclaiming her skill. In that moment of laughter my "civilized" mind vanished and I forgot to say the prayer as the hunter jumped out of the jeep. Immediately there was a shot, and he reappeared carrying a marmot; I felt proud of our ability to survive in this great land. Without noticing the transition, I had entered my unused hunter's mind.

When the young man threw the marmot on the grass, the marmot moved, so they smashed his skull with a rock. The horrible bone-crunching sound returned me to my ordinary mind and I felt suddenly sick and sad. I realized I hadn't prayed for this marmot. Yamataka threw the marmot on top of the berry cans and we raced off in the fading day to the river, about ten km away.

When we reached the river the marmot was still alive. This time the rifle barrel was held firmly across his neck, his body was yanked up, and the spine was broken with a sharp snap. I felt terrible for all the suffering the marmot had endured.

Some of the women gathered sheep dung and made a fire, while the little boy picked up smooth dry stones to heat in the fire. The hunter, with a skillful hand, peeled the thin pelt from the flesh so that it became a

bag. Dendev wanted me to watch the skinning, but I assured him that living in Alaska I had skinned rabbits, moose and bear. The truth was that I didn't want to watch. I wanted to be alone to think about the mar-

There was a shot, and the hunter reappeared with the marmot. I felt proud that we could survive in this great land. Without noticing the transition, I had entered my unused hunter's mind.

mot. So I told Dendev I was going down by the river to look for interesting rocks.

The cold water flowed slowly past me. The wind was chilly. I buttoned my down vest over my sweater and thought about the situation. As my mind cleared, I understood that I had no choice. Just by being human and a carnivore I shared the karma for the marmot's death. I wished he had died instantly, without suffering, but either the hunter's shot was poorly placed or marmots, like porcupines, take a long time to die. I decided to participate in the feast to honor the marmot's life. Not to eat him would be an insult to the marmot, and also to my friends.

Back upstream the marmot skin bag was being filled with the cut-up meat and hot rocks from the fire. Then the neck was tied off with a thin wire and the body was held over the embers for extra cooking. This traditional method is called *boodog*: cooking in the skin. But Yamataka added a modern twist. With a gasoline blow torch he singed the marmot's golden-brown fur and his wife rubbed off the crisp hairs with a stick. After the skin was nearly hairless, he used the torch to melt the fat which his wife collected with some stray hairs in a blue plastic tea cup.

The sky had darkened and first stars twinkled. Just as Genghis Khan had done centuries before, we squatted on the damp ground and passed around a silver-lined bowl of mare's milk, flicking three offerings to the earth and sky with our ring fingers. Then the skin bag was cut down the belly to become a tablecloth on which was spread the sizzling meat. Yamataka offered me the liver and I took it in my hand. Umm, the taste of the flowered steppes! The marmot was delicious! When the cup of drippings came around I drank without hesitation. Savoring the sweet taste of marmot grease I paid homage to an honest life of flower-root eating. ❖

Denise Lassaw is a poet/writer/multi-media artist, gardener, and snow shoveler. She lives in a small cabin with a spacious mountain-water view, a computer named Sarasvati and a cat named Jigme, 16 miles from Homer, Alaska. Be careful: if you ask her a simple question, she will tell you a long story.

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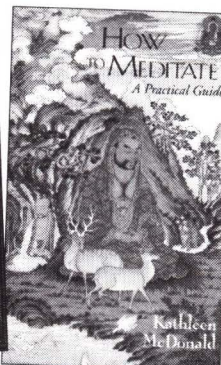
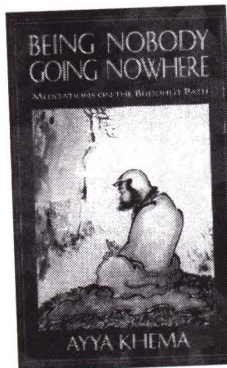
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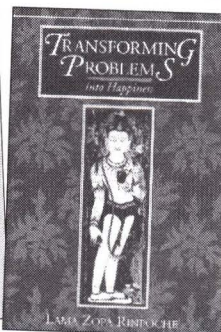
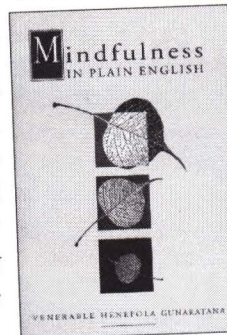
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STRANGELY LOCATED

An Essay on Place

We've been banished willy-nilly from our geographical, and therefore cosmic, centers—

by **Tim Dutcher-Walls**

Along the greater stretch of California's Big Sur region and the West Coast of America, Esalen Institute south to Sand Dollar Beach forms a parcel of inhabited nature, a "place" one might call it. Along this coast is Lime Kiln Campground, and hiking from there into the canyon, along Lime Kiln Creek, one soon moves up into redwood forest. Here is an upper valley, steep and expansive. Fog from the ocean often drifts into it, giving a sense of the ethereal and profound.

At Sand Dollar Beach, the coast is lined with cliffs. Waves crash into huge boulders just off the shore. From Highway 1, one walks across headlands to the cliffs above the beach, where wildflowers and low grasses grow.

This stretch of coast is a location that has provided me, for more than twenty years, a "center," a grounding in the universe—an area to return to for blessing and personal restoration, to get off the trail of aimless postmodern mobility in a kind of pilgrimage.

Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday writes:

I am interested in the way that a man [sic] looks at a given landscape and takes possession of it in his blood and brain. For this happens, I am certain, in the ordinary motion of life. None of us lives apart from the land entirely; such an isolation is unimaginable.

The grounding in place so common in traditional cultures is fractured by the compulsive mobility of postmodern life. Where we grew up may hold antiquarian, nostalgic significance for us, and where we presently live and work may after some time grow on us, the familiar becoming meaningful in its familiarity. But our being is no longer taken over by what Native American writer Sam Gill, in *Native American Religions*, calls the "cosmic significance" of a place. Even religious practitioners are no longer *that* religious. Many in the developed, technological world of America are disconnected from "place," perennially on the road with spiritually nowhere to go.

Poet and teacher Gary Snyder, who aims for a retrieval of the native sense of grounding in a natural region, elaborates, in *The Practice of the Wild*:

For most Americans, to reflect on "home place" would be an unfamiliar exercise. Few today can announce themselves as someone from somewhere. Almost nobody

spends a lifetime in the same valley, working alongside the people they knew as children. Native people everywhere (the very term means "someone born there") and Old World farmers and city people share this experience of living in place.

For Snyder, an existential base in location—even in an urban setting where one can discover a natural harmony—is crucial to identity. From this base, we "go out," not aimlessly but to work, explore, connect with others *and* to return. Snyder lives thus with his family in the foothills of the northern Sierra Nevada, reconnected with place and community.

This chosen rootedness is not available to all; and, when it is, the shadow side of place ought not to be overlooked: parochialism and tribal conflicts. Parts of our world seem to bleed without end over claims of place.

Still, in our era, many people are inevitably and irreversibly disconnected from place. Personal choice goes only so far in this matter. There has in fact been a kind of "fall" from place that is bigger than any individual's decisions. We have been banished willy nilly from our geographical, and therefore cosmic, centers. Though Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise (heroes of Kerouac's notorious travelogue) may now live in the suburbs, pruning grass instead of smoking it, they're still compulsively "On the Road."

What this amounts to is a kind of "spiritual homelessness," with all the anxiety that being ungrounded in place and disconnected from ongoing community brings with it. When the center goes—what Mircea Eliade alludes to as the "navel of the earth" (in *The Sacred and the Profane*)—existential disorientation follows. Herein is the predicament, and the possibility.

Snyder again:

The Buddhists say "homeless" to mean a monk or priest...It refers to a person who has supposedly left the householder's life and the temptations and obligations of the secular world behind ... "Homeless" is here coming to mean "being at home in the whole universe."

Snyder argues for a kind of "homeless" frame of mind while being situated in a chosen place. The perspicacious point here about Buddhists is that being disconnected from place provides the possibility of "being at home in the whole universe." As one moves through the disorientation of spiritual-geographical homelessness (a process of suffering, awareness, acceptance—no small task),

there develops existential flexibility and openness, what Snyder calls “the maturity of relying on nothing and responding to whatever turns up on the doorstep.”

This is the goal of ending craving, attachments that ensnare and frustrate; blowing out the flame of desire (craving) being one meaning of “nirvana.” As this process is accomplished, one becomes available to be at home, in freedom, wherever one wanders in the post-modern world.

Yet some geographical grounding is helpful, even necessary. For some this may mean, as with Gary Snyder, putting down roots in a locale, rural or urban, while learning from one’s environment over the years an integrated way of life. This may occur in more than one location during a lifetime. Even the suburbs can teach us, with their proximity to both urban and rural, if there is community, and a garden.

For people whose “fall from place” is more thorough and continuous, geographical and cosmic centering can take the form of “pilgrimage.” One “journeys to,” from time to time, a place laden with personal meaning, reconnecting with the center: home for the “homeless.” It could be the place of one’s natural birth or spiritual rebirth. There may be more than one place a person travels to, periodically, on pilgrimage.

But the places of pilgrimage are not to be clung to anxiously, in an attempt to make them more than they are. For one remains essentially “homeless.” The haiku-like ditty by Sixties troubadour Donovan, “First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is,” comes to mind: places special to us have a reality, but only as passing phenomena in and out of which we ourselves pass on the way through life.

A Story Strangely Located

A young man wearing backpack and headband hitchhikes up the coast through Big Sur, amazed at what he sees, having never before encountered landscape so beautiful and majestic. His spirit expands to take it in as he moves north toward his destination, a commune in Berkeley.

He feels lonely but excited and strangely fulfilled, continuing his journey so far from his Pennsylvania home. The places he is *not*—Vietnam, in college (a year off to “search”), at home with parents—cast into relief the places he now is, the experiences he now acquires.

Then somewhere near Carmel, he is passed by a carload of his closest friends and kin driving south. He recognizes them as they pass by, although the car looks odd and futuristic, and its passengers, different, and older than he would have thought. Gazing at the Pacific, they fail to see him by the other side of the road.

They weave down the coast, through the village of Big Sur, past Pfeiffer State Park, down Highway 1 as it twists and turns, in and out of deep canyons, along the high cliffs overlooking the ocean.

The purposeful travelers drive into the southern part of Big Sur, past Esalen Institute, then past a solitary cross by a monastic road ascending the mountain. At a certain place, they park off the road, traverse the headlands and descend to a beach where, reading Whitman and bowing deeply to the Buddha-nature of all things, they toss his ashes into the sea which, it seems, reaches to infinity. ❖

Tim Dutcher-Walls is a Lutheran pastor in rural Western Ohio and a member of the Yellow Springs Dharma Center.

Endlessly Chewing

*Mornings before all else
before coffee even
even sometimes before a pee
I feed the two cats
the house cat and the one
outside half wild
filling their bowls with dry food
topped with a spoon of the wet stuff
made from ground-up animals
the cats mewing and scratching
and rubbing up against things—
the outside cat’s bowl
brought in at night because of
the prowling raccoons—
after zazen I feed myself
or go out to eat rolls or pancakes
in some room where others
sit chewing and swallowing—
life, existence, all of this
basically ravening hunger, ourselves
nothing but a skin stretched over
appetite...each creature likewise
a feathered appetite
a furry appetite
a slimy appetite
mouths constantly open, endlessly chewing
gulping some other creature
only to become feed in turn
(Bill the Bard said it best:
“We fat all creatures else to fat us,
and we fat ourselves for maggots.”)
and the flocks of shoppers
the tourists, all of us
CONSUMERS
eating up the world
gorging on the latest fashions
yummy yummy for mind and tummy—
What does Kuan Yin hear with those big ears
but the crunching, sucking sounds from earth.*

—Daigan Lueck

SHUNNING AND INTERVENTION: A Think Piece

by Robert Aitken

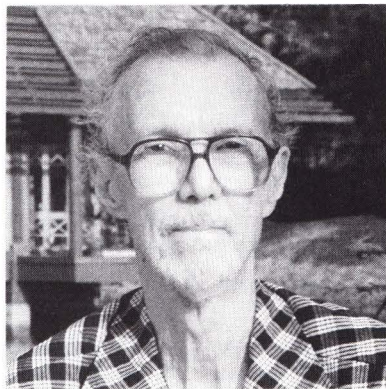
Author's note: I shared earlier drafts of this paper with many people, and consulted on the subject with several others. Despite all this help, I take full responsibility for the points made.

For the past 30 years I have been musing and occasionally speaking out on the subject of sexual exploitation of students by Buddhist teachers. That's how long it's been since our resident monk departed under a cloud from the Koko An Zendo, leaving two women students in the mental health ward of The Queen's Medical Center. The subject is difficult to address because, as John Bradford remarked as he watched criminals face the executioner, "There but for the grace of God go I." (Bradford himself was later led to the stake, a consummation that added poignancy to his piety.)

Occasionally, a woman comes to the interview room wearing a particularly low-cut dress, so that when she bows before me, she might partially expose her breasts. In the early days, I would shut my eyes for the crucial moment, then open them again before she made eye-contact. A fellow teacher said, "Why don't you keep your eyes open? Are you so susceptible?"

"No," I thought to myself, "surely I'm immune by now." So I tried keeping my eyes open and found that I was indeed vulnerable after all. I noticed that the sexual charge I got from that glimpse of pretty breasts would color my attitude and give the interaction an undesirable personal tug. So I returned to my old custom of closing my eyes.

I'm 78 years old now, the fires are banked, but incidents almost every day remind me that under the ashes the coals are still glowing. I hug students by way of greeting them at potluck suppers and other informal occasions at our Zendo. Do I hug the men the way I hug the women? Do I hug the old ladies the way I do their daughters, or their nubile granddaughters? I can't be sure, but I do practice uniformity in hugging as best I can. Sometimes my best is none too good, and I exchange a rueful glance with my student. No need for words. The message is clear: "Sure, it's there, and that's where we'll leave it!"



Robert Aitken Roshi

The late twelfth century Lin-chi master Sung-yuan asked, "Why is it that someone of great satori does not cut off the vermilion thread?" (This is a koan in the Zen classic, the *Mumonkan*). Vermilion was a color associated with women's undergarments in old China, and thus with sexual energy. Sung-yuan's question is intimate and as a koan it requires an intimate response. As a comment, I would add that it is possible to cut the thread, but if I take such a drastic step, or even try to take it, then I'm dead, whether or not I am still walking around. That sexy vermilion, those hot encapsulations of vitality that glow under the ashes of decades, nurture and enrich my body, speech and thought. They are my id, my alligator mind, my passion. Keep the home fires burning!

It would seem that the problem is not with the fire itself, but with the fire-place, the container, the character. The welder's torch regulates its own fire and builds the human habitat, but the conflagration that destroys a city building has run wild. Lives and careers are ravaged. We build character to contain the fire in our practice. Then the fire empowers body, speech and thought.

One thing leads to another, as my grandmother used to say. Natural, healthy sexual attraction can lead to courtship in other circumstances, but for the Buddhist teacher working with students, I am sure that the practice must be to "leave it alone." Let it glow in peace, transmuting into bows, smiles, and words that encourage and inspire. Otherwise, the attraction becomes a grotesque mirror of courtship, leading step by step, to tragedy.

Here I should distinguish the case of a teacher who falls in love with a student and has an affair with her, from that of a teacher with a record of seductions that reflects an addiction to sex. The love affair might be messy and cause pain for both the student and teacher, as well as disruption in the families involved and in the larger Sangha. I could visualize, however, that as a one-time incident, it could be mediated, with everyone learning and maturing in the process. It could lead to guidelines that set forth ways to avoid, or work through such exigencies. I don't seek to minimize the distress the love affair could cause, but it is sexual addiction, where ruthless exploitation stands in for love, that creates particularly sordid, seemingly intractable problems.

I should add that the scenario underlying this essay is the one in which a ruthless male teacher takes advantage of vulnerable female students. As women take a proportionate share of authority in Zen Buddhist organizations, perhaps other problematic sexual pairings may crop up: female teacher/male students or female teacher/female students. Even at present, male teacher/male student pairings are on the record.

*The Devil can cite scripture:
"Everything is empty anyway."*

Still, the pressing, current problem is that of sexually addicted, heterosexual male teachers. In this essay, I seek ways to address the abuses, and then to examine their origins.

In Tucson last fall, I heard a talk by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana that helped me to focus my musings on a method of confronting sexual abuse. Bhante spoke of *brahmadanda*, or shunning. He explained that *brahmadanda* literally means "noble staff," and metaphorically it means "noble penalty." In the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, the Buddha says,

"After my passing, the monk Channa is to receive the Brahma-penalty."

"But Lord, what is the Brahma-penalty?"

"Whatever the monk Channa wants or says, he is not to be spoken to, admonished or instructed by the monks" (from *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, translated by Maurice Walshe).

Bhante explained: "Channa had played a role in the earliest part of the Buddha's career as the charioteer who drove him around his father's compound, where he saw old age, sickness, death, and a monk. Later, as a monk himself, Channa took credit for establishing the Buddha's career. He was arrogant about it, making himself obnoxious. After the Buddha gave instruction that he be shunned, Channa appealed to the Buddha to reverse his verdict and the Buddha refused. Channa saw the light, became repentant, and after a probationary period was readmitted to the order."

When I heard this story from Bhante, it occurred to me that shunning might be an option today in the cases of teachers who abuse their students sexually. This is a think piece, so let me think.

First of all, can we presume to uproot *brahmadanda* from a traditional text and transform it into a modern tool? We would have to rally around in an unprecedented manner to make it work in our circumstances. The world community of Buddhists is not a Sangha or a network of Sanghas of the sort that the Buddha established in his lifetime. We are not cohesive, we do not even have a cohesive community of elders, and we don't have

a figure with the moral and spiritual authority of the Buddha Shakyamuni. Even the Dalai Lama doesn't say, "Okay, Rinpoche, you're busted."

Second, sexual abuse is more complex than the empty boasts of a charioteer. The sexual abuser learns to manipulate transference (the natural bond that arises between teacher and student) to create an ultimate kind of loyalty. If one of his senior students or board members becomes disaffected—bingo!—she or he is disappeared, and a new, more faithful disciple is slipped into place.

However, this latter problem could be addressed by starting with an expanded kind of *brahmadanda*. If those who run the teacher's center are blind in their loyalty, then colleagues from other centers and from academia could agree to practice *brahmadanda*. The colleagues would have less to lose by taking such a position than deeply invested students. At the same time, they are important to the teacher. Without interaction with colleagues I, for one, would lack some of the inspiration that helps me grow. Cut off from such support, the teacher in question might begin to face some very unpleasant facts.

This shunning, like that of Channa, should be initiated with open communication. The malefactor should be reached and told, in effect, "Because we are old friends, because I respect your work, and because I can't stand seeing you ruin your life and the lives of others, I have to take a stand. Ordinarily, I would invite you to take part in this conference, but I can't play the role of codependent anymore. Convince me that you have changed your ways, and we can take up where we left off."

If just a few colleagues shun the addicted teacher in this way, students in the Sangha might ask why their teacher no longer appears so frequently at conferences of teachers and at academic symposiums in the field of his supposed expertise. This kind of open query, along with private expressions of concern through private channels of friendship with senior members, could start a train of cohesive action. The matter could come up in board meetings, a professional interventionist could be invited in, and a process begun to help the teacher squarely face his depredations.

There are other options. One would be for fellow teachers to direct a letter to senior members or board members. These would be teachers who have interviewed former students of the addicted teacher and have gained a clear picture of his condition. The letter could be worded as a communication that would be made public if a positive response is not forthcoming. This too could lead to the board taking action.

Another option would be for disaffected senior members to gather and exert pressure from an informed, stable position. Still another (in the works now, I understand) would be for senior teachers to

come together as a commission to gather evidence, and then to convey the objective findings of fact to the concerned board or senior members.

The ensuing process in the concerned Sangha could be like intervention in the case of a substance abuser. With private counseling, the family, friends, colleagues and employer learn to say to the addict (as Vernon Johnson suggests in *Intervention: How to Help Someone Who Doesn't Want Help*), "We are your family, your friends, your colleagues, your employer—but until you enter a program for treatment, and then get regular professional help to maintain a way of sober conduct, we will suspend this relationship." This is, of course, a last resort, when it is clear that the drive to indulge in drink or drugs overrides good sense and decency. It is the end of the road, after a long history of denial, evasiveness and broken promises.

In the case of the substance abuser, family and friends must stick together in the treatment process. If someone wavers, then the process doesn't work. In the Sangha of the sexually abusive teacher, it is likewise important for the senior members and/or the board to be united. This could be especially difficult. The teacher is likely to be defensive to the bitter end. Senior people who understand the need for action might have to labor with companions who want to cleave to their guru. Perhaps some members might have to resign to make consensus possible.

Implicit and explicit in this process should be an acknowledgment on the part of the Sangha that this is a teacher who has simply let the fire get away from him. There is nothing wrong with the fire itself. It can be diverted, admittedly with painful work, to save the many beings.

This saving, by whatever name, is our first vow. The purpose of the intervention would be the same as Buddha's in dealing with Channa: to encourage the liberation of the troublemaker, as well as those for whom he has caused trouble. For the teacher especially, but also for the Sangha, this liberation would be freedom from self-centered constraints to allow full confession and repentance. The truth is confessed, the past is repented, and all beings are liberated. Everything else is extraneous, and should be allowed to drop away. Hang the consequences. If it means no more zendo, then no more zendo. "The truth shall make you free."

The confession and repentance process could involve so much personal pain that the teacher might become quite immobilized. This could be a plateau on the upward path, and the teacher should be encouraged not to tarry there. With the help of the Sangha and with someone skilled in helping people who suffer from self-betrayal, he can move on.

On the other hand, the teacher might not be able to bring himself to consider confession. In such a case, maybe the best solution would be to encourage him

simply to retire—even to raise the funds to make it possible for him to retire—and to invite in some talented person to help bring the Dharma to life.

If, however with the support of his students and the interventionist, the teacher can manage to turn himself around, then the Sangha can turn around too. Secrets will be brought into the open, conspiracy will become harmony, and years of earnest practice can be salvaged—not only salvaged but made meaningful as never before. There will be no place for co-dependency. If the teacher must leave, then he will leave with *aloha*, as we say in our Islands. If he can stay, he will simply be, as Senzaki Sensei used to say of himself, an elder brother in the Dharma. The new openness and well-grounded harmony will surely enrich and enhance the practice of all members.

The risk, of course, is that the process could fail. The teacher might simply become more careful, or he might take a position of denial, split off with devoted followers, and set up another center. Thus intervention is a calculated risk, and it needs to be coordinated with the utmost patience, love and wisdom.

All this, of course, must run in conjunction with therapy for the victims who have been so badly burned. This can be one-on-one treatment, but should include group sessions as well. It seems to me that the Sangha should support all such treatment financially, and stand ready to help in every other possible way.

I am always surprised and disappointed when I hear people blame the victim. "She should not have put herself in such a vulnerable position," they say. *Come on!* If one is not vulnerable, no teaching or learning is possible.

Occasionally I meet a student who doubts every word I say. I don't take this personally—people walked away from Chao-chou, even from the Buddha himself. But such invulnerable students are incapable of entering the stream, at least for now. To be vulnerable, to be naive—that is the Tao.

Still, the people in charge of orienting new students on this path should caution them to listen to their feelings. They should assure the inquirers that it is all right to reflect on their reaction to the words or conduct of the teacher and to feel free to say, for example, "Hey, I'm feeling manipulated." If the teacher doesn't listen and respond appropriately, then they should walk away.

It is also important for the senior people to schedule regular sharing meetings, where new and old students alike feel safe to disclose anything about their lives, including any betrayal they might be experiencing. A skilled facilitator can set a tone of safety in just a few sessions, sometimes in just a few minutes.

Of course, this kind of openness won't happen in the centers that concern us. The sexually addicted teacher will do everything he can to prevent anyone from suggesting that he be questioned, or from scheduling a sharing meeting. There will be all kinds of

doctrinal justification for these taboos. The Devil can cite scripture—he can twist precedent and the teachings to justify the pernicious conduct itself: “This is the crazy wisdom of our tradition.” “There is no right or wrong.” “Everything is empty anyway.”

Openness and sharing are modes that should be in place when the new teacher is installed. Once an abusive teacher is in control, then intervention is likely to be the only viable way to proceed.

Some students, however, are likely to find that their practice becomes flat in the extended strain of the intervention process. Many will probably drift away. “There are things time passing can never make come true,” as the poet William Stafford has written. One can just do what one can.

Well, maybe just setting forth these thoughts about dealing with sexual exploitation will do for now. I hope they will generate discussion, and perhaps even action within our informal network of friendly Sanghas. But I can’t end here. The long-running disaster in our Sanghas presses me to consider the origin of the abuses.

First, it helps to see the problem in its social context. Sexual exploitation is far-reaching in America; indeed it is a world problem. Talk to any school counselor, any pediatrician, any social worker or psychologist. The same dynamics are at work in the home, academic seminar, science lab, doctor’s office or sanctuary. Moreover, the depressed position of women in the merging streams of Asian and European cultural history forms a precedent that contributes to sexual abuse in the Buddhist temple.

There is a particular irony in the abuse of students by their Buddhist teacher: Yamada Koun Roshi said, “The practice of Zen is the perfection of character.” I understand his words to mean that the function of Zen Buddhist practice, and by extension all Buddhist practice, is to personify the Dharma. Students are drawn to Zen practice specifically to attain this perfection for themselves, and they idealize the teacher as one who has attained it, or at least as one who seeks to practice it. When the paragon turns out to be a sham and declares that he is above the Dharma—that you must venerate him separately from the Dharma—then the student can fall with Satan to the bottom of hell.

At a recent sharing session at the Palolo Zen Center, I mentioned that I planned to write a paper about sexually addicted teachers. To my surprise, one of our newer students disclosed that he was sexually addicted. “It’s an agonizing imperative,” he said. “I feel desolate and forsaken, altogether unloved. I seek some kind of sexual encounter, and then afterwards I feel degraded and profoundly remorseful. So when you write about

sexually addicted teachers, please be merciful.”

On the subject of lust, I am reminded of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 120:

*The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjur’d, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoy’d no sooner than despised straight...*

Indeed, but lust isn’t the whole story. The sexually addicted teacher is commonly not just acting out his lust. Like the rapist he is seeking power. I sense that this search for power, like my student’s lustful imperatives, comes from a vacuum—not the *shunyata* of peace, but an agonizing, profoundly-felt sense of personal inadequacy. Once again, “There but for the grace of God...” Who among us feels altogether adequate? Not me.

Perhaps the particular feeling of inadequacy that leads to sexual exploitation is connected with the failure to form emotional bonds during childhood. All the rinpoches are adopted by monks at an early age, I understand—and so are many Japanese teachers. This is a time-tested practice, and some of our best teachers grew up in such circumstances. The Dalai Lama

comes first to mind; Yasutani Haku’un Roshi as well.

Still, in particular instances, perhaps the men who raise little monks cannot evoke a nurturing spirit in themselves, much less convey it to their wards. The boys then grow up unable to respond to the world with affection. The American teacher who goes astray might have had a similarly loveless upbringing. It would be a central factor in his character. Without affective talent, any emotional release might be limited to exploitative sex and perhaps violence.

However, like the dyslectic who has learned to simulate an ability to read easily, the one deficient in affection might be led to simulate feelings and commitment. Such a person can be very persuasive, because his mind is constantly directed toward making the right impression. Indeed, he might persuade *himself*, since he knows no feelings more real than his own versions of love. As a candidate to become a master, he might even persuade his old teacher—but the truth comes out eventually.

This leaves open the question as to how the old teacher could be persuaded, even by a very convincing aspirant. The answer may lie in the fact that formal leadership positions in Zen have only recently opened to women, and even now, just barely. Male Zen leaders of the past appear to have shut their eyes to the disturbing power of sexuality by failing to address the subject both in Zen literature and in the process of checking the character of their successors.

*“She shouldn’t have put
herself in such a vulnerable
position,” some say. Come
on! To be vulnerable, to be
naive—that is the Tao.*

A look at the literature confirms this. Taking Chinese culture first, among the fifty-five hundred cases listed in my directory of Chinese koans, I have found just two that acknowledge sexuality, one of them Sung-yuan's question about the vermilion thread, cited above. The second case, which can be found in my book, *The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics*, is the story of an old woman who burned down the hut of a monk who responded inappropriately to sexual advances.

In Japanese Buddhism, by contrast, sex is acknowledged, but trivialized. Our resident monk at Koko An 30 years ago was mildly admonished by his teacher as a "rascal." That teacher was my teacher as well, but I was unable to communicate my sense that his monk might be suffering from an obsession. The neglect of feelings in Japanese Buddhist practice and ambivalent attitudes toward the precepts contribute to this kind of denial. Sexual hypocrisy, rather than exploitation, is seen as the primary evil in Japan. Thus the Japanese master who has an affair is criticized, but much stronger disapproval is directed to the teacher who preaches celibacy while keeping a mistress. (See *New Mahayana: Buddhism for a Post Modern World*, by Ryomin Akizuki.)

The problems are not limited to teachers from Japan. In recent times, we find Korean, Tibetan, and Vietnamese teachers accused of abusing their students. In fact, the Sanghas of teachers from many countries,

including the United States, have had to face the issue.

I have heard people try to excuse Far Eastern teachers by suggesting that their monastic training did not permit much interaction with women, and they were not prepared to work with them as students. I find that to be a specious argument. What happened to the basic experience of the "other" as no other than myself? It doesn't matter that the other is superficially different. Without at least a glimpse of the Buddha Shakyamuni's realization that all beings are the Tathagata—without continuing practice to clarify that glimpse and make it personal, a teacher cannot lead others on the path of wisdom and compassion. He is not grounded—not a teacher in the first place.

The Buddha said, "It is hard to be born a human being. It is hard to meet the true Dharma." So it seems, even in a long-established center, even with earnest practice. It is my hope that we can bring ourselves forth anew from the conflagrations that are still burning people. We know enough. Let's take ourselves in hand, and share.

This is my contribution to the sharing. I look forward to continuing the discussion. ❖

Robert Aitken is the head teacher of the Diamond Sangha in Honolulu, Hawai'i, one of the founders of BPF, and the author of many books on Buddhism, including the recent The Practice of Perfection, The Paramitas from a Zen Buddhist Perspective.

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PORTRAITS FROM CAMBODIA

by Susan Moon

I went to Cambodia last February, before attending the INEB conference in Thailand. On this mind-altering trip, I learned about the ravages of the Pol Pot years, the continued suffering of Cambodians, the landmines, the civil war, the deforestation; and I saw the hopefulness of people, their desire to continue to work for peace. I saw bullock carts on country roads, a woman with an enormous dead pig strapped to the back of her bicycle, a man getting a tooth pulled in an open-air dentist's office next to a rice paddy, a girl selling big black beetles wrapped in banana leaves

I attended a forestry conference in Svay Rieng, a province of Cambodia next to the Vietnam border. About 80 participants, both ordained and lay people, from various Cambodian environmental groups, met in a large temple. On the altar a giant Buddha statue sat next to an electric picture of Buddha, like a Hamm's beer sign, with rays of colored light continually spraying out of Buddha's head.

I fell in love with Cambodians, their courage, their smiles, their remarkable freedom from bitterness. I interviewed a number of people who live and work in Cambodia, and I here I offer you this fragmentary collage of portraits. I wish, as always, I had more space.



Liz Bernstein

I was shepherded through Cambodia by Liz Bernstein, a young American who has lived and worked in Southeast Asia for eight years, first in a refugee camp on the Thai border, and now in Cambodia itself. She has worked with Maha Ghosananda in organizing the Cam-

bodian peace walks, and in the anti-landmine campaign.

Last year, on the 1994 peace walk, some armed government soldiers joined the walk as "escorts," and the walkers ended up being caught in cross-fire between government troops and the Khmer Rouge. Two Cambodians were killed and a group of foreigners, including Liz, were taken prisoner by the Khmer Rouge, and detained for a day.

Buddhism and nonviolence are the same in Maha's teaching. You can't bring peace by hatred but only by love. When I talked normally with the Khmer Rouge soldiers, they treated us decently. They treated us like people because we treated them like people.

It's hard to explain—I just wasn't that afraid. I didn't think they were going to harm us. Just talking about ordinary things as we walked through the forest, they became more human to me. One of them told me his brother lives in California. The whole idea that I was being taken hostage in the forest by Khmer Rouge soldiers sort of disappeared.

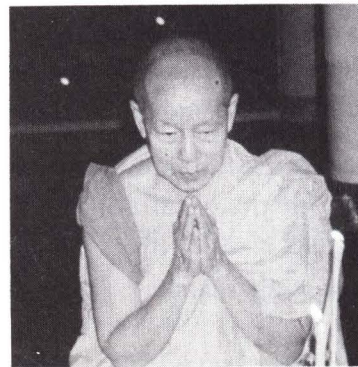
One of the soldiers asked me, "Ever heard of the Khmer Rouge?" "Yes!" "So are you afraid?"

I said, "I'm not afraid of you, I'm afraid of the mines." And I walked in his footsteps, trying to be careful where I was putting my feet. But they said "Quick! Quick!" and I knew I couldn't do anything about it, I just had to go forward. Either I would step on a mine or I wouldn't. There was no path.

We walked about two hours. Then we met their commander. We stopped under some trees and talked to him for an hour and a half. He was very reasonable and open and said he'd like to talk with us and with Maha Ghosananda sometime in the future when they knew we were coming. He said, "We all want peace." Then they let us go back by ourselves. We had to find the way.

The whole time on the peace walk I'd been screaming at everybody not to litter, but we found our way by following the trail of plastic bottles from the monks and nuns, and I was thankful for the litter for a moment.

The point of the walk was to meet the Khmer Rouge. We had said we would walk until our enemies become our friends, and yet we had been fleeing them from the beginning. At that point we had nowhere to flee to. We were there in front of them. It was the only occasion we had to meet them, and in some ways it was very positive. It opened a door.



Ven. Maha Ghosananda

While I was at the forestry conference, Liz Bernstein arranged for me to "interview" Venerable Maha Ghosananda. I followed her up the wooden stairs of the monks' quarters to a small room where Maha sat in his saffron robes on a red-flowered mattress

cover, among pink and orange cushions, his mosquito netting drawn aside like a canopy. He had been napping, having returned from Europe the day before, and the shutters were closed against the afternoon sun.

But it wasn't really an interview. Out of shyness, I

hadn't brought my tape recorder, and it seemed rude to write while this venerable teacher was speaking. And as Liz said, he's a challenge to interview anyway; he's a man of few words, and no matter what you ask him, he gives you a little bit of dharma for answer, moving seamlessly from compassion to farts to fear. Jokingly, he called us both "grandmother," and offered us date palm sugar.

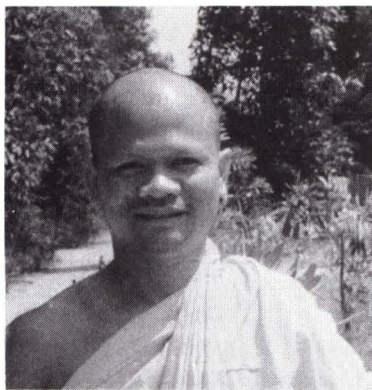
I asked him how he could confront so much suffering in Cambodia. He smiled sweetly as he answered.

Buddha means "one who suffered." Buddhism is about suffering. By taking care not to stumble, we protect all beings. Lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity—this practice saves all beings.

There is no "I." There is only sensation. Sensation gives rise to thoughts which gives rise to the idea of I. There are pleasant and unpleasant feelings. If we smell flowers we have a pleasant feeling. If somebody farts near us we have an unpleasant feeling. The way out of suffering is being aware in every moment. In order to end our suffering we have to stop imagining that "I" exist.

If you're afraid, you need meditation, breathing in and breathing out. This is very important. The body is just the breath.

Yes, I get tired from traveling, so I sleep wherever I go. I was sleeping before you came. If somebody comes to talk to me I get up and talk. If nobody comes, I sleep.



Ven. Kim Teng

Venerable Kim Teng has been an activist for the Cambodian forest for several years now. It was he who organized the forestry conference I attended, the first such gathering in Cambodia. A kind, sturdy man, Kim Teng seemed ready to respond with confidence to the unpredictable.

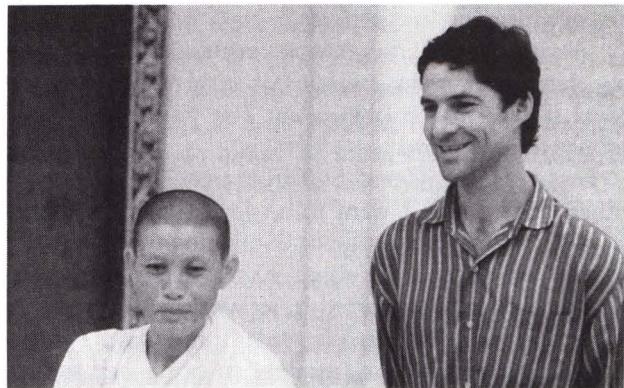
I became concerned about the forest because I saw the great difference from before the war and after the war. There used to be trees near my temple, and trees in the rice fields; now there are none. There's no more logging because there are no trees left to cut.

The trees were cut down by big companies and also by poor people, to sell for their subsistence. People need other ways to support themselves, and so we have started a project to replant trees. A little wage is paid to the people. We also set up a rice bank, and started a canal rehabilitation project, and the people are paid in rice. Now people in Cambodia believe that Buddhist monks can help to protect the forest.

There is some wild forest left in Cambodia, and I

wish we could go on forest walks like the monks in Thailand, but it's too dangerous to walk in the forest because of the mines.

We didn't study the forest in the monastery, but I learned from Buddhism about the importance of the forest. Buddha was born under a tree, he was enlightened under a tree, and his first dharma talk was in the forest. He died under a tree. Buddhism and the environment are one thing, not two things.



Sou Mouy and Gordon Paterson

Gordon Paterson is an Australian who has been working in Cambodia for three years as a volunteer with the MCC (Mennonite Central Committee). He started a pilot reforestation project in which several villages have come together to manage their surrounding land, and to replant trees according to ecological principles. His gaze is intense, and his quiet voice brims over with what I think must be faith.

I feel more at home here than in my own Australian culture, maybe because my parents were Pentecostal Christian missionaries in the highlands of New Guinea when I was a child. I'm happy in a traditional culture.

My life is very simple. Working with MCC you don't get paid much of anything but everything is taken care of. It's a little like a monastic practice, quite worry-free.

Usually I practice meditation every morning, by myself. My friends call me a Pentecostal Buddhist. I think everybody creates their own form of spirituality, and for me, meditation is a sort of back-and-forth conversation with God. I couldn't face the day without it.

If I seem calm, it's partly meditation, but also my personality is very passive. When I take initiative, it's because God activates what I am. God doesn't need us to have any particular attributes. He accepts us as we are, and whatever our weaknesses are, that's an opportunity for God to turn them into strengths.

As for the reforestation project, we hope in a couple of years' time the villagers will be able to carry on by themselves, and eventually to spread the concept of locally managed forests to other areas. Step by step we can build a good foundation of people-managed forestry in Cambodia.

Sou Mow and I spoke in the early morning, on the terrace of the temple, while the tops of the palm trees were still shrouded in morning mist. She is a small quiet woman with big eyes and a big smile. Gordon Paterson translated for us.

I wanted to become a nun because I saw that many people in Cambodia have such hard lives. They are born and they die, and they suffer so much in between. They have no meaning in their lives. I wanted to share the dhamma with other people, to help them feel like they *do* have meaning in their lives.

I started a meditation center for monks and nuns. In my center the monks and nuns sit at the same level. The nuns still do the cooking, but I'm going to ask the monks to cook, too.

Last year we planted 500 fruit trees—mangoes and other kinds—after I went to an INEB conference and learned about the importance of planting trees.

We have a school for about 30 children from the surrounding farms. We started it because there's no public school at all in the area. We study outside in the shade. For tuition, we ask each student to bring one sack of manure a week, for the fruit trees.

Our center is just three kilometers from the beach, with mountains all around. You could say it's a little piece of paradise, but I'm worried that somebody will try to take our land away from us, to build a big hotel.

I don't have time to go swimming, what with watering the seedlings and teaching the children, but I'm just as happy as I would be if I was swimming.

During the Pol Pot years, the dhamma was badly destroyed in Cambodia. The dhamma will not be strong again unless we combine it with social action, so that it has meaning for our lives.



Renee Pan

Renee Pan works training school teachers, in order to help rebuild Cambodia's shattered educational system. As she mentions below, she and her three children were able to leave Phnom Penh for the U.S. in 1975, just days before Pol Pot entered the city, but her husband stayed behind and was

killed by the Khmer Rouge. Renee lived in North Dakota, and her children became U.S. citizens. All three are highly educated young adults currently working or studying in the U.S. Renee did not return to Cambodia until 1992, when the U.N. came to Cambodia to oversee the elections.

I left for the U.S. in 1975, the day the U.S. closed their embassy here. We got the invitation from the

Ambassador—my husband and my children. At that time my husband was the Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia. But he refused to leave. As a leader, you don't go like that. He said that I had to take the children and go first and he will join me later. I did not know we would never see each other again. Never know that.

For me it wasn't hard to come back, because it was in my heart that some day I will come back and help Cambodia. But I was a stranger in my own country when I came back, because of so many changes, my friends and family gone or dead.

I was prepared. How did I prepare? I prepared myself in the training of meditation. Because I knew that after a war there's a lot of things that need to be restored, but the first thing to restore is yourself.

I studied meditation in the U.S. My teacher was a Cambodian from Battambang, and he specialized in insight meditation. He just passed away last Friday. I feel so bad that I cannot go to his funeral.

I meditate every day. I never let it go. I love it. Because you keep giving. The work we both are doing is the work of giving, but nobody gives energy back to you. Only yourself can give that energy to yourself. You flush out the impurity and you drink in the purity. Any problem, anything that harms me, I use it as a positive thing.

Now you see many Cambodians as beggars. But we are very rich in our culture, and that's our strength. We have to restore our culture. If we don't, it doesn't matter how much we give, people will say, "So what?" They will never be satisfied. Never fill their thirst. The culture that we have is a culture to give, not to beg.

The Cambodian system is very good. There's a connection between the temple and the villagers. The community development is right there. You do not need to import it, it's already there. It's a matter of just using it.



Korm Chanthan

Korm Chanthan is the co-director of an NGO called Khe-mera, a women's weaving collective which sets up cottage industry weaving centers all around Cambodia. Their beautiful crafts are sold in a shop in Phnom Penh. She is one of the friendliest people I've ever met.

I wanted to hang around her all the time.

Chanthan and Renee and I are all about the same age, and we all have young adult children whom we raised as single mothers. But I only lost my husband to divorce; they both lost theirs to Pol Pot.

(continued on page 34)

SHIN AND THE SOCIAL ACTIVIST

by Diane Patenaude Ames

There's a meditation retreat this weekend, but your article, "Meditative Awareness in Buddhist Peace Work," is due Monday. And if you go to the women's rights march and do all the housework afterwards, you won't get any prostrations done again this week. You were planning to do a few this evening, but your boss is making you work late putting up the library's display on labor rights. Unfortunately, the daycare center closes at 6. So when you finally rush there at 6:15, famished and exhausted, and they tell you that they will no longer take care of your children, who have forgotten who you are, you find yourself confronting certain fundamental questions:

Can a working parent practice the Buddhist religion? On the other hand, can a working parent remain sane *without* practicing the Buddhist religion?

Can a practicing Buddhist, parent or not, keep up this social activism? But how can a Buddhist *not* try to stop the destruction of the planet's biosphere, for example?

Why is the baby screaming *now*? And why were you ever born?

As the years go by, questions like these can wear you down, burn you out, and drive you mad. But so can your government's foreign policy, and so can—life! You may not have time to practice, but you still have time to experience the truth of suffering. What now?

Here history may be instructive. Your problems are not new. Buddhism has, from the beginning, recognized that lay practitioners—Buddhists who for some reason cannot abandon economic activity to go do prostrations in a monastery—face special difficulties. That's most Buddhists, after all. But for centuries, the 95% of the population who did not have the time or economic resources to undertake intensive study and practice were mainly told to hope that if they were good, they might be reborn as monks. In Japan (among other places), organized Buddhism virtually ignored the masses until the 13th century, when Pure Land Buddhism, particularly the form known as *Jodo Shinshu* or *Shin*, was popularized.

Basically, Shin told the peasants that no matter what sort of spiritual disadvantages they labored under here below, they could simply call on the Buddha (*nembutsu*), with the words "Namu Amida Butsu" ("I call on Amida Buddha"), and be reborn in Amida Buddha's Pure Land, where there are no obstacles to becoming enlightened. Because of the simplicity of this practice, Shin has often been described in the West as a naive, theistic cult. But this stereotype misses the main point of Shin: We weak mortals must depend on

Amida to save us because the ego, the small self, is never going to liberate itself; it simply is not going to self-destruct. Thus it will never escape from its little cage of suffering unless it learns to look beyond itself, to examine its true relationship to the great ultimate reality beyond what it imagines itself to be.

That ultimate reality is not really outside the self, not really external. It is more as if this self, this I, is an agonized little bubble in a mass of foam on the ocean, always trembling with envy and self-contempt because other bubbles are bigger or more iridescent than it is, always terrified because it will pop someday. And Amida Buddha is the great, warm, all-accepting sea. The bubble came from the ocean, remains part of the ocean, and will eventually return to the ocean; its problems stem from its refusal to acknowledge that fact. It will only be relieved of its suffering when it fully understands and accepts its own true nature, its place in the scheme of things. We are transient, totally dependent on all the rest of the universe, mired in ignorance and delusion, and in general very, very limited. But there's nothing bad about that. Actually it's just another way of stating the Buddhist truth of *anatman*, the non-substantiality of the self.

How do we come to understand all this? Truly understanding our own nature and our own limitations requires constant self-examination. A basic Shin text, the *Kyogyoshinsho*, repeatedly insists that *shinjin*, complete trust in Amida, can come only when "one truly knows oneself to be a foolish being full of blind passions, with scant roots of good, transmigrating in the three realms and unable to emerge from this burning house." I think the phrase *truly knows oneself*, which refers to knowing the true nature of the ego as opposed to harboring our usual illusions about it, expresses the key concept here.

Now, you could make a case that all forms of Buddhism try to teach us to grasp the nature of the self. But in many forms of Buddhism, you must perform arduous practices for decades to try to achieve that goal. In Shin, however, all you have to do is face the fact that you absolutely, positively, are in no position to enlighten yourself, and instead just throw yourself on your face in front of the great Buddha principle—Amida. Pure Land texts compare this to an easy journey by water, which anyone may undertake even if they're struggling with family responsibilities, or terminal illness, or, yes, being active in the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

Yet a path that involves a lot of self-scrutiny will not always be so easy. In fact, it has also been said that the Pure Land way is actually "the most difficult of the difficult." But for the busy social activist, it *does* have the advantage that you're not required to set aside extra

time. For don't we all already spend virtually every minute of every day contemplating ourselves?

The fact that it doesn't require extra time is the least of all the good reasons for a social activist to practice Shin. For, as critics of Buddhist social action have been pointing out for centuries, such activism is full of special traps. It can turn into a distraction from one's spiritual aspirations and problems, for one thing. If you want to forget that you're going to die, and, indeed, forget everything in life except fundraising, you need only found and run a small charitable foundation. Social action can subtly, or not so subtly, puff up the ego's pride, often at the expense of the people one is "helping." And it can encourage even cruder and more obviously destructive self-delusions. For instance: caring for helpless, hopeless people can present a therapist or social worker with an almost irresistible temptation to go on a power trip, to exert more control over crushed and broken lives than is really necessary.

Shin, for all its emphasis on self-examination, may not always be able to help us weak and deluded human beings to avoid such pitfalls. But it can help.

Another problem plaguing activists everywhere is discouragement, often culminating in burnout. There seems to be so little we can do. You work for months trying to counsel one alcoholic into sobriety only to find ten more alcoholics, including your Buddhist teacher, in your waiting room with delirium tremens. When you put them all into a therapy group with the original alcoholic client, that teacher of yours persuades the whole lot to take up Buddhist meditation. And during their first group retreat, they all get drunk. So now you have eleven of them lying passed out on the Zendo floor, and you feel so . . . *limited*.

Shin would assure you that's because you *are* very limited. You are just one insignificant little sentient being, and your power to change the world is slight. But since you are, on the other hand, a part of the world like everything else, your impact on your environment is not nil either. Scientists now assert that even the movements of a single butterfly's wing, when combined with everything else that happens in the atmosphere, influence the climate sooner or later. An activist must be content to be one butterfly's wing among many, and to hope that things will get a little better if all those wings go on flapping. In the meantime, learning to understand and accept that situation can itself be a spiritual practice.

And let us not forget the problem of dualistic thinking, of starting to hate the people who oppose us. Here, too, Shin reminds me that, for example, the public relations staff of the lumber company may not be so different from me. What if I couldn't get health insurance for my child if I left my job with the lumber company? I never felt much concern for the redwoods myself until I saw them and then saw those huge stumps. What if I'd never seen them?

Incidentally: you need not give up your current practice to practice Shin. You only have to give up any idea that that practice will get you enlightened; and you should have given *that* up already.

And finally, it's worth remembering that the central act in Shin worship is reciting "Namu Amida Butsu." But I'm not sure that can be called a practice. For if I really grasped the implications of calling on Amida—the implications about the nature of the self, about my relationship to the cosmos, about my capacity to escape the chains of my own delusions—how could I possibly think that saying the *nembutsu* is *my* practice, something *I* do?

If you grasp that, you grasp Shin. ❖

Diane Ames has been a member of the Buddhist Churches of America, a Shin Buddhist organization, for 16 years. She edits a small Shin Buddhist newsletter.

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In 1975 the Khmer Rouge moved us from Phnom Penh to the province. We had to walk 60 km, with our six young children. My husband was an electrical engineer—he had just come back from his education in Paris. Six months after we were relocated to the country, they arrested my husband. When they moved me to the center for widows, I knew they had killed him. They took away all my children but the 10-month-old. I worked in the field all day, and they only gave us two cups of rice. I don't even want to remember—it was so terrible.

In 1992 I started Khemera, the weaving collective, along with my partner. Then we had the idea for Women Weaving the World Together. We decided to make a huge banner out of pieces of traditional weaving from all over the world, for the Beijing women's conference. We went to every province in Cambodia to teach the women about the project, and in each province women wove according to local tradition. A thousand women came to the big Water Festival in Phnom Penh in November 1992, and all the weaving was linked together. The women opened their hearts, and it made me happy.

I am never discouraged. People tell me I am always smiling. I like to listen to other people. If they don't understand me, I try to explain.

My happiness in this work is to empower women to improve their lives. We also need to educate men about their duties in the family. We can go forward if the foundation is strong—both women and men. And we need to improve the education of children. We need childcare centers. Women need information about birth control. Now in Cambodia we worry about AIDS. Two important problems to focus on in Cambodia are AIDS and landmines. There are many lands we can't use for agriculture because of mines.

Most Cambodians are Buddhist. We ask the monks and nuns to understand that Buddhism means working in the world. The Buddha helped people, and we help people, too. ❖

HERMIT AT STALLION'S ROCK

by Ken Jones

Following is a description of the author's solitary retreat in a cave in the mountains of his native Wales. At Stallion's Rock he seems to us about as far from consumerism as you can get, both internally and externally. This first retreat was four days long, and now he returns to Stallion's Rock for a week at a time whenever he can. He calls this place "the end of longing."—Ed.

It was a cliff overhang rather than a real cave. But the walls glowed with lichens, and at one end was a rockfall hung with ferns. I cleared out the sheep dung, set up a little shrine, cut a bed of reeds, and laid out my sleeping bag. I was in business as a hermit.

After two decades of tough Zen training, I still had a romantic itch for the hermit life—all those poems and ink drawings! I've done many a solitary retreat in many a lonely cabin, and I'm a seasoned backpacker. But four walls or a good tent make all the difference. This time, perched several hundred feet up on my cliff ledge, I would have nowhere to hole up, and no choice but to hang out.

Good weather sustained my first days of idyllic delusion. I was at the top end of a wild valley of steep grass slopes and craggy outcrops. However...

*For stonechats and ravens
this isn't a melancholy place*

The little stream gathered its tributaries and flowed on past the ruins of ancient sheepfolds to the main valley two miles away. Here were no signs of human habitation, nor any footprint but my own. A solitary pine stood sentinel, growing out of a cleft in the rocks. Down among its roots were small bones and the acrid smell of fox. Since my *I Ching* name is Tree on the Mountainside (Hexagram 53), maybe this would be a good place for me to end up:

Zazen in Cwm Hiraeth
where my ashes will join me*

That first night I had good company. Outside my shallow cave, enchanted by moonlight, stonechats sang the night away.

Came the morning star, and dawn meditation above my mist-filled valley. Back in my sack, I watched mist and sunlight vying with each other along the opposite ridge, while my spirit stove struggled to produce the coffee.

*Surrounded by wilderness
among the pebbles of the spring
my delicate pink dental plate*

*A steep mountain valley

The ledge fell so steeply to the stream below that here one was mindful or dead. But as yet I was no more than a visitor playing at being a hermit. My initiation came that night.

At dusk came thunder, lightning, and torrential rain. Water running down the cliff curtained off my hermitage, and the little springs springing into life all around me explained the luxuriant ferns.

*Chanting mantra
burning incense
my sleeping bag gets wetter
and wetter*

As the hiking guidebooks say, "What kills in the British hills is the combination of sustained wetness, cold and wind." This desolate upland is famed for its bogs and is unforgiving of travelers who make an error of judgment. I decided it was better to stay put and risk hypothermia than to attempt the many miles through the storm to the nearest sheep farm. After I created some minor drainage works and invoked the aid of Kuan Yin (who specializes in tacky situations like this) there was not much I could usefully do all night except watch my mind (quite dramatic) and feel the damp

Continued on page 37

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A CALL TO BUDDHAS IN TEN DIRECTIONS

by Judith Stronach

*A patch sewn on clothing doesn't move,
but the cloud will move away from blocking the sun.*

These words are not a koan inviting us to consider impermanence, but words from a song composed by 15 Tibetan nuns being held by the Chinese in Lhasa's Drapchi Prison. They call on Buddhas in ten directions: "Please consider our mournful truth."

I first heard the song at Plum Village, in France. Later, a Tibetan peace organization gave me the lyrics.

The songs tell of the pain these women endure, their fierce commitment to Tibet's independence, and to the Dalai Lama.

*I sing a song of torment
from Drapchi Prison.
Of Tibet I sing my song.
Our land of the Dharma has now become a prison camp.*

An inspiring courage pervades the lyrics.

*Our minds will come from Drapchi Prison.
Through the blessings of the all-knowing Dalai Lama,
We are in a state of happiness and peace.*

The nuns composed the songs on a tape recorder smuggled into the prison, and when the tape was circu-

lated in Tibet, Phuntsog Nyidron's sentence was extended by nine years, to seventeen, the longest known sentence for a political prisoner in Tibet. The very Buddhist practice we may take for granted, and sometimes doubt, postpone or delay, is a precious necessity for this nun in her mid-twenties.

She was first arrested, along with six other nuns, in October, 1989 after a demonstration for Tibetan independence that lasted but a few minutes. The impetus was the announcement that the Dalai Lama would receive the Nobel Peace Prize. After their arrest, the nuns were interrogated, tortured, tried and imprisoned.

*I'll never forget the horrible tortures.
May this present misery in prison
Never be inflicted on any sentient being.*

On the tape the nuns tell their names before singing of their brutal treatment. The distribution of the tape apparently was considered by the Chinese authorities to be "spreading counter-revolutionary propaganda." The normal sentence for this offense is five years, but it may be extended for ringleaders "whose crimes are more monstrous." Because she was the only nun with a semi-official position in her nunnery, that of store keeper, Phuntsog Nyidron was viewed as a ringleader.

She is one of 250 political prisoners in Drapchi, one third of whom are nuns, with almost all the rest being monks. Ill-treatment and torture are regularly used on all prisoners. Many of the nuns have been raped. Electric batons and other objects have been forced into the vaginas of others. Beatings are routine, frequently on naked bodies hung from the ceiling or suspended upside down. Medical attention is often denied, and human rights organizations are investigating numerous deaths in the prison, presumably resulting from torture.

*What there is to eat is no better than slop for pigs.
The beatings are severe.
The years are endless,
Endless.*

The shaved heads of the monks and nuns, outward signs of lives dedicated to non-harming, are a reminder that any torture is a violent transgression of the fundamental connectedness of all life.

I don't report these facts to numb but to awaken. The nuns and monks are very aware of us as part of their sangha, and I would like to increase our awareness of them.

*Tibetans who are outside and
Tibetans who have the experience of
Suffering inside prison
Are (all) Tibetans...
Alas, this sad song in my mind
I send to all who help prisoners.*

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With the upcoming United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Chinese are sensitive to the fact that the eyes of the world are upon them. In March, Amnesty International launched a year-long worldwide campaign on human rights violations against women. Tibet is one country the campaign focuses on, and Phuntsog Nyidron is one of the highlighted cases.

Rampant violence against women often remains hidden. Hidden, because no country in the world treats women as well as men, and discrimination often goes hand-in-hand with violence. This inequality and violence are embedded in judicial and penal systems that violate women's rights. Few governments recognize the work of women's human rights organizations as legitimate, and to organize a food project, to search for a kidnapped husband, or to write a protest song may be dangerous. Governments frequently sanction violations of women's rights. As in Tibet, women often receive harsher sentences than men, and rape and sexual abuse by government agents is regularly condoned. Such violations are increasingly a central component of military strategy around the world, according to Amnesty International.

Kuan Yin, bodhisattva of compassion, is sometimes called "she who listens to the suffering of the world." The nuns have sent us their words. If we listen, we may respond with compassion.

*Looking out from Drapchi Prison
There is nothing to see but sky.
The time will come when the sun
Will appear from behind the cloud.*

Continued from page 35

slowly chilling my bones. In the middle of the night, cradled surely by Kuan Yin, I sank into a deep sleep.

After that, life on Stallion's Rock began for real. The weather was mostly too wet, too cold, too blustery, or:

*Like me
the midges
enjoy hazy sunshine*

Frankincense and myrrh kept the midges at bay. But the roof of the cave was too low for meditating in the approved posture. Indeed, in some weathers I was condemned to long periods of sheer idleness. Just hanging out. Reduced to watching my mind. Or watching the view in its ever-changing sameness.

Again I was reminded that acceptance is what it is about: leaving space for clarity, gratitude, and energy to bubble up—laughing at nothing with no one to hear me. I became even more intimate with this valley than with the one where I normally live, where there is so much else going on that it fogs my perception of *how it really is*. But here on Stallion's Rock:

*Day after day
the mind flutters*

*I am not sad.
If you ask why,
Though days follow on days,
There is the moon at night.*

Letters written now will join others generated by this campaign and will arrive in Beijing before the UN Women's Conference gets underway. Effective action may be possible at this time. Please write to the Premier of China and the President of the All-China Women's Federation. Say that you have heard about Phuntsog Nyidron's imprisonment in Tibet as a prisoner of conscience, arrested for the nonviolent exercise of her right to freedom of expression. Urge that she be released immediately and unconditionally. Also ask for information about the conditions of her confinement.

Send your letters to:

- Premier Li Peng Zongli/Guowuyuan/9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie, Beijingshi 100032/People's Republic of China.
- Chen Muhua Zhuxi/President of All China Women's Federation/Zhonghua Quanguo Funu Lianhehui/50 Dengshikou/Beijingshi/People's Republic of China.

[Note: I have condensed some of the lyrics. If anyone wants to publish or read the entire text, please contact me through *Turning Wheel*.] ♦

Judith Stronach lives and writes in Berkeley, California where she has recently joined the board of BPF.

*against the cwm's
irresistible reality
day after day
the cwm is there
the stream below
winding through yellow grass
and opposite my cave
the ridge
coming and going in the mist
the end of longing*

Humping out across the mountain, I encounter a shepherd checking the old ridge fence. We stop to enjoy each other's company, and as we talk about a parliament for Wales, our two pairs of boots settle gently into the bog. ♦

Ken Jones lives in Wales, where he is the coordinator of the British BPF affiliate, Network of Engaged Buddhists (see inside back cover). He is the author of The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political Activism, and most recently, Beyond Optimism: A Buddhist Political Ecology (Jon Carpenter Publishing, England).

This article is reprinted by permission from "Interbeing," the Newsletter of the Leeds Network of Engaged Buddhists.

FINDING HOME BASE

A report on BASE—Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement—BPF's new volunteer corps

by Diana Winston

How do six Zen practitioners (five Soto, one Rinzai) and five Vipassana meditators (from Burmese Mahasi lineage to Thai forest tradition) practice walking meditation together?

A koan? Perhaps, but also the first challenge posed to the group of BASE (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement) participants and teachers. We had come together for an Orientation Weekend of practice, study, discussion, and play at the (Tibetan!) Vajrapani Institute outside of Santa Cruz. Our confusion around form (when—or if—to ring bells, for instance) was met by shrugs and smiles, but also with a sense of inquiry and delight. Working together to come to a decision is exactly what BASE is (and will be) about.

For many of us, our practice of engaged Buddhism has lacked the context of community. We may have been limited to reading, discussion with like-minded friends, and individual attempts to bring Buddhist thought into the social and political work we're involved with. Or we may have been trying to infuse a global consciousness into our dharma centers. But often, when faced with the tremendous suffering in the world, we have asked how we can really help. Can we do this alone?

There is a long historical tradition in Christianity of spiritually-based activism. Currently, numerous opportunities for service are available, such as the Catholic Worker houses and the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (and other programs like these). As socially engaged Buddhism is still in its infancy in the U.S., there has been little opportunity to explore it through a structured program.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship has been inspired by these Christian models, and by socially engaged Buddhist responses in Asia such as Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka, and the School of Youth for Social Service, Thich Nhat Hanh's group in Vietnam. In addition, we feel that addressing worldly suffering in concrete ways is a radical necessity at this time in the planet's history. For some, it is a natural outgrowth of meditation practice.

BPF knew we wanted to find a way for a group of volunteers to spend an extended period of time in full or part-time service in the outside community, combined with Buddhist practice, retreat and training. We worked with the notion of creating a kind of Buddhist (domestic) Peace Corps, a training ground for spiritual activists, or a practice period in the world.

As we began to develop the program, we brought together certain elements which we imagined would be needed for a training in Buddhist activism:

Community (*sangha*): Clearly, the frequently disheartening work of facing planetary suffering is not a task that should be undertaken alone. Ongoing interaction in community with others engaged in similar pursuits is a necessary foundation. The task in BASE has been to create community within an urban setting, where each person lives and works separately. (A long-term vision is to have a BASE household.) The BASE program began with a weekend orientation program, and continues with monthly day-long sittings and discussion days, and weekly meetings. Often BASE members gather informally for potluck lunches at or at various outside events.

Social Action (*seva*): We knew that our ideas about a socially engaged Buddhism needed a concrete basis or they would run the risk of remaining merely intellectual concepts. Many of us struggle with questions about where we can most be of service, so we wanted to provide a variety of service opportunities for volunteers to choose from. We went out into the greater community to discover who could use a BASE volunteer, assessing need, and trying to find Buddhist or like-minded service providers. Currently BASE has volunteers placed in a variety of 15-30 hour per week positions, including: the Zen Hospice Project, work with the homeless through Martin de Porres House of Hospitality and the Tom Waddell Clinic, with victims of domestic violence at the Asian Women's Shelter, environmental education for youth through San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, and anti-nuclear activism with Plutonium Free Future.

Retreat and Training (*panna*): We felt that volunteering might be simply "do-gooding" unless placed within the context of wisdom and understanding. We wanted to bring together dharma study and practice with a theoretical approach to engaged Buddhism, as well as psychological support for volunteers. BASE now has a six-month training program facilitated by Maylie Scott, a long-time activist and Zen priest, and Donald Rothberg, a writer, teacher, and former BPF board member. We meet one full day per month and two evenings per week for sitting, study, and discussion. In addition, each participant can sit one-day retreats once a month and two five-day retreats during the six-month

period at practice centers which have donated space. Our study this year (based on participants' interests) focuses on a personal and global perspective on Buddhist ethics, despair and empowerment work, non-violence, and the historical and contemporary roots of engaged Buddhism in the U.S. and abroad. We also use our meetings to discuss emotions and issues that arise through our volunteer experiences.

Mentorship (kalyana mitta): When creating this program, we were struck by how many people in the Bay Area are already engaged (many for years) as Buddhist activists. We wanted to take advantage of this rich resource; there is much to be learned through the sharing of experience and the passing down of tradition. Currently, Maylie Scott is serving as the mentor for the program, holding practice interviews monthly. In addition, each participant has a spiritually-based "friend"/mentor at each service site. We also have ongoing support from the dharma and activist community, and many volunteers have connected with individual practice centers like Berkeley Zen Center, San Francisco Zen Center, and Spirit Rock Meditation Center.

On April 1, 1995, we brought the program to life with eight participants ranging in age from 25-50. From now until the end of September, we will practice, study, and serve together. Some participants are full-time, 30-hours-per-week volunteers, others volunteer 15 hours per week and hold outside jobs, and a few are activists participating in the training program. The group members come to BASE with varying backgrounds, as well as practice and activist histories, united by a strong commitment to explore a life of socially engaged Buddhism.

Since BASE is being developed as a long-term program, we are looking at its various components with an eye to flexibility. We try to keep in mind that, although we have a sense of what will be effective, in truth, the learning is in the doing. Much of this initial year will be an experiment as we work together to explore what is useful, what deepens our practice and understanding, and where we can invite change.

It is quite an extraordinary process to watch a vision become a reality. After a year and a half of planning, we have our Buddhist Peace Corps, a container for Buddhist-based social action. We are working in the world to make a difference and we have a community to come home to, where we can discuss and become aware of despair and frustration, breakthrough and joy. We have a network of support, and we have the encouragement to watch our minds through whatever we encounter. BASE is becoming a refuge for many of us. As one volunteer put it, BASE is filling places inside her she never knew were empty.

And how did we practice walking meditation?

One of us remarked he'd like to do it in a line. Another wanted to retain her individuality. A few said as it was such a beautiful day, we really should get outside. Some had no idea. Finally someone mentioned that we could simply walk together outside in nature, each at our own pace, but as a group. Eventually, he said, we will all discover a natural rhythm both in keeping with our surroundings, and with our own inner awareness. And we will walk as one, and as many, discovering as we go along.

And so we did, and so BASE will. ❖

Diana Winston is the coordinator of BASE. She has been practicing Insight Meditation since 1989 with Joseph Goldstein and Sayadaw U Pandita. Through BASE, she has finally found a way to reconcile her diverse interests.

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Banana Roseby *Natalie Goldberg*

Bantam, 1995, \$21.95, hardcover.

Reviewed by Leslie Boies

Natalie Goldberg is best known for her writing workshops and her nonfiction books on writing. Whether teaching or writing, she usually makes explicit the connections between her Zen Buddhist practice and her writing practice. I was therefore struck by how, in her latest book, the novel *Banana Rose*, little mention is made of Buddhism, and yet the whole book is permeated with the spirit of Buddhist practice. Certainly the main character, Nell Schwartz (AKA Banana Rose), learns how to turn the painful and confusing events of her life as skillfully and wholeheartedly as any Zen monk.

It's the 1970s and Banana Rose and her boyfriend Gauguin live in a commune called the Elephant House, complete with outhouse and dirt floors, in Taos, New Mexico. Friends with names like Happiness, Neon, and Blue come to party and often end up crashing on mattresses in the hallway. Banana Rose teaches fifth graders, many of whom have already dropped acid with their hippie parents. For some readers the book may recall moments of their own hippie past.

Like most of her friends, Banana Rose is restless and searching for something, she's not sure what. The one thing she's absolutely certain of is her love for New Mexico, its vast spaciousness, "like the mind of God: empty." She struggles with her various identities of hippie, Jew, feminist, girlfriend, and artist, looking outside herself for answers, for someone to give her a gold star or an "A." Gradually, after leaving her beloved Taos, and following Gauguin to cold, gray Minnesota, she comes to trust her own mind and becomes committed to herself as a painter. The empty canvas, like the big, open sky of New Mexico, proves to be a steadfast friend and teacher, helping her to make peace with the incomprehensible changes happening all around her—changes in herself, in her marriage to (and later divorce from) Gauguin, and in her friends who are

increasingly dropping their hippie names, moving away from Taos and leading conventional lives.

Aside from painting, it is her friendship with Anna which helps Nell settle with her life. A lesbian writer who lives alone and is passionately dedicated to her writing, Anna is always with Nell, even when she's living hundreds of miles away in Nebraska. Near the end of the book, when Nell gets a letter from Anna saying she's moving back to Taos, she sits down and paints a picture out of sheer joy. It is her first truly inspired picture, a painting "lit from within," as her friend Blue describes it.

A few weeks later, on her way to Taos, Anna dies in a car accident. (It's OK for me to reveal this—you find it out in the opening pages.) Nell brings Anna's body back to New Mexico to be burned on the mesa. While others are gathering pinon and cedar for the funeral pyre, Nell paints a picture with "FOR ANNA AND NELL" printed across the top. When she is finished, she sticks dozens of silver and gold stars all over it, exclaiming as she goes, "Excellent, Nell gets an A. Anna gets an A-plus. Excellent, excellent. The two of us excelled. Congratulations." Having finally become her own teacher, she throws the painting into the flames, not needing anything to remind her of Anna; like her painting, Anna is alive in her.

Banana Rose has a sweet, generous honesty about it. It also has a naive, self-conscious feel to it, like a gangly adolescent. In part this is due to the idealism of the time and the youth of the characters; Banana Rose and Gauguin believe the hippie years and their love will last forever, though they really aren't quite sure who they are or what they want or how to take care of love. In part the self-consciousness of the book is due to Goldberg's prose style. She seems to take too seriously her own advice on writing, as if afraid of being accused of not practicing what she preaches. There is an abundance of concrete, specific detail in the novel, but it is frequently either heavy-handed or distracting. For example, when Nell is sitting in a cafe sunk in depression caused by her divorce, with a heart full of despair, she notes: "I finished my second cup of Lipton's and took the third bite out of my second chocolate croissant." Such alertness and attention feels out of place, given her grief and the slump she's in.

I found myself wishing Goldberg had written *Banana Rose* without sticking to a strictly chronological format, as it seems to have hampered her attempt to convey the feeling of the time, the vitality, love, freedom, and sense of possibility. There are definite glimpses of it, however, and perhaps Goldberg will be a little bolder in her second novel. ♦

Leslie Boies practices Zen, teaches English as a second language, and is active in the Interracial Buddhist Council and San Francisco Zen Center's Dismantling Racism Task Force. She lives in Berkeley, California.

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If You Don't Like the News . . . Go Out and Make Some of Your Own

by Wes "Scoop" Nisker

Ten Speed Press, 1994, \$14.95.

Confessions of a Raving Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counter-Culture

by Paul Krassner

Simon & Schuster, 1993, \$12.00.

Reviewed by Taigen Dan Leighton

The movement known in the West as "Engaged Buddhism" has many roots. Ages of Mahayana bodhisattva teachings, Judeo-Christian altruism, and modern Asian teachers such as Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama have all had enormous impacts. But engaged Buddhism is also an outgrowth of the concerns of the Sixties "counter-culture" and its meld of hippies and leftists. These two books by prominent spokespersons of that culture chronicle its history and lingering effects.

Scoop Nisker and Paul Krassner are participatory journalists, Nisker for FM radio, originally with KSAN in San Francisco in its rock heyday, and Krassner for "underground" newspapers, most prominently as publisher of the notorious *Realist*. Both are comedians/satirists who pay homage to the inspiration of the Beat writers and *Mad* magazine (for which Krassner wrote), and both recount their exploits on the frontlines of Sixties political and psychedelic frontiers. More recently they have jointly taught workshops in absurdist and cosmic humor. Nisker calls himself the "straight man," explaining philosophical context of the era.

Indeed, *If You Don't Like the News . . .* is mostly old news for those of us who lived through and acted out the Sixties. But for those of you under thirty (or with friends and progeny under thirty who don't know where you're coming from), Scoop provides a clear, existentially honest account of our long, strange trip. Nisker shares interesting personal anecdotes and provides a liberal selection of provocative quotes from literary, psychological, spiritual, and historical luminaries; for example, Rollo May stating that the American myth of individualism "was unknown in the Middle Ages and would have been considered psychotic in classical Greece." He also offers his own wit: "The beats and hippies were in recovery from monotheism. They were polytheistically perverse."

Nisker meanders through whimsical and insightful reflections on sex, drugs, rock-and-roll, the devastating effects of the Vietnam War, guru-seeking in India, environmentalism, the vagaries of the New Age movement, and his own long-term meditation practice. He

also expounds his current bemused advocacy of the "Hahayana" Vehicle of Buddhism, and his "Zen socialist" political program, the "Great Leap Backward," for the downsizing of the cancerous American economy.

Anything but a "straight man" journalist, Paul Krassner has been making news of his own for a long time. Perhaps the consummate "coyote" trickster of our generation, his outrageous memoirs, *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut*, are named after the label given him by the FBI. At the outset Krassner reveals his commitment to the truth as he sees it, beyond the "rough tyranny of Circumstance" and the "lies told about me by the slinking facts of life." This book is a riot, the funniest I've read since David Chadwick's *Thank You and OK!* Not suitable fare for the faint-hearted or satirically-challenged, Krassner's work is likely to offend almost everyone at some point.

Krassner refers to himself as a Zen Bastard, who is not without spiritual concerns. He admits that he was glad to be saved, by a personal request from his daughter, from entry into formal Buddhist practice on the one occasion he nearly succumbed to his friend Scoop Nisker's invitation to a ten-day meditation retreat. Despite his lack of mental discipline, Krassner's brilliant monkey mind makes bizarre, hilarious, and psychically subversive connections.

Krassner's journey, laced with entertaining anecdotes, ranges from playing violin at Carnegie Hall as a child prodigy, to stand-up comic, to key roles in counter-culture highlights. He was close friends with Lenny Bruce, his mentor in satire. Krassner may well offend Puritan Buddhists, as he later followed Bruce's pathfinding role as graphic commentator on American sexual foibles. He relates sundry encounters with sexual liberation and feminism, as well as a brief stint as editor of *Hustler* after the religious conversion of its publisher Larry Flynt by Jimmy Carter's evangelist sister.

During a period of anti-communist hysteria, Krassner was inspired by statements such as Pat Boone's that, "I would rather see my four daughters shot before my eyes than have them grow up in a Communist United States." Krassner created some consternation, including a court case, by printing a red-white-and-blue patriotic poster with stars and stripes that proclaimed "FUCK COMMUNISM!" Then he had *The Realist* "offer full-size color copies by mail. And if the post office interfered, I would have to accuse them of being soft on communism."

Krassner was an early LSD experiencer with Tim Leary and Ram Dass, and later a fellow traveler with Ken Kesey. His delightful account of his acid trip with Groucho Marx is worth the price of the book. He was also a key player, along with Abbie Hoffman, in the Yippies and the 1968 protests at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. In his role as editor of *The Realist*, Krassner was immersed in the various, often-

intriguing conspiracy theories about the assassinations of the Sixties. He also reveals the background of his most infamous and inflammatory escapade, the story he printed about Lyndon Johnson's activities on the plane back from the Dallas assassination.

Considering the roots of American engaged Buddhists, as described by Nisker and Krassner, we might remember not to take ourselves too seriously. Reviewing this history, we may also learn from past mistakes and be reminded of new possibilities. Although the psychedelic hippies and the leftists of the Sixties were often at odds, there were also figures such as Nisker and Krassner who encompassed both modes. Contemporary American Buddhists are not the first jugglers of the dialectic between spiritual contemplation and social concern. ♦

Taigen Dan Leighton is a Zen priest, writer, and teacher who lives in Fairfax, California.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

by Alan Senauke

Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree: The Buddha's Teaching on Voidness

by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. Wisdom Publications, 1994, \$12.50.

The late Thai monk Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was one of the most prolific and influential Buddhist teachers in our modern era, and an early advocate of engaged Buddhism. Few of his works have been translated into English, and those few have been hard to find. Wisdom Books does us a wonderful service by publishing *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*, his core teachings about sunnata. Sunnata is often translated as "voidness" or "emptiness," but Buddhadasa explains it as not clinging to concepts of "I" or "mine," a rigorous practice of seeing the world as it is and being intimate with its joys and sorrows. This modest volume is a precious taste of Buddhadasa's way. I look forward to more translations of his work.

The Jew in the Lotus

by Roger Kamenetz. Harper/San Francisco, 1994, \$20.

Why do so many Western Buddhists come from a Jewish background? That being my own birth tradition, I've often considered the question, coming up with countless speculative explanations. The Jew in the Lotus documents a 1990 meeting between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and a delegation of rabbis and Jewish scholars. The book begins to answer the question of "Why Jewish Buddhists?" Then it turns the

inquiry around to ask what lessons Tibetans can learn from Judaism about cultural and spiritual survival in diaspora. The dialogue of rabbis and lamas is challenging, humorous, and very much about how tradition can continue even in the onslaught of postmodern society.

The weakness here is that Kamenetz seems not completely at home in either the Jewish or Buddhist tradition, a common hindrance for many of us. But he knows how to ask and who to go to. And this is the book's great strength. His inquiry is deep and sincere, and this spirit is perhaps the common source of all religion. With the help of spiritual friends we have to do our own digging.

Seeds of Hope: Local Initiatives in Thailand

by Sanitsuda Ekachai. Thai Development Support Committee, 1994 (TSDC, 409 3rd floor, TVS Bldg, Soi Rohitsook, Pracharat-bampen Road, Huay Khwang, Bangkok 10310, Thailand).

Someone once told me that Thailand is a theme park, a kind of Buddhist Disneyland. Having been there a number of times, I know what he meant. Santisuda Ekachai's earlier book, *Behind The Smile*, revealed the human costs of runaway development and consumerism. Her new volume, *Seeds of Hope*, recounts tales of courage and vision, of people reclaiming their culture against great odds: saving forests, cleansing waters, teaching children, cherishing dreams. Santisuda's text, originally published in newspaper feature articles, is richly embellished with photographs that bring the stories to life. These are local endeavors, people's best efforts to save the future. Their examples are inspiring. Let's hope they succeed.

Mandate of Heaven: A New Generation of Entrepreneurs, Dissidents, Bohemians, and Technocrats Lays Claim to China's Future

by Orville Schell. Simon & Schuster, 1994, \$25.

The BBC news this morning carries word of yet another round of repression targeted at the expression of human rights in China. Again, the former student leader Wang Dan is in official hands, outside the protection of our concern. Orville Schell's excellent book, *Mandate of Heaven*, is a compelling narrative about Tiananmen Square in 1989. This book at last gave me a perspective on background, events, and implications for China's future that I could never quite get by reading news reports. Wang Dan's story is skillfully woven in with the story of other key figures, and most of all the story of China's people as they faced the cataclysmic change and oppression of June, 1989. *Mandate of Heaven* is popular history of the highest order, and the issues it speaks of will continue to occupy the world's center stage. ♦

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Do we live in the human realm or in the realm of hungry ghosts? Are we caught somewhere in between? Those of us in the cities are daily subject to thousands of messages to buy, to "improve" ourselves with various products, to find the momentary fulfillment of our desires. Advertising works, but desires are inexhaustible. Two months ago the twenty-year-old daughter of my oldest friend took her life. Growing up in a loving, expressive and highly conscious family, she found herself unable to endure the suffering of the serious eating disorders that seemed to control her body and mind. Of course, this tragedy is more complicated than runaway consumerism, but it seems to be part of the terrible price we and our children pay to escape from reality.

Yet internationally we in the West (or North) often turn a critical eye to so-called developing nations, where consumerism is almost epidemic, a virus for which the host country has no natural defenses. Looking uneasily on these people's fierce hunger for modernity, we offer homilies about the values of traditionalism and simple living—at least for them. For ourselves, we're not quite ready to forego the comforts of materialism based on the exploitation of people and the environment of those very countries.

These are difficult questions. Without the dharma eye of practice and without our families and spiritual friends, we are often blind to our own actions and habits. We don't know which realm we inhabit. We live among the ghosts.

It's a busy time at the BPF office. Sometimes I wonder if the way we use and are used by time (here in the office and elsewhere) makes time and ourselves just subtler kinds of consumer goods. A snake eating its own tail. But we try to bring awareness to our activities and not be too attached to outcomes. We try to remember to breathe.

Next week we'll have a brief visit from Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, recently acquitted of the charges of *lese majeste* and defamation that were brought against him by the military-backed Suchinda government in 1992. (There's more detail about his victory in our "Readings" section.) The whole time I've known Sulak—several years now—these serious legal charges have been casting a long shadow over his life. That particular shadow is gone for now, but the task of saving Asia from the hungry ghosts is far from done.

We are excited that the first BASE group has found its own form in the last two months. BASE coordinator Diana Winston's article, "Finding Home Base," says more about how this is going. Our recent membership mailing about BASE raised substantial funds and great interest in the program. We look forward to developing the program in many places and for years to come.

Our third BPF summer institute, "Meditation in Action: Transforming Violence," grows out of the community vision of BASE and our ongoing effort to understand and confront the roots of violence in ourselves and in society. With the help and teaching of Joanna Macy, Nelson Foster, David Grant, Fran Peavey, Tova Green, and the broad experience of all the participants, we can deepen our own practice of peace and social healing.

From August 4 to 9, BPFers will join several thousand others from different faith communities at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site to commemorate the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 50 years ago. I hope some of you will be able to join this August Desert Witness. Please write or call us for further information.

Thich Nhat Hanh will be touring the U.S. in the fall and once again we are helping to organize a talk for him here at the Berkeley Community Theater, on September 26. We always look toward the deeply grounded engagement of Thay's life and teaching. It reminds us that even in the urgency and emergency of *fin de siecle* America we can take time to know where we are and how we are bound up with all of life.



Sulak Sivaraksa, recently acquitted by the Thai government

One last note. June 19 is the 50th birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and leader of Burma's beleaguered democracy movement. On July 20, she will have been under house arrest for six years, cut off from her family, supporters, and a nation that deeply needs her courage and vision. There will be vigils and activities on behalf of Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi throughout June and July. But we are also asking our friends to take a moment right now to write letters of concern and support to: Dr. Boutros

Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 38th Floor, UN Secretariat, New York, NY, 10017, USA; Lt. General Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of SLORC, Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Rd, Yangon, Myanmar (Burma); and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, 56, University Ave, Rangoon, Burma. —Alan Senauke ❖

CHAPTER NEWS

Portland

RINGDOWN FOR THE SPECIES

On Sunday, April 21 in Portland, Oregon, nearly one hundred people gathered for a mindfulness vigil in commemoration of the extinct and endangered species of the Pacific Northwest Bioregion. The date was chosen because on the following day, ten miles north in Vancouver, Washington, the House Resources Committee was going to hold a field hearing on the Endangered Species Act, and the future of the spotted owl, the coho salmon and other indigenous species would be held hostage to economic gain and political advantage. But for a few moments on this sunny Sunday afternoon, Portland area Buddhists and their friends joined together in mindful and compassionate consideration of these species and rededicated themselves to the welfare of all beings.

The "Ringdown for the Species of the Pacific Northwest" was opened by Eagle Stone Woman, a Pipe Carrier and Great Grandmother of the Aleut Alaska Tribe. Invoking the four winds and the four directions, she shared a sacred tradition that has connected her people to the land for countless generations. Kyogen Carlson Sensei of the Dharma Rain Zen Center called forth the image of Indra's net to remind us of our fundamental inseparability. He said that we each hold within us spotted owls and loggers, salmon and fishermen, poets and industrialists, and that each and all are sacred. Wangchuk Dorjee of Portland's Tibetan Community spoke of the importance of patience and compassion and made the connection between environmental action and Buddhism's fundamental task of bringing well-being and happiness to all sentient beings.

Everyone present was invited to participate in the mindfulness ritual. As the name of a species was read aloud, a person would come forward and ring the bell in consideration of that species. The bell was sounded 108 times to commemorate 108 extinct or endangered species including: grizzly bear, woodland caribou, bald eagle, Snake River physa snail, Snake River coho, steelhead trout, wood bison, San Joaquin kit fox, grey wolf, whooping crane, brown pelican, Idaho spring snail, chum salmon, Steller sea-lion, Point Arena mountain beaver, Tipton kangaroo rat, Eskimo curlew, desert tortoise, green-flowered wild ginger, dwarf evening primrose, Oregon willow-herb, green-tinged paintbrush, Borax Lake chub, Fosskett dace, American peregrine falcon, marbled murrelet, western snowy plover, shortnose sucker fish, Lahontan cutthroat trout, leatherback sea turtle, Warner Valley redband trout, California condor, right whale, sperm whale, blunt-

nosed leopard lizard, Howell's bentgrass, Greene's mariposa lily, clustered lady slipper, membrane-leaved monkey flower, Oregon silverspot butterfly, Oregon chub, Columbian white-tailed deer, Aleutian Canada goose, Northern spotted owl, Lost River sucker fish, Warner sucker fish, green sea turtle, olive Pacific turtle, sockeye salmon, southern sea otter, sei whale, humpback whale, and California clapper rail.

After a period of silent meditation, the ceremony culminated with Eagle Stone Woman's offering of gifts to the Portland Buddhist community. This Aleut Great Grandmother presented Kyogen Carlson with bundles of sacred herbs—sage, tobacco and cedar—and spoke of a vision she had as a young woman. In this vision she saw the Indians and "the people of the East" moving together towards a common destination. Her gifts will be shared among Portland's sanghas.

The Ringdown for the Species was sponsored and organized by the Portland Chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship with the support of local Sanghas, businesses and individuals. The organizers hope that this event might serve as a model for similar meditation vigils around the country. —Paul Conrad

San Diego

The San Diego BPF has been working with the Peace Resource Center on a peace march to be held in San Diego on August 6th to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Meditation, discussions and the folding of paper cranes as a symbol of peace will take place. For further details contact Ava Torre-Bueno at 619/296-6001. Also people in the San Diego area are encouraged to come to the chapter meetings in order to support upcoming projects. The meetings are held the third Wednesday of every month at 6:30 PM at the San Diego Buddhist Association.

Seattle

The Seattle BPF has been supporting the work of Vana Yacic from Yugoslavia in her efforts to establish international zones of peace. They have been focusing on the question of what is a zone of peace, and is it as big as one's own heart, or as large as the entire planet? They have been working to get churches and youth groups involved in the zones of peace project. The Seattle chapter has also been working on establishing nonviolent conflict resolution training programs that could be used in prisons, social services, and inter-city school programs.

New York

The President and Vice-president of the Tibetan Women's Association and other delegates from the UN preparatory meeting for the Beijing Women's conference participated in an exciting and involving March chapter meeting. They spoke about the difficulties that human rights and women's groups were having in trying to gain access to the Beijing Conference. ♦

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

LETTERS FROM ANNE AITKEN sought for a forthcoming collection. I would be grateful for photocopies and written permission to reprint them. Explanations and comments about the contents of the letters would also be most welcome. Robert Aitken, 2747 Waiomao Rd., Honolulu, HI 96816.

THE TIBETAN AID PROJECT seeks a work/study participant. Learn non-profit administrative skills while studying and working in a Buddhist community. Demanding but rewarding schedule. Contact Wangmo at 510/848-4238 for an interview. Also seeking enthusiastic volunteers for various clerical tasks.

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.

MAHABODHI INTERNATIONAL Meditation Centre operates a residential school for children, mobile medical camps for remote villages, a monastery for nuns, a home for homeless people, and meditation and teaching programs for both locals and foreign visitors to Ladakh. To offer support or request further information: Maha Bodhi Society, 14 Kalidasa Rd., Gandhinagar, Bangalore-560 009, India. 91-812-260684; Fax: 91-812-260292.

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.

PARBATYA BOUDHA MISSION Orphanage, established in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1983 to serve the many children orphaned by floods, political unrest and repression, desperately needs your financial support. Please send contributions to: Parbatya Boudha Mission Orphanage, Pilotpara, Kamalchari, Khagrachari Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.

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.

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.

TEACH ENGLISH IN MONGOLIA: Opportunities for North American Buddhists. Some offer room and board plus a small salary; other benefits include opportunities to study traditional medicine and astrology, Mongolian and Tibetan language. Contact Denise Lassaw: 907/235-4277 or e-mail: dpalor@igc.apc.org. The school also needs English text books.

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 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.

DANIEL HENNING PH.D. is available to lead free workshops for organizations on Buddhism, deep ecology, and tropical forest environments. Contact 406/982-3201.

NEEDS OF HOMELESS WOMEN and children: Help people in need by donating personal care items: toothbrushes, 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.

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.

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.

50th ANNIVERSARY OF HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI

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

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.

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.

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.

Classifieds

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

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.

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 avail-
able. For more information, contact the
Harbor Sangha at 415/241-8807.

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Designs, Dept. BPFN, P.O. Box 2832,
Asheville, NC 28802. 704/683-1843.

THE ATOMIC MIRROR:
Reflecting Our Nuclear History, a benefit
performance with poetry, music & person-
al narratives. Mayumi Oda & others. **July
30, 2 PM**, in the zendo at Green Gulch
Farm, Muir Beach, CA. 510/526-4476.

Gratitude

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- ❖ To make clear public witness to Buddhist practice as a way of peace and protection of all beings;
- ❖ To raise peace, environmental, feminist, and social justice concerns among North American 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 North American and world sanghas.

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