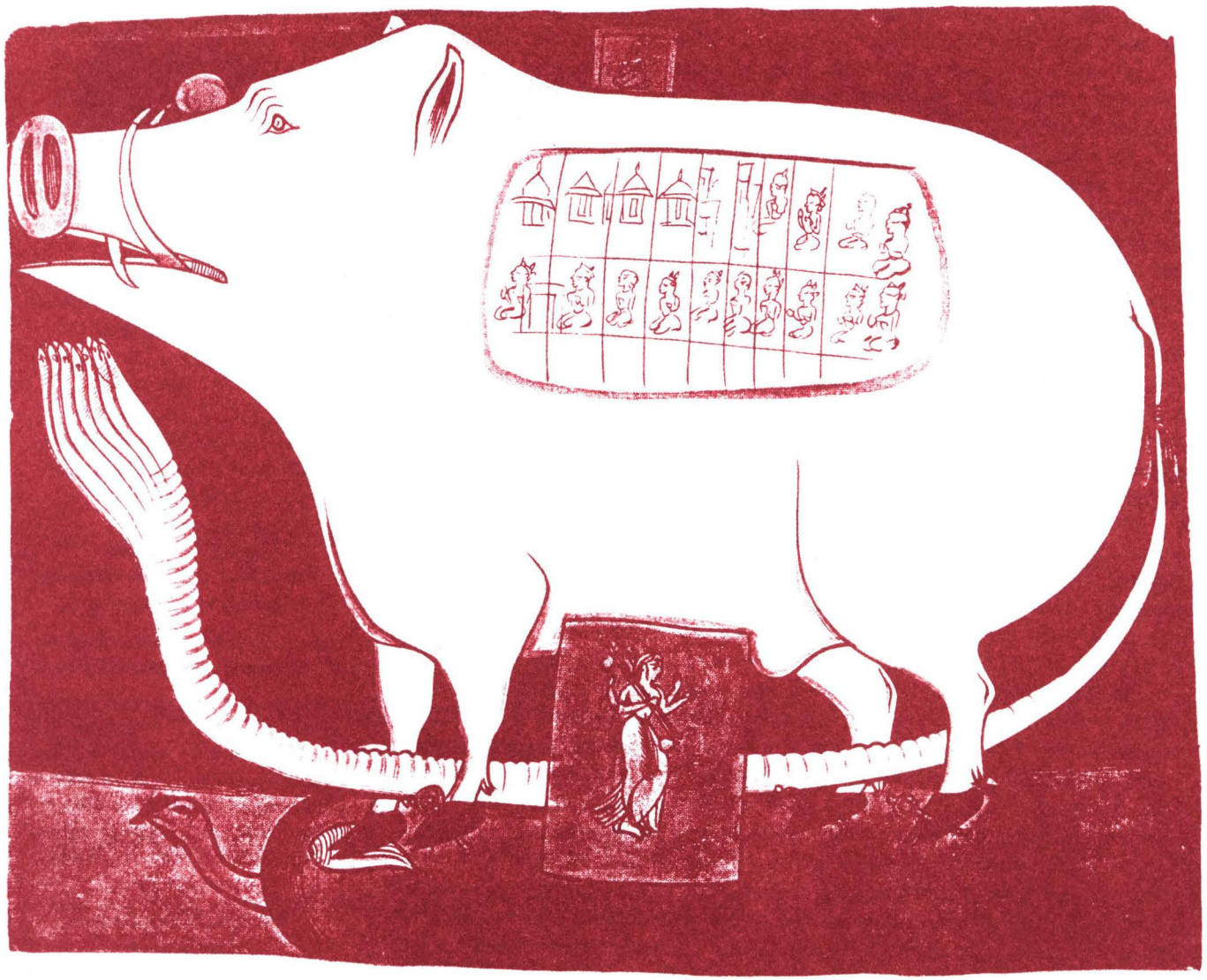
TURNING WHEEL

Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship *Winter 1993 $3.00*



❖ ***Special Section on Animal Rights***
Pigs, Chickens, Leeches, and Other Friends

❖ ***Reb Anderson on "Life Is Not Killed"***

❖ ***Eyewitness on the Burma Border***
Revolution and Malaria

BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP
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From the Editor

I used to think that people who worried about animal rights had their priorities mixed up. Why worry about rats in a lab when millions of people are being oppressed and killed by racism, militarism, materialism? And when I've told friends and relatives that I'm working on an issue of *Turning Wheel* about animal rights, I've often gotten negative reactions. "What about the underpaid lab workers?" "What about death squads in El Salvador?"

It's easy for us to forget that we humans are animals too. The kind of time I remember my animal nature is when I'm sick, curled up sweating in a nest of bedclothes, or when I'm backpacking, and I splash mountain water on my hot face. Or when I'm driven mad by poison oak. Once, broken-hearted over some tragic romance, I went to a peace group meeting and spent the evening lying on a friend's living room floor hugging her golden retriever while the rest of the people sat in chairs and talked about nuclear free zones. And when my kids were little, I felt more like an animal, wheeling them down the supermarket aisle, gathering wild nuts and berries.

Noticing our bodies, our blood, our longing for the sun's warmth, our animal selves, we notice our connection to other beings, whether they are (as Buddha put it) "egg-born, born from a womb, moisture-born or miracle-born." Surely the mind that thinks it's okay to stack chickens in tiny wire cages because they are other than us, and their suffering in some way doesn't really count, is getting practice at thinking that the 300,000 Iraqi civilians killed in American bombings are other than us, and so their suffering doesn't really count either.

Of course there are many more direct ways in which animal rights have an impact on human rights, and some of them are mentioned in this issue. Stephanie Kaza speaks of the suffering of people who work in the poultry industry. Vanya Palmers gives us statistics about the way in which factory farming, particularly the raising of beef cattle, uses up resources of land, water and energy which could feed all the starving people in the world many times over.

As Joan Tollifson and Diane Ames point out, animal rights is a subject which invites self-righteousness. Becoming converted to stricter and stricter vegetarianism, I find it a challenge not to be judgmental. I recently put a bumper sticker on my car which says "Boycott Veal." If I go to dinner at a friend's house and meat is served, I *could* say, "No thanks. I don't wish to support the unimaginable torture of innocent animals, the starving of Third World people, global warming, the destruction of our soil and the pollution of our water. I'll just have a little crust of bread, please." I'm reminded of how I felt 20 years ago when I became converted to the women's movement and I saw sexism all around me, including in my friends' conversation. I couldn't refrain from pointing it out, and I ended up leaving the dinner table in tears (mine or somebody else's) on several occasions. This time around I've managed to refrain from ruining any dinner parties. So far. I guess it's a function of age.

Nothing is simple. As meat-eaters are likely to point out, Hitler was a vegetarian. (Although this seems only to prove that vegetarianism is seen as deviant behavior in the West. Hitler no doubt did a lot of other things we do, too, like brush his teeth, but nobody makes an issue of it.) Martin Luther King Jr. ate meat. And W.C. Fields said, "Anybody who hates both dogs and children can't be all bad."

Animal rights is a vast subject, including vegetarianism, factory farming, lab animals, drug testing, cosmetics, crash testing of cars with animals inside, hunting, habitat destruction, zoos, circuses, pets ---- We can't begin to cover the topic in one issue of a little quarterly magazine, but by touching on some aspects of it, we can get you (us) thinking and talking about it. ❖ – *Susan Moon*

Spring '93 *Turning Wheel:* Race and Sangha. Deadline: February 16.
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Cover: Vishnu's 3rd incarnation as a boar, Rajasthan, ca. 1800

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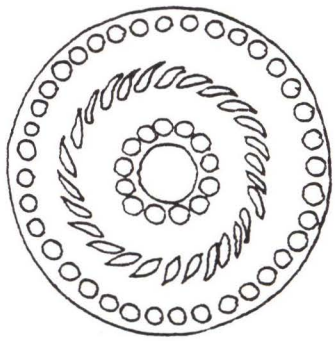
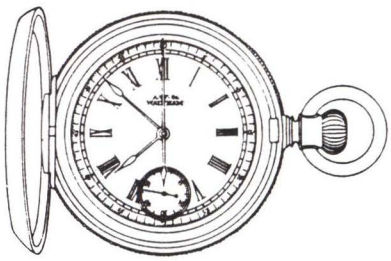
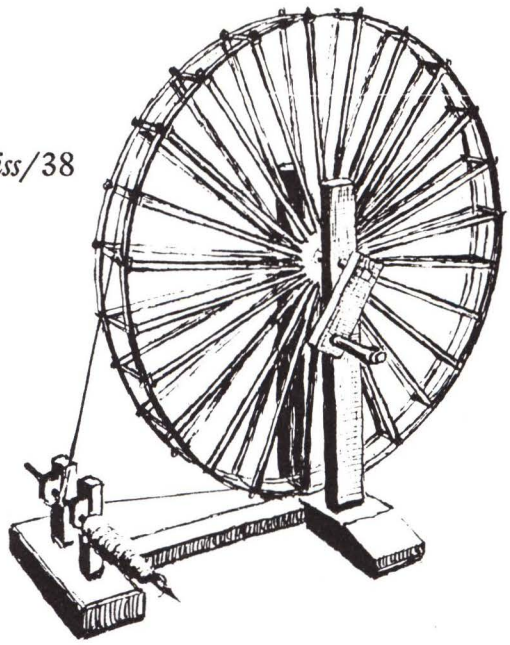






Traditional Japanese spinning wheel

LETTERS

Dear *Turning Wheel:*

The issue on gays and lesbians in the Dharma is excellent. Thank you and bless you for making all those good words happen. The time is coming when American Buddhism will offer a real refuge and home to gay folks in a homophobic society. You've helped us toward that end.

—Eric Kolvig, Leverett, Massachusetts

Dear *Turning Wheel:*

I really enjoyed the lesbian-gay issue, especially the fact that you included material about the importance of coming out and identifying as gay, as well as material questioning our need for labels and identities. Both sides of the paradox seem true to me, and I was glad to see them explored in such diversity and depth. As a queer reader (lesbian/bisexual who remembers what it was like to come out back in the Dark Ages, and who is lately into living without labels), I am glad to see all these issues moving out of the closet and into the Light of Day. Your exploration is an important contribution to the development of an ever more inclusive and flexible understanding of Community. Nine bows.

—Joan Tollifson, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dear *Turning Wheel:*

This letter is a response to your Summer issue on the Columbus Quincentennial. In October I observed all the Columbus activities in Europe. In one German newspaper the Chinese government was even ridiculed because they were said to claim that China discovered America. But it is well attested in Buddhist research that in 409 C.E., a Chinese monk, Hiu Shen, made a trip to Mexico to spread the Dhamma, returning in 450 with gifts and an official report for the Chinese Emperor, Yung-Yuan. (See "The Spread of Buddhism Throughout the Ages" in *Narada Felicitation Volume* by Olcott Gunasekera, Buddhist Publication Society, Colombo 1979.)

So who discovered the American continent? And was it 500 or 1583 years ago? I think it is not really important — but what counts is that the Eurocentric (US-centric?) way of thinking is limited, and as Westerners we should be critical of it. Since we know that America was discovered by a Buddhist missionary, we should at least consider it worth a note in an international Buddhist journal to oppose the widespread ignorance on this count.

—Inge Sterk, Chiang Mai, Thailand

READINGS

Sulak Sivaraksa Returns to Thailand, Faces Trial

Thai activist Sulak Sivaraksa, who fled Thailand 15 months ago after being charged with *lese majesté* (defamation of the monarchy), decided on December 14 to return home to fight the charges. He cited the new democratically elected government as a major factor in his decision. Sulak was met at the Bangkok airport by police, and later released on bail.

His trial, originally set for Dec. 24, 1992, has been postponed at least until Jan. 24, 1993. There has been significant international attention to Sulak's case, and the Int'l Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) is appealing for faxes and letters to the King, respectfully urging that the charges against Sulak be dropped. Sulak has long been on record as a supporter of the monarchy, and has carried out projects in the name of the royal family. It is important in this case that faxes be followed up by duplicate *letters* (sent via post office): begin "Your Majesty," and write to King Bumiphol Adulyadej, Chitlada Palace, Bangkok 10200, Thailand; fax 66-2-282-5984.

Thai monk Phra Prachak sentenced to a year in prison

Ven. Phra Prachak, the monk who began the process of ordaining trees in Thailand's Dong Yai forest to prevent their destruction by lumber poachers, was sentenced to a year in prison by the Buriram Provincial court on Dec. 3, 1992. The court found him guilty of "leading a mob attack on a Livestock Department research station" two years ago.

Another set of charges against Phra Prachak, relating to a violent clash on September 4, 1991, between villagers and soldiers and forestry officials, resulted in a six-month sentence, which was, however, suspended for two years.

Both cases against Phra Prachak are now under appeal.

Please write courteous letters asking for the reversal of the decisions against Phra Prachak. Begin "Dear Prime Minister Chuan," and send or fax to: Honorable Chuan Leekpai, Prime Minister of Thailand, Government House, Nakhorn Pathom Rd., Bangkok 10300, Thailand; fax 66-2-280-1443.

BPF National Office has full sample letters in defense of both Sulak and Phra Prachak, referring also to the larger social issues at stake; if you would like a model or more information, please call National Coordinator Alan Senauke at 510/525-8596.

Congressional Human Rights Caucus Urges Inquiry into Chittagong Massacre

Partly as a result of a BPF-sponsored meeting in

September between members of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and Ven. Bimal Tishya, a Buddhist monk from the beleaguered Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the Caucus has sent a letter to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia asking for an inquiry into the reported massacre of hundreds of Buddhist tribal people by Bangladeshi military and settlers on April 10 of this year (see Summer '92 *Readings*). Official government statements have said that only 10 Chakma tribespeople were killed in the incident, but several independent reports place the death toll anywhere at from 200 to 1200 hill people. Teams of human rights investigators and journalists have been denied access to the region of Khagrachari district where the incident was reported.

For more on Ven. Bimal, see *Coordinator's Report.*

Sri Lanka - South India Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life

Nipponzan Myohoji, the Buddhist group which has built Peace Pagodas in Leverett, MA and elsewhere, is sponsoring an "Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life" from the sacred peak of Sri-pada in Sri Lanka to Madras, India. The pilgrimage seeks a way for neighboring groups divided by fear and strife to live together harmoniously. All are welcome who will commit to the discipline of nonviolence and who will persevere through whatever difficulties may arise. The pilgrimage is planned for Feb. 25-April 14, 1993. Contributions are also welcome. Prospective participants should contact the coordinators immediately (the formal deadline was Dec. 25, 1992). Contact Nipponzan Myohoji, Peace Pagoda, Leverett, MA 01054; tel. 413/367-2202, fax 413/367-9369.

Protest Against Religious Repression in Vietnam

Vietnam Journal, a project of the Vietnam Human Rights Group, has devoted its premier issue to extensive documentation of religious dissent in Vietnam. Since the reunification of Vietnam in April 1975, the Communist regime has targeted for systematic repression the tradition-based Unified Buddhist Church (UBC), which had been well known during the war for its strong stance in favor of peace and human rights.

According to the *Vietnam Journal*, there has recently been a growing movement to unite all Vietnamese Buddhists, at home and abroad, behind the UBC and to reject the government-created Vietnam Buddhist Church. But events this last September and October have shown the government cracking down on the Buddhist dissent movement.

In late September, Venerable Thich Thien An, age 25, was reportedly tortured to death in Chi Hoa prison of Ho Chi Minh city (contrary to police rumors that he had committed suicide). Ven. An's crime was supporting the

appeal of Ven. Thich Huyen Quang, one of the UBC's two most prominent monks, for religious freedom and restoring the right of the UBC to carry out its activities.

Two other monks and a layman were arrested for distributing Ven. Quang's statements. One of the two monks, Thich Khong Tanh, had previously been detained from 1976 to 1986 for writing a letter to the Prime Minister protesting the military conscription of Buddhist monks.

In the face of the Vietnamese government's attempt to crack down on religious dissent, it is important to write letters to the Chairman of Vietnam's Council of Ministers appealing for religious freedom and the release of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam. You are also encouraged to contact your local congressperson.

Besides Thich Khong Tanh, the other monk arrested on Oct. 2 was Thich Tri Luc; the name of the layman arrested (on Sept. 15) was Nhat Thuong.

A well-written and respectful sample letter is available from Vietnam Journal, P.O. Box 1163, Burlingame, CA 94011-1163. (Subscription to the journal, which will appear three times annually, is available from the same address for $6 domestic, $8 overseas; it is free to those who cannot pay.)

Please begin your letter "Your Excellency," and write to: His Excellency Vo Van Kiet, Chairman, Council of Ministers, Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

FOR Statement on Somalia

The Fellowship of Reconciliation has issued a two-page statement on the U.S. military intervention in Somalia. While deploring the starvation and human suffering in Somalia, and recognizing the critical need for an urgent response to the activities of the armed rival factions there, FOR questions the long-term ramifications of the current U.N.-sponsored U.S. military action.

In particular, FOR points out that this military action cannot guarantee that the effort be a genuinely international coalition dedicated solely to safeguarding the channels of aid distribution, with no strategic benefits to participants during or after the conflict, that excessive force will not be used in the event of conflicts arising with or between warring factions and others, that the press will have freedom of movement and reporting, that troops will be withdrawn promptly, and so on.

FOR calls upon the U.N. to take charge of the peacekeeping operation, and urges that any restructuring within the country be effected by an agency without political, economic, or religious interest in Somalia (not by the U.S., which has strategic interests and a military base there). This work must be done with Somalis themselves, especially building on the efforts of Mohamed Sahnoun, former U.N. envoy to Somalia, who was making progress in negotiations with clan elders to take control of their country once again. ❖

Ecology Column —

ANOTHER REASON FOR BEING A VEGETARIAN

by Stephanie Kaza

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers in slaughterhouses and processing plants perform one of the ten most dangerous jobs in the United States, measured by rates of cumulative traumatic injury. Animal rights activists are quick to outline the suffering of chickens raised on factory farms and cattle grown with steroids and hormones. But what about the suffering of the people who process the animals, preparing their bodies for the supermarket? To eat this meat is to take into one's own body not only the animal's suffering but the human suffering as well.

In poverty-stricken northeastern North Carolina, Perdue Chicken Farms is the largest single local employer. As a leading producer in the poultry industry, Perdue is prospering under the increasing national demand for chicken, based on its relatively cheap cost and rising health and environmental concerns about beef. Poultry companies like Perdue tend to locate in places where unemployment is high, workers are unorganized and un-unionized, and land is cheap.

Uneducated and unskilled Afro-American women fill a large proportion of the assembly-line jobs, earning an average wage of $6 an hour. Almost half are heads of households dependent on their jobs for survival and support of their families. Some women process baby chicks, debeaking and inoculating them at a rate of over 2000 chicks per hour or 33 per minute. Others stand on their feet for 8-10 hours on cement floors covered with ice, water, chicken fat, and blood. They eviscerate, debone, and pack chickens at a rate of 90-120 birds per minute.

Lillie Watson, a now disabled poultry worker, said, "When I went to Perdue, I had two good hands and two good legs; now my hands no longer work. I have arthritis in both legs, and a number of other problems created by the industry. When I began to complain, they discarded me like a pair of old worn-out shoes." According to the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives, 79% of the work force suffers some form of degenerative health problem due to the pressure of repetitive motion and poor working conditions. It is not uncommon for the women employees of Perdue to become disabled by the age of 26, leaving them crippled and unable to work with their hands for the rest of their lives. Women who rise to supervisory positions often are expected to extend sexual favors to the white male foremen. These men routinely harass female workers with butt-slapping, yet no one who values her job can question this practice.

The situation is abysmal and fraught with personal risk. Some progress in worker empowerment is being made in northeastern North Carolina by community organizers of the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives. Hand-screening clinics have been started to diagnose early disorders and monitor the rate of injuries. Poultry workers are learning how to advocate for their rights through collective efforts. But mostly the story of the people behind the plastic-wrapped chicken breasts remains untold.

Though the taking of life is inevitable to support life, some versions of this taking involve more suffering than others. Factory chicken farming begins with the suffering of the chicks and the confining of clipped-wing adults. It progresses through the cold, arthritic hands of impoverished women to come to us, the consumers, in sterile, clueless packages of fragmented body parts. It is something to consider when you are standing by the meat counter trying to be a conscious bodhisattva. ❖

For more information about poultry industry worker organizing, contact the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives, 207 West Main St., P.O. Box 1033, Ahoskie, NC 27910; 919/332-4179.

Education Column —

THE CHILDREN'S WAR

by Patrick McMahon

Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and to prevent war.

—From the Tiep Hien Precepts of Thich Nhat Hanh

I got in a fight when this boy punched my brother in his stumic and I punched him in the moth and ramed his head in the light pool. He told his mom I got in truble my mom almost hit me.

—From "Conflicts At Home," by Jason, 10 years old

Punches and head-ramming are all in the course of a day for Jason and many of my third grade students. They go to recess as to a battlefield of ninja kicks and hard words. They line up at the classroom door, still shoving and kicking for their square foot of concrete. As they tumble in the door I'm overwhelmed with their complaints: "He said 'Yo mama is a female dog' . . . She took away my jump rope . . . Those boys touched my butt. . . ."

What would Thich Nhat Hanh do in my position? What means would he find to prevent war in these children's lives? The more I look into the precept the more impossible it seems. I once thought that if I protected the victims and punished the aggressors, I would fulfill the precept and meet a basic responsibility of my job: to provide a "safe learning environment." But day after day this ideal has been eroded under the sheer volume of conflict. While dealing with Jeremiah and Miranda over a broken pencil, in the back corner I can see Johnathan and Manuel baiting the class "Cootie Boy." One policeman to 32 children is a doomed ratio.

As I get to know the homes and neighborhoods from which my students come, it's clear they're all victims. While I'm taking attendance, a fresh-faced, dark-eyed girl mentions to me that an automatic weapon was discovered in her back yard last night. A straw-haired boy comes in limping; his father, drunk in front of the TV football game, tackled him on the living room floor. The parents themselves are casualties. A mother comes in for conference, red-eyed and sniffling, caught between her son's failing grades and her own failing battle with crack. How would Thich Nhat Hanh stop the killing, of spirit, health, family, community, in this civil war?

The best clue I've gotten is from a friend who advises, "Don't try to be a little boat of 'being peace.' There is no boat. Just jump in." Jumping in then, lately we've been studying conflict, violence, and fear in class. At least once a day we circle up for "Kid's Council." Embattled parties speak their grievances to the group, rather than just to me. The group offers additional information and possible solutions. Just being heard goes a long way toward lowering tension. Eyes hooded with defensiveness open up as the drama finds voice; attention is galvanized, and for the time being the acting out of conflicts comes to rest. There's a security for these children in standing on their own ground, rather than on the territory of adult moralisms. This fray is their realm of expertise. These are the factors they know so well — their family histories, their school careers, their courage, their treachery.

Of course I can't help but wish that their knowledge of each other included kindness, compassion, tolerance. But for now, they at least have a place to say what needs to be said, to see what needs to be seen. What they say and see doesn't fit moralistic boxes anyway. Bad is good. Obnoxious is attractive. I'll give the last word to Veronica, who writes with affectionate disgust of Jason, the head-rammer:

He talk to much he burps in my ears and I can't stand it he make ugly faces and think hes funny but I eghold him he play a round at lunch time on plege a legets he say the word out of place on perpis he crack nut on his head he bame his head on the wall and say it don't hurt and bame his head agint apples to he make people smell his socks and I can not stand it he drive me bananas and other frute to he farts to much and then say hes the good boy in the class. ❖

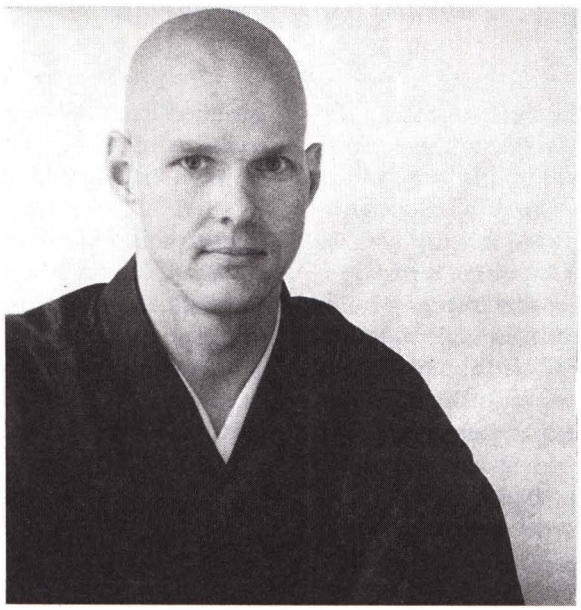
Patrick McMahon edits Teaching Circle, *a journal for educators who meditate. For more information, contact him at 2311 "C" Woolsey, Berkeley, CA 94705.*

THE FIRST GRAVE PRECEPT: NOT TO KILL

by Reb Anderson

The following article is based on two lectures given at Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery in the spring of 1992.

What is not to kill? When you meet a sentient being, to give complete attention to that sentient being, to be totally devoted to your friends, to your family, to your dog — that's not to kill, and that's what life is. If you practice like this, you will instantly be promoted from an ordinary human being into a Buddha. Devotion is instant promotion. But it must be total. You can't be holding back even a little bit. Put your entire life into this being or this activity, without expecting anything. Stay close and do nothing, and you will instantly become a Buddha, because that's what a Buddha would do. That's what not to kill means.



Dogen says, "Life is not killed." Not killing is not something you do, exactly, it's just the way things are, and your practice then is just the way things are. If you examine life thoroughly, you'll see that it's entirely interconnected. You cannot cut off an interconnected thing.

Life is not killed. This is a transcendent statement, not just a prohibitory one. Another translation of Dogen's commentary is, "One must not cut off life," and this matches our usual understanding of the precept. "Life is not killed" is very different from "One must not cut off life."

In the latter translation, Dogen Zenji is like a kindly grandmother, showing us a step-by-step practice by which we will become Buddha. But the way I'm reading the precept, it's not a step-by-step practice. It's a practice that's already over; Buddha has already happened.

Bodhidharma said,

Self nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of everlasting Dharma, not giving rise to the concept of killing is called the precept of not killing.

I think this means when the mind does not believe in the concept of killing, life is not killed. And because life is not killed, the mind can rest completely in its nature, which is not to have a view of killing.

If life were killed, how could the mind rest? The mind is life. And in the mind at rest, life is not killed. Buddha's mind is so stupid it can't think of such a clever thing as to cut off life. If Buddha could figure out how to do it, then Buddha could be a murderer. This is Bodhidharma's instruction. This is Dogen's instruction.

Kyogo, Dogen Zenji's dharma grandson, wrote a commentary on what Dogen Zenji said about the precepts. "Living and dying are not before and after," he says. And the Buddhist precepts and Buddhist teaching, too, have nothing to do with before and after. We don't reject the world and say there is no before and after; human consciousness is involved in before and after. But there's another way, called Buddha's way, which is not about before and after.

Kyogo says, "Just not taking life is the manifestation of the whole works." This means that the whole, everything, is working. And "the whole works" also means the whole universe. Another translation of "the whole works" would be "total dynamic working." It's everything working with everything towards everything, all together. So life is the manifestation of the whole works. Death is the manifestation of the whole works. And just not taking life is the manifestation of the whole works.

When we understand that life is the manifestation of the whole works, the words "to kill" and "not to kill" are beyond their literal meaning. I think of the little wind bell hanging like a mouth in emptiness, not being concerned with north, south, east, west, good, bad; just being a wind bell. Just hanging there as a manifestation of the whole works.

Life is just like this. Life is just life-ing. Death is just dying. That's all. Wind bell is just hanging. The wind is just blowing. It moves the wind bell. The wind bell is just moving. It doesn't wish it was moving in some

other direction. It is manifesting its gravity and the movement of wind, and this is all it does. It is the whole works, and that's enough. And that's so simple that the human mind can't stand it. That's why we receive this precept over and over again, so that we can stand being so simple.

Someone told me a story about this. This person was a monk at Tassajara, and a message was delivered to her that there was illness in the family. She has a good imagination, and she made up a world, a horrible world full of life that's not life-ing and death that's not dying. She imagined a world of life that can be cut off, and dying happening to things. And she became very upset, right in the peaceful little valley of Tassajara. She tried to find out what was wrong, calling all over the world, eliminating some possibilities as she contacted certain relatives, but coming down to a more specific set of possibilities: something must have happened to one of her children.

She was drowning in a poisonous sea. She was given a bunch of turnips to cut, and she asked the turnips to save her.

Then she went to work in the kitchen, totally distraught. Even though she was in a Zen monastery, she was drowning in a poisonous sea. She was given a bunch of turnips to cut. She asked the turnips to save her — she appealed to each turnip as she took it in her hand — and the turnips saved her. She got to cut the turnips.

The world of before and after was always a hairsbreadth's deviation away, but by continuously going back to the turnip and cutting it — thump! thump! thump! — she was saved.

Of course, later she found out that there had been a miscommunication, and everything she had imagined was a dream. She was released from the bad dream, and now she imagined that all the people she loved were happy.

Then she realized that this was just a dream too, and that the people she cared about might be utterly miserable. She couldn't know. But the point is that as she switched from dream to dream, where did her turnip go? She had lost her turnip again.

To go for refuge and to receive these precepts is like receiving a turnip. In fact, every moment we are given a turnip. And we just need to find out what is the turnip of this moment. What is the manifestation of the whole works right now? What frees us from this constant flow of dreams? What protects us from all the endless vanities?

Do you feel ready to be this sentient being? Do you feel ready to receive the precept of completely being yourself? The Buddha rejoices to see someone who receives this precept. Does anybody lack anything they need to receive this precept?

Suppose your back hurts. Suppose it feels as though a piece of heavy equipment is rolling over it. That's your turnip. A back with a steamroller going over it is a huge turnip. Be run over by it. That's what you have to work with. The way you get into the world beyond birth-and-death is through this body. This steamrollered body is your entrance point to that other world.

Or maybe you have a lot of doubt. You don't believe you can ever get to a world beyond birth-and-death. The not believing is another turnip that's given to you to save you. You have to have something to be saved by. Red, yellow, blue, green, white, form, not form, existing, not existing, cause and effect — we have to have something. You use the stuff of these dreams to save you from the dreams. In the midst of the dreams you have to find something that you pick up and say, "This is my thing to work on."

But sometimes the pain is too much. Like the woman I just told you about, you go crazy. If the pain destroys your ability to practice patience, then you're cooked. You're temporarily disqualified from the game. But when you see the consequences of that, you come back. Maybe somebody walks up to you and says, "Sister, regain your presence of mind." Maybe the pain's not so bad anymore. Maybe it's the same. Maybe it's worse. But anyway, you come back into it, and you say, "I'm going to work with this turnip." Thump! "I'm going to receive the precept of life-is-not-killed. I may have to cry my way into it. I may have to slide my way, but somehow I'm going to get into this body that I've got. I'm going to get into this mind that I've got. And I'm going to use this to save myself."

When human beings accept a precept, and they hear it in terms of past and future, they say, "Oh, I know what that means. I'll accept that precept." They are working on their ethics, which is fine. But when human beings accept a precept after hearing that this precept is not about past and future, then they have willingly accepted something which they do not understand. Usually people say, "I don't want anything that I don't understand. Get that away from me." They want to be able to say to themselves, "I don't have any foreign bodies in here. Everything I've got here is part of my system." But when you know that these precepts are not in the realm of human comprehension and you still receive them, you are like a Buddha.

This receiving is free of marks. If someone gives you something that you don't understand, you just take it. You can just receive a turnip. Or in the morning you can say to yourself, "I receive this precept." It's a kind of ceremony. Life is not killed. You've not only received something you don't understand, you've received something which is potent and vital.

This precept is about you being you completely. This, too, we do not understand. It is inexhaustibly vast to be us; we are the manifestation of the whole works.

After you receive the precept you aren't different than you were before. But if you don't receive it, you don't know that. That's the advantage of receiving it. It's like a robe. The point of putting on a robe is to understand that it doesn't make any difference. There's no difference between receiving the precept and not receiving it.

There are three levels on which to understand the precept not-to-kill. One level is the literal level, which is the same idea we grow up with in this culture: It's not right to kill. It's something you can do which you must not do. It's a given. In my childhood, and probably yours too, killing was just something we didn't do around the house.

The next level is the compassionate level. Sometimes you may need to kill in order to be helpful. Sometimes it's more compassionate to violate the precept in the literal sense, just as you need to lie sometimes in order to benefit beings.

At the third level, this precept is not talking about killing and not killing. This precept is pointing out that either of those ways of looking at things is violating Buddha's mind. To think that you can kill is violating this precept. And thinking that you could successfully keep this precept in a conventional sense is also violating this precept. If you are afraid of being killed, it's because you think you can kill someone. People who believe they can kill need some way to stop themselves from acting on their belief.

But to think of killing and to realize it's not possible — that's not to think of killing. That's just seeing killing as a unicorn or a chocolate moon, a thought without substance. This precept points to the practice of living in this world without giving substance to the thought that you can kill.

Thinking you can kill, and thinking you cannot kill both violate the precept, not to mention killing and not killing.

Anybody who is afraid of being killed is somebody who thinks they can kill somebody else. People go to war because they're afraid they're going to be killed. But somebody who knows for sure that they can't kill anybody, somebody who knows for sure they won't kill anybody, will not be afraid of being killed, and therefore won't go to war. Not only that, but they won't be killed. And they won't die. Life doesn't die. Life is infinite and unbounded. Life is just life-ing, and then it's gone. It changes. And if death happens, that's it. There's just death. Don't expect any other result.

If you let death be death, you go to heaven. But if you want death to give you some other result than death, that's misery, and you're not dying, or going to heaven either. There's a song that says, "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die." In order to go to heaven you have to die. On time. Death's time, not yours. Also, you get to go to heaven if you just live, and for us human beings to be alive when we're alive, we have to die to before and after. And that's heaven — the same heaven as the heaven you go to when death is death. As far as we can figure out, anyway.

You might ask: Why would it matter if I stabbed a bunch of people, since life can't be killed anyway? But why would you do that? Why would you stab people? Just to see the blood come out? A person who understands that life cannot be killed is a Buddha. Why would a Buddha want to stab somebody? A Buddha looks at a person and sees a Buddha. Why would a Buddha stab a Buddha? Such a being would absolutely not be able to kill anything.

You might ask: Why would it matter if I stabbed a bunch of people, since life can't be killed anyway?

According to worldly law, and the law of karma, people do kill people. In the mind of Buddha that doesn't happen, but Buddha can see that even the people who think that way are Buddhas, too, and she sees that no matter what they think, their life is not killed. The Buddha can see that people act out a dream of killing each other. The Buddha sees perfect beings causing themselves and each other misery, and Buddha does not see any life killed.

Maybe you are thinking about a situation like the Holocaust. Buddhism doesn't contradict the worldly view of what happened. Buddhism doesn't say, "That wasn't a problem." It was a problem. It is a problem. That's not what this precept is talking about.

Most of us have never seen anybody murdered. We've heard about it, but we haven't seen it. In our own life, perhaps the most horrific thing we've ever experienced is sesshin. But in one way or another, we've experienced before-and-after mind. This precept is asking you to give up before-and-after mind and enter a different reality. It's saying that if you would die to before-and-after and enter the actual present moment, you could bring a light back to the world and teach people what it means not to kill.

Buddha understands the mind that thinks we can be killed. Buddha doesn't say, "I don't know what you're talking about." Buddha comes into the world where people think that there's killing and not killing, and teaches. As a matter of fact, Buddha exists because of beings like that. Those beings evoke Buddha. If you have thoughts of before and after, and you believe in

them, you're miserable, but if you have such thoughts and see that they're delusions, you're happy. In either case, Buddha sees Buddha in you. Both views are perfect manifestations of the way things work.

Someone asked me if a Buddha could go to San Quentin Prison and teach that life is not killed, and at the same time try to work against the death penalty. Buddha would go into the prison to teach people when the people in the prison were ready to have Buddha come in. If they were in the middle of a fight, Buddha wouldn't walk in there. And Buddha would go to talk to the prison officials and the state government when they were ready to hear the Buddha talk.

They're probably not going to say, "We're ready for Buddha to come talk to us." But when they're ready, they will express it in some way. If they're not ready, the Buddha won't go and talk to them because it's a waste of time to talk to them before they're ready.

Everybody wants to know how to take care of things now before they die, or they want to know how they should take care of things after they die. "Before I go, what can I do?" Or, "After I've died and given up my attachment to birth and death, and I've gone to Buddha's land, then what should I do?" But this precept is not talking about how to apply the precept. This precept is pointing to how to become Buddha. Once you're Buddha, you can talk to people about the details of how to apply it.

In order to practice this precept, you've got to expect no other result than just not to kill. "Not to kill is just not to kill. Not to kill is one precept, not to kill is ten precepts." Not to kill is the entire world. There's nothing else. There's no application. That's the precept.

Now of course, if you accept the precept, you have just converted yourself into a beneficent being, and whatever you do will be beneficial in the world. And you can decide whether or not to stand outside of San Quentin, holding up a sign to abolish the death penalty. But we want everything we do to have some result right now. We don't want to be just who we are, just as we don't want to be totally devoted to another person, regardless of whether they improve their health, get educated, get better-looking, like us better, give us money — we don't want to do that. But that's what this precept is about. It's about total attention to this moment, to just sitting here, with no idea of any other result but: Just don't kill.

As Buddha said, you're like a person with an arrow in him who goes to the doctor and says, "What extraction procedure are you going to use? Is there going to be an infection following this? Am I going to be as good as I was before? Am I going to be as good-looking, or better-looking?"

After you believe that not to kill is just not to kill, do you think you could go stab people? And their blood wouldn't matter? Of course not. But when you receive the precept, you're giving up control, and you don't know what you're going to do after that. You can't go into Buddha's realm saying, "Well, I'll go in there, but you've got to guarantee that I won't do anything wrong after this, that I'll be politically correct afterwards, that people will still like me." In fact, you will be more compassionate than you are now, more effective than you are now, but maybe not in the same way.

We have to give up everything to enter Buddha's realm, but we don't have to kill ourselves. We just have to stay in the present, which is exactly the same as dying to each moment, so we can be alive in each moment. It's not a violent thing. You've got to do it kindly. You have to be patient with yourself, and notice how difficult it is to let go of this conceptual mind and to enter a realm where you can just suffer.

I don't mean to say it's easy to give up everything. I know it's hard. In the meantime, please try to acknowledge your suffering and to sit patiently in the middle of it with all sentient beings. When we sit patiently in the presence of our pain, we can see the outlines of birth and death, and we can see our attachments to it. And then we can see where it is we're going to let go. ❖

Reb Anderson is an Abbot of San Francisco Zen Center, which includes the temples at San Francisco, Green Gulch Farm, and Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery.

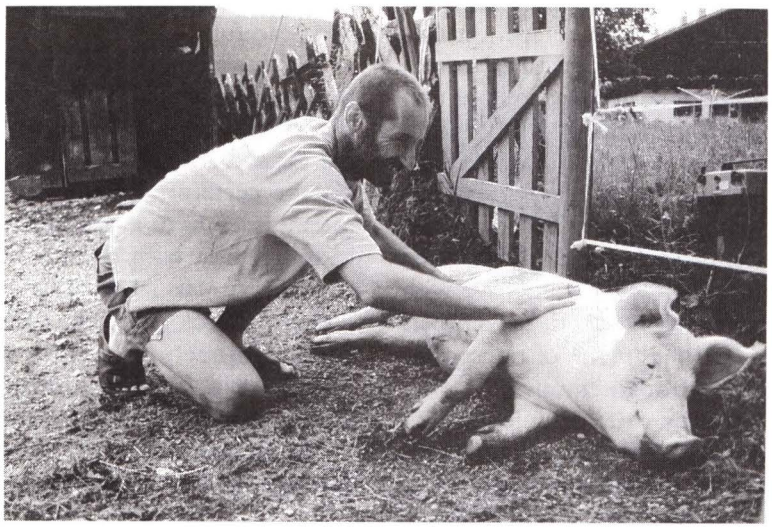
WHAT CAN I DO?

Ramblings of a Pig, Having Taken Birth as a Human

by Vanya Palmers

We humans are optical animals; we relate to the world predominantly through our eyes. So it's not surprising that it was a picture that first triggered my interest in animal rights. It showed a monkey in a "restraining chair," immobilized in the technical surroundings of screws, wires and plexiglass. My one-year-old daughter probably had something to do with the fact that this picture grabbed me. In the frightened, confused face of the monkey I saw — not just with my eyes but with my heart and body — the face of my daughter. It haunted me for days and nights.

Up until this point, I had not been particularly interested in animal rights. Of course I didn't think we should mistreat animals, but I left it to elderly ladies who doted on their pets to worry about animal rights. As for me, my primary concern was *bodhicitta,* the mind of enlightenment, and my social conscience was appeased by writing letters for Amnesty International. But looking at the monkey's face, I felt that something was very wrong, and I wanted to know more about it. At that time, I was living at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, and our contact with the outside world was limited to the mail and the monthly town trip.



Vanya and his sister

It was Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation* that gave me the information and the language to talk about what was burning inside of me. In 1982, educated and motivated by this excellent book, some friends and I at Zen Center started an organization called Buddhists Concerned for Animals, and over the next few years we published several newsletters. We used donations to send Peter Singer's book and other material to all the North American Buddhist Centers we knew of.

When it was time for us to leave the monastery and return to the marketplace, our opportunities increased. We gave talks, showed slides and videos, organized rallies, conducted anti-cruelty investigations, filed lawsuits, and networked with other concerned people.

In terms of outreach, the Buddhist part of our name eventually outlived its usefulness. We also felt the need to concentrate our energies in order to be more effective, and so we chose to focus on the relatively unknown subject of factory farming.

Brad Miller, a fellow practitioner at San Francisco Zen Center, founded the Humane Farming Association in 1985, and it turned out to be a tremendous success story. (I can say this without self-praise, because by that time I had returned to Europe.) With 70,000 members and a dedicated core group, the Humane Farming Association now has the muscle and political weight to effect real change. The Boycott Veal campaign, for example, has been putting a lot of pressure on farmers to stop the extremely cruel treatment of calves who spend all of their short lives locked in dark boxes too small for them to turn around in, and the campaign has reduced veal production by 60% nationwide.

After getting settled again in Switzerland with my wife and daughter and helping to establish a Zen center here, I was ready to turn my attention back to animal rights. This time it was pigs.

I wanted to learn how pigs would live without human interference. The pig is the smartest of domestic animals, somewhere between a dog and a monkey in terms of intelligence. We are told that the pig has been domesticated for so long that it has lost most of its original instincts. But students of ethology (animal behavior) in Europe started a project in which pigs from a commercial pig farm were released into a large nearly wild territory. Within hours they started to behave just like their wild sisters and brothers. They formed packs of several adults and their offspring, and built themselves nests.

Pigs have highly differentiated sound communications and tight family bonds. When the mother pig is ready to give birth, she withdraws from the group and

finds herself a protected place where she builds a special soft nest, about six feet in diameter and several feet deep, out of ferns, moss, grass and twigs. If she is on a factory farm, she looks frantically for a place to build a nest, postponing giving birth for several hours. In nature, she and her litter remain apart from the group for about ten days. She suckles her piglets for about 16 weeks, and they stay with her until they are grown. If a nursing mother dies, the piglets are suckled by another sow in the family. The males leave the family group at about a year, while the females remain. If the group becomes too large, it divides in two.

When the mother pig is ready to give birth, she builds a special soft nest out of ferns, moss, grass and twigs.

On a factory farm, baby pigs are separated from their mothers at three or four weeks of age. At this point their tails are cut off, their canine teeth extracted, the males are castrated — all without anesthetic — and they are put into dark crowded cages with slatted floors, where they will spend the rest of their lives living just above their own excrement. Pigs are famous for their sensitive noses. They can smell roots and insects two feet under the ground, which is why they make such good truffle hunters. Factory pigs live with no sun, no jumping, no grasses, no wind, no mother, and no escape, until the final nightmare of transportation to the *parinirvana* of the slaughterhouse.

We spent three years studying the technical details of factory farming and the law, lobbying, holding endless meetings, breaking into locked buildings, filing charges over a hundred times against agricultural schools, farms, and administrative departments, organizing rallies, writing articles and informing the public with slide shows and videos, and staging dramatic direct actions. For me, one of the most satisfying actions was showering the Swiss capitol of Bern with down feathers (from old pillows) to protest the import of "battery eggs," which are eggs from chickens who live their whole lives in wire cages with an 8" square per chicken. Battery eggs were outlawed in Switzerland by public vote 12 years ago.

Another one of our actions is to take live piglets, 8-12 weeks old, to schools and public places. Most people have never met a pig except on their plate, and children especially love to feed and scratch them and play with them. We make an event out of it, with T-shirts, balloons, and things to paint, cut out, and glue together. For this we have a little bus and a wagon for the pigs.

We have also created a 45-second spot film which is shown in movie theaters as our finances allow. The first shots are of free-range pigs building a nest, and of piglets jumping and playing in the woods; then come pictures of screaming pigs locked in separate cages; and the last shots are of a group of animal rights activists ranging in age from 12 (my daughter) to 80. A narrator's voice asks people to eat less meat and to support our work for animal rights.

We've done other things, too. A friend came back from Russia with a film about fur-farming, which he was able to show on Swiss TV during prime time. A few days later we organized a simultaneous demonstration in every city in Switzerland, in which people poured red paint on the sidewalks in front of fur shops. This action received good press coverage and good response from the public.

A few weeks ago I was on a retreat with Sister Phuong, the Vietnamese nun who works with Thich Nhat Hanh, and I asked her about this kind of aggressive action. She said that the spirit in which we act and speak is of crucial importance. I'm happy to report that throughout the action at the fur shops we were joyful and peaceful.

We've also had a good time recently with His Most Serene Highness, Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein. His land holdings in Austria contain that country's largest pig factory. He may not even have known this before, but he certainly knows it now. After unsuccessful attempts to have a dialogue with him, we filed suit, charging him with cruelty to animals and with false advertising. (His labels claim his pig-factory is "animal-friendly," "ecological," etc.) We distributed photographs of the princely pig cages to every household in Liechtenstein. The largest daily newspaper in Switzerland picked up the story and gave it big headlines.

But in spite of three years of activism, the conditions for pigs on factory farms in Austria and Switzerland

We distributed photographs of the prince's pig cages to every household in Liechtenstein.

haven't changed much, and it doesn't look as if they will in the near future. So our new focus is to urge people to eat less meat and dairy products, and we do this by educating them as to the destructive effects of eating meat on their health and the health of the whole planet. A few relevant statistics follow this article.

A few months ago, a friend of mine who is a Catholic priest in Vienna brought a Zen master from Morocco to visit me, accompanied by six practitioners. They were friendly, and experienced in the practice. But I couldn't help feeling distressed when, at dinner, all of them ordered heavy meat dishes. It's hard for me to understand how such awake people can have what seem

to me to be such blind spots, but I know that cultural conditioning and lack of information have a lot do with it. I didn't say anything at dinner, but later I had a lively correspondence with the Moroccan Zen master, an open-minded man in his seventies. I argued that it wasn't just a question of the precept of not killing (although Shakyamuni considered it important enough to put it at the top of the list); eating meat causes problems that didn't exist 2500 years ago, or even a few decades ago, just as the nuclear threat, global warming and the ozone hole didn't exist. I sent him pictures, and once again, these were the persuasive argument.

The suffering inflicted in the course of today's meat production is enormous, and I can't imagine that anyone who learns about it would want to support it, least of all a Buddhist.

May all beings be happy! ❖

Vanya Palmers is Swiss, born in Austria. He came to San Francisco Zen Center in 1973, and returned to Europe in 1983. Along with Brother Steindl-Rast, he started a mountain retreat center in the Austrian Alps, and he also takes care of a small zendo in Lucerne, Switzerland. By profession he is a jack of all trades.

The following figures are from Earth Save, 706 Frederick St., Santa Cruz, CA 95062.

Health

• Increased risk of breast cancer for women who eat meat daily, compared to women who eat meat less than once a week: 3.8 times higher.

• Increased risk of fatal prostate cancer for men who consume meats, dairy products and eggs daily as compared to sparingly: 3.6 times higher.

Resources

• In the United States, over one third of all raw materials consumed — including fossil fuels — are devoted to the production of livestock.

• 64% of U.S. cropland is given over to the production of livestock feed.

• It takes 78 calories of fossil fuel to produce one calorie of beef protein. It takes two calories of fossil fuel to produce one calorie of soy protein.

• Livestock production accounts for more than half of all water consumed for all purposes in the U.S.

In California, number of gallons of water needed to produce one edible pound of

tomatoes	23
potatoes	24
wheat	25
apples	49
milk	130
eggs	544
chicken	815
pork	1630
beef	5214

World hunger

20 million people will die as a result of malnutrition and starvation this year.

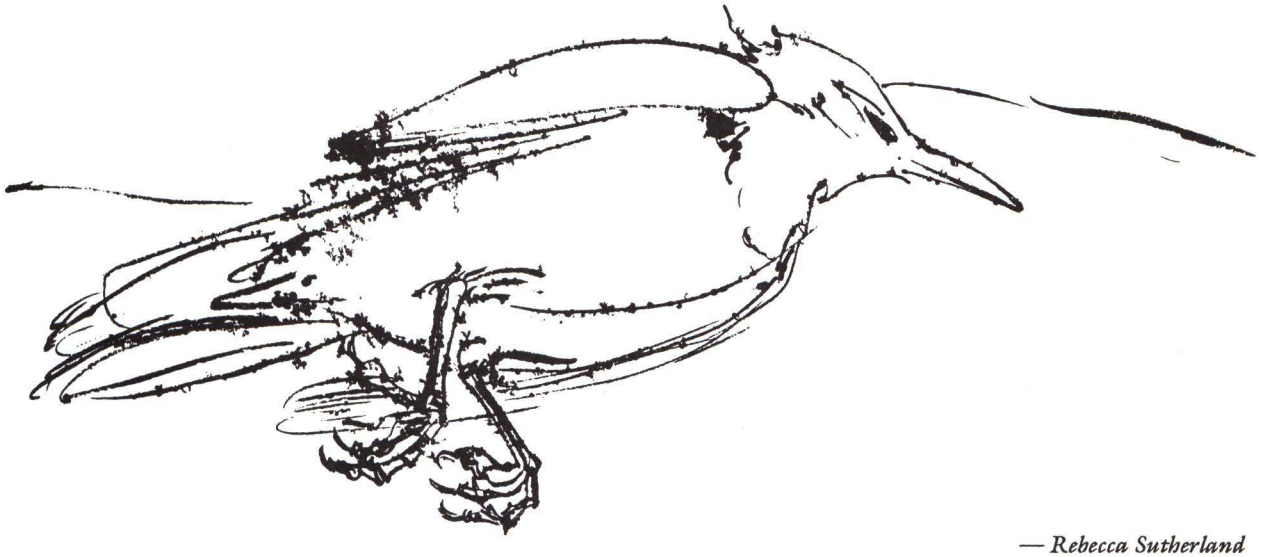
100 million people could be fed using the land, water and energy that would be freed up if Americans reduced their intake of meat by 10%.

Rainforest

In Central America, cattle ranging has destroyed more rainforest than any other activity. 40% of the new cattle ranches in the Amazon go out of business within eight years, because their soil base is so depleted from overgrazing.

Global warming

World livestock production is now a significant factor in the emission of two of the four global warming gases: carbon dioxide and methane. Every steak we eat has the same global warming effect as a 25-mile drive in a typical American car. ❖



— Rebecca Sutherland

FOOD

by Joan Tollifson

Some months ago I promised *Turning Wheel* an article on the politics of food: the horrors of factory farming, the ethical and spiritual imperative of the vegan diet, my own experiences as a newly enlightened macrobiotic. But before I got around to writing it, while driving from California to New Mexico, I stopped at Denny's to eat. I ordered the grilled chicken dinner. By the time I reached Arizona, I had the guidebook to Denny's nationwide locations in the front seat with me and I had eaten many grilled chicken dinners. The very sight of the yellow Denny's sign outside of Albuquerque made my heart flutter with excitement. After a few weeks in Santa Fe I was not only continuing to eat grilled chicken, but I was also drinking coffee with half-and-half and eating bars of Swiss chocolate.

The very sight of the yellow Denny's sign outside of Albuquerque made my heart flutter with excitement.

A few days ago Sue Moon called me up to see how the article was coming.

"It isn't," I told her. "I've been eating chicken at Denny's and drinking coffee. It would be totally hypocritical for me to write that article now, wouldn't it?"

"Oh no," Sue said, "not at all. I'm tired of self-righteous, morally superior diatribes. It could be a great article!"

So here I am, writing a different article from the one I imagined.

I have no moral objections to eating meat per se. Life feeds on life — that's part of the great mystery. We are all food. But I do object to the way it's possible in our culture to do it without having to take responsibility for the killing of the animals. It's like flush toilets. The living, breathing, ecological realities are hidden from us, and we therefore make greater and greater errors in judgment because we don't see what we're really doing. I've always said that no one should eat anything they aren't willing to kill. But I have broken my own rule countless times. I probably couldn't kill a chicken unless my life depended on it. I share the collective illusion that the chicken I'm eating isn't really chicken, that the problems we face can somehow be magically flushed away at the last minute. Even though we all know better intellectually, the illusion persists on a deeper level. And next thing we know we're gleefully ordering dinner at Denny's.

As a child, I felt a deep affinity with animals. I even wanted to be a Jain, a follower of that religion in India whose adherents wear masks to avoid inhaling bugs and inadvertently killing them. As I grew older, I forced myself to put what I came to regard as my sentimentality aside and focus instead on the apparently more serious and pressing issues: imperialism, patriarchy, racism, class division. For many years I regarded animal rights as a lesser concern, a white middle class luxury item on the laundry list of political causes. Ecology suffered from the same kind of stigma for awhile. I had more important business, or so I thought.

I woke up to the importance of ecology long before I began paying serious attention to animal rights or factory farming practices. John Robbins was my first awakening to how all these issues are interconnected, and to the global importance of animal rights. A number of years ago someone gave me a copy of Robbins' then newly released book, *Diet for a New America,* and insisted that I read it. I didn't want to read it. I hate reading about cruelty to animals, and this was an exposé of the factory farming system. I thought I already knew what there was to know about it anyway. But my friend insisted in such certain terms that I forced myself to begin. I'm glad I did.

This is a book I wish every human being would read, and a must for anyone with an engaged Buddhist orientation. It's not comfortable to read, but I discovered (once again, surprise, surprise) that the truth is more empowering than denial, however painful it may be.

Factory farming is becoming the norm, and it's worth learning exactly what that means, in concrete terms. I suspect that you will be as shocked as I was by what is going on nationwide. You may already know that animals are treated as commodities, not as living beings. But the level of insensitivity and cruelty was beyond my wildest nightmares. Pigs, for example, live crammed into steel cages one third the size of a twin bed, often in continuous darkness. The cages are stacked and have slatted floors which deform the pigs' feet. Pigs below are covered in the excrement of those above. The air is saturated with the smell of ammonia. Unable to move, the pigs become so top-heavy that their bones and joints crumble beneath them. Genetic engineers are at work to create a new improved pig who can be better stacked and ever more quickly and cheaply reproduced and fattened up. Following is some advice for hog farmers, from *Hog Farm Management:* "Forget the pig is an animal. Treat him just like a machine in a factory. Schedule treatments like you would lubrication. Breeding season is the first step in an assembly."

Robbins exposes how the dairy and meat industries are powerful political forces, like the tobacco industry, and shows how everything we learned in school about diet (remember the Four Food Groups?) was prepared by the American Dairy Association. He provides extensive evidence of the links between meat and dairy consumption and cancer, heart disease, and strokes. He documents how increasing numbers of young children are experiencing premature puberty as a side effect of hormone consumption in meat, milk, and poultry products.

There is something liberating about this (hopefully temporary) downfall into chicken and chocolate, and it has to do with abandonment of limiting ideas.

The animals we eat have been fed on chemicals, tortured beyond belief and treated as objects. You are what you eat, and eating such food must contribute in some way to the increasing violence of our culture, not to mention the ever-growing trend of auto-immune diseases and cancers. Robbins shows how cattle-farming is a major cause of ecological destruction (from the felling of the rainforests to increasing desertification of grazing lands to global warming), and how cattle-based land use is a major cause of world hunger.

After I read the Robbins book, I wanted to stop eating dairy products. I was already primarily vegetarian, except for occasional fish or poultry, and I wanted to give that up, too. I had a dream — one of those prophetic type dreams — that if I followed the macrobiotic diet, all my problems would be solved, not just physical ones, but all of them. You may laugh, as I laughed, too, back when I first heard of macrobiotics and read a book which propounded the macrobiotic diet as the key to world peace. But funny thing, I don't think that's so far off the mark anymore.

I discovered though that life without dairy products wasn't easy. Dairy foods are comforting, narcotic substances. I am addicted to them. Life without cheese enchiladas or chocolate cake seemed barely worth living. Furthermore, such a diet makes it even harder to live in this world than simple vegetarianism, harder to be in social situations that involve food, harder to find the foods you need in stores and restaurants. Friends and family members may find your restrictions frustrating and annoying. They may think you're an obsessive-compulsive, and you may wonder if they're right. I spent two years on staff at a meditation retreat center, and the diet there included eggs, milk, cheese and sugar. So despite my good intentions, I found myself continuing to indulge (at least periodically) in foods I no longer wanted to consume for both ethical and health reasons.

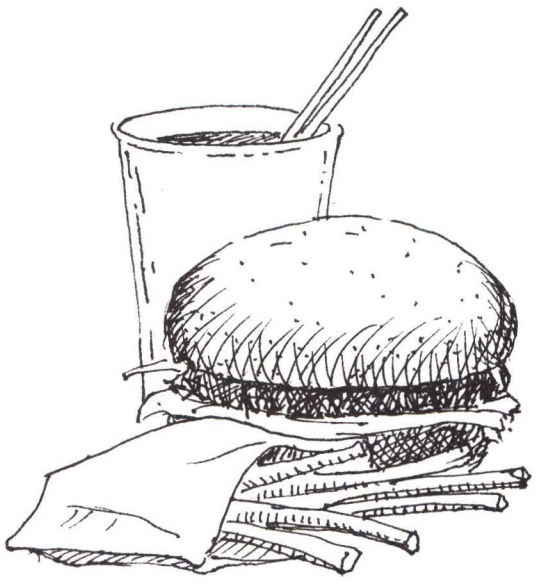
But finally this past summer, after I had left the meditation center and returned to Berkeley, I went onto a strict macrobiotic diet. The impact was amazing. I felt incredibly different almost immediately. I woke up early, full of energy. I was no longer exhausted in the afternoons, as I had been for years. Beyond my increased energy, the whole quality of my consciousness was different. There was more light. More space. I was much more grounded emotionally. Difficult situations didn't phase me at all. My mind was relaxed, far less prone to spinning out on thoughts. I felt great! It went on like that for several months. I was a walking advertisement for macrobiotics.

[If you're interested in looking into an alternative diet, a great place to begin is with *The Self-Healing Cookbook* by Kristina Turner (Earthtones Press, Grass Valley, CA). This book explains the basics of macrobiotic theory and cooking, gives wonderful recipes and information about foods, and does it all in a gentle, humorous, warm-hearted, supportive way. You'll feel nurtured just reading this book.]

And then in mid-October came my drive to New Mexico and my downfall into Denny's. I was on the road. There weren't a lot of options. And next thing I knew I had been sucked back into an addictive food pattern.

There may be a positive side to my fall from dietary grace.

When you get into the clean and sober life, the macrobiotic diet, meditation, recycling, politically correct behavior and all the rest, especially in the beginning, you can become inflexible, humorless, defensive, overly



concerned with your own health and the future of the world (as if you could control it or know what is best for it). You are trying too hard somehow. There is something liberating about this (hopefully temporary) downfall into chicken and chocolate, and it has to do with abandonment of limiting ideas, with discovering that the essence of enlightenment or health is beyond any system of behavior.

This isn't to say that nothing matters and we should all live as recklessly as possible. Our society encourages narcotic, destructive behaviors. Billboards on every block urge us to drink, smoke, and eat junk food. It's hard to sober up, go off drugs, quit smoking or meat-eating, partly because it threatens the social fabric that is built around those activities. The one who stops is not always loved by those who continue to indulge, and often has to establish new friendships. I know I did, as I moved away from all those activities.

I would like to see a world without factory farming, without excessive meat consumption or rampant alcoholism and drug addiction, without colonized countries turned over to cash crops, without people being strung out on sugar and caffeine and hormones and chemicals. I'd like to be able to stop at Denny's and order a macrobiotic dinner. Making a change in this direction seems vital to our survival. At the same time, I don't want to get too narrow-minded about it. I recognize that day and night go together somehow.

Aitken Roshi said somewhere that he eats meat if it's served to him, because the cow is already dead but the hostess isn't. Ayurvedic medicine — a completely different healing paradigm from macrobiotics — recommends milk and dairy consumption, and even ice cream! My mother is in her eighties and going strong on a diet that features liberal amounts of chocolate. I am sure that her delight in chocolate is as life-sustaining as miso soup and seaweed.

And on the cosmic scale, none of this matters. At some point the sun will explode and all of this will be history. A Zen priest once told me that Buddhism is a virus. So are animal rights, deep ecology and factory farming. Ultimately, we don't know anything. All political engagement needs to be informed by this radical not-knowing or it turns dogmatic, simplistic and stale.

It's snowing here in Santa Fe as I write this, and the snow is getting deeper and deeper. The world is disappearing. Shit Happens. Grace Happens. There is nothing but food and that which eats, so say the Upanishads. Maybe some day I'll be able to leave chocolate, chicken *and* dogmatism completely behind me. In the meantime, here I am, high on dark French roast coffee, writing this crazy patchwork article. ❖

Joan Tollifson is a peripatetic writer and occasional patron of Denny's, currently finishing a book based on her two years at Springwater, a meditation center in New York State.

— Bokara Legendre

Now you fleas!
You shall see Matsushima --
Off we go!

–Issa

R.H. Blyth, *Haiku* (Tokyo, Hokuseido Press, 1949), Vol. III, p. 192.

RENNYO'S LETTER ON HUNTING AND FISHING

by Diane Patenaude Ames

In the Jodo Shinshu, realizing a settled mind does not mean that we put a stop to our mind's evil or to the rising of delusions and attachments. If it be your lot, engage in commerce or in servitude or in hunting and fishing. Believe firmly in Amida Buddha's vow, which promises deliverance for evil beings such as we who are perplexed day and night by our shamefully evil karma.

—The *Gobunshô*, "Letter on Hunting and Fishing"

These are the startling words of Rennyo Shonin (1415-1499), the second founder of the Jodo Shinshu, a Japanese Pure Land school of Buddhism. They still express the orthodox Shin attitude towards people who must kill animals for a living.

Why? Because Shin emphasizes that no matter what we do, we cannot change the human condition. We are all trapped by the needs of this human body, for one thing. And if we try to ignore this fact in order to pursue a moral purity that we can never attain, we will only fall prey to strange and cruel delusions. In the treatment of fishermen in Muromachi Japan — and in the even worse treatment of hunters and butchers — Rennyo saw a case in point.

Then as now, Japan could not adequately feed her population without catching a lot of fish. This was embarrassing to a Buddhist people who believed that they ought to be vegetarians. (The fact that few of them were, that even Buddhist monks were often accused of sneaking seafood meals, did nothing to shake this religious ideal.) The problem was solved by stigmatizing the fishermen who killed the fish. People questioned whether fishermen had any hope of salvation at all. No one asked why they were supposed to incur more evil karma than their customers, who ate the fish, or how this was fair, seeing that occupations were hereditary. And it was all very demoralizing to fishermen.

Some people were treated even more harshly than fishermen, for the killing and eating of four-legged animals was regarded with pious horror. But an economy as poor as feudal Japan's could not afford to waste the carcasses of horses and oxen. When one of these beasts got too old to work, somebody had to slaughter it, somebody had to tan its hide and work the leather. And somebody had to eat the flesh, down to the brains and entrails of the old horses. This not only solved the considerable problem of waste disposal, it meant that the wretched tanners did not have to be given much else to eat. Nor much to wear; these hereditary outcasts were stereotypically portrayed as ragged and barefoot. Their very touch was considered polluting. They were called *hinin* ("nonhumans"), and they lived lives of unimaginable poverty and degradation. Many of their descendants still do, for their social status has not really changed. And of course it was all justified. They killed animals. They were impure.

In most cases, the option of eating a healthy vegetarian diet is only available to an elite (local or global) which does not have to eat whatever it can find in order to get enough nutrients. Buddhist monks were such a group in Rennyo's time. Those who were conscientious about diet were usually assured of enough tofu and vegetables to keep them alive and well, often to an unusually old age. Such a diet made them very pure. If the production of the soybeans and vegetables required the exploitation of oxen, no matter. After the oxen were worked to death, the impure nonhumans would haul them out of sight.

Similarly — if an undocumented farm worker gets dioxin poisoning while he is picking California's lettuce for almost no money, and the rest of us get cheap salads out of the deal, we do not blame ourselves. We deport the farm worker.

Only when we acknowledge our own hopeless egocentricity do we stop trying to externalize and disown it. That is one reason why, paradoxically, we have to face up to our essential moral hopelessness before any semblance of compassion becomes possible. That includes compassion for animals, because it means that we can admit our own responsibility for how society treats animals.

It also includes compassion for people, whoever they are. Rennyo converted countless fishermen and outcasts to Shin.

If we love animals too much to eat them, that is no doubt good. But as we eat our sprouted soybeans, we ought to be grateful, not, like the Biblical Pharisee, that "we are not as other men," but rather that the local supermarket is filled with tofu and exotic produce and we have the money to shop there. Let us thank our circumstances. It is through absolutely no merit of our own that we are not at this moment slaughtering our dogs for food. It is only that we are not trapped in Sarajevo. ❖

Diane Ames is a BPF member and has been a member of the Buddhist Churches of America for the past 14 years. She is an editor and librarian, and lives in El Cerrito, California.

CONFIRMING THE ORIGINAL INTIMACY

by Stephanie Kaza

The frogs had arrived. Sitting on my lab desk was a large box of leaping, croaking, squirming frogs. My 10th grade biology students were about to begin the frog lab. First part — observation of live frogs. Second part — dissection of dead frogs. The same frogs. The lab called for the students to learn all they could about frog movement, perception, and responses, and then to kill their frogs to see the internal organs. As their instructor, I saw the value of both parts of the lab. Some of my students, however, did not. They were quite sure they were not going to kill a frog. In fact, they called me a "murderer" for my willingness to participate in these experiments.

I struggled with their questions. Could I, in good moral faith, sincerely promote the killing of frogs for the purpose of learning? Learning what? That it was okay to kill for science? that science was exempt from moral authority? I offered them the option of writing a clearly articulated statement of conscientious objection, and I killed 13 frogs for students who couldn't do it themselves. By the time the lab was over, I knew I could not do another frog dissection.

— Nanda Currant

The students had given me a strong lesson in animal rights. They had questioned a basic premise of modern Western science — that the world is composed of separate objects which can be observed and manipulated in the search for understanding. This mechanistic view of the universe is the exact opposite of Buddhist philosophy and practice. The fundamental truth of interdependence means that all actions affect all other beings, and all actions offer the opportunity to practice compassion. Compassion for lab animals, compassion for food animals. Compassion for human habits of unconsciousness towards animals.

Examining Attitudes

Bodhidharma said, "Self nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the everlasting Dharma, not giving rise to concepts of killing is called the Precept of Not Killing"(1). Not killing, not killing life, not letting others kill, not giving rise to the mind of extinction — the precept is worded in many ways. The literal meaning is straightforward — Don't Kill. In looking at human relationships with animals, this raises many questions, at both the individual and collective level. How does one relate to animals — as pets, as symbols, as food, as clothing, as wildlife?

Stephen Kellert, Yale Forestry professor, has done several national surveys on people's attitudes towards animals(2). He describes nine general types: 1) *naturalistic* — strong interest in the outdoors and wildlife; 2) *ecologistic* — systemic understanding of animals in large populations; 3) *humanistic* — feelings of affection and attachment to individual animals, especially pets; 4) *moralistic* — concern for humane treatment of animals; 5) *scientistic* — animals as objects of curiosity and study; 6) *aesthetic* — artistic beauty and merit of animals; 6) *utilitarian* — practical and material value of animals; 7) *dominionistic* — satisfaction from mastery and control of animals; 8) *negativistic* — active dislike of animals; 9) *neutralistic* — indifference to animals. The most commonly held attitudes were humanistic, moralistic, utilitarian, and neutralistic. Attitudes tended to correlate with amount of education and geographic location, reflecting our socially conditioned ideas about animals.

Kellert looked for patterns of preference and aversion towards particular animals. He found that many people have strong aversions to rats, cockroaches, snakes, and animals that sting or hurt. In contrast, people have strong preferences for beautiful or admirable animals such as cats, hawks, or dolphins. Cows, chickens, and frogs were not high on either list. Many prejudices about animals are carried from generation to generation. Snakes are dangerous (not all are), women are afraid of mice and spiders (some women aren't, some men are), bats want to suck your blood (only one species).

A first step in not killing is to investigate one's culturally inherited habits towards animals. What *about* eating meat, i.e. animals? What *about* using cosmetics

tested on animals? What *about* scientific research that harms animals for the sake of new knowledge? One can also actively work the other side of the precept — "Encourage life." For example, you might choose to eat organically-grown food as an act of solidarity with the soil — soil teeming with worms, insects, microorganisms, fungi, and bacteria. You might choose to avoid sugar, coffee, alcohol, or drugs to encourage your own healthy life. Or you might buy locally grown vegetables to sustain the life of your regional economy.

The Compassionate View

The relative interpretation of No Killing is what Robert Aitken Roshi calls the compassionate view. One might also call it the relational view — not killing relationship with animals. To work the First Precept through the relative perspective is to look at patterns and processes that determine the fate of the animal as Other.

In the early 1900s, hundreds of thousands of mountain lions, bobcats, eagles, and coyotes were killed under a systematized bounty incentive program. Wolves and grizzly bears became extinct in many parts of their ranges from this hunting. Predators were pursued as "bad" animals threatening the lives of "good" animals — cows and sheep. These mass killings reflect a dualistic world view, in which people presume *their* needs and interests are more important than the needs of animals. These anthropocentric thought habits justify and perpetuate human domination.

To participate in the logic of domination is to give rise to the killing mind. The first precept calls for the practice of compassion — compassion for oneself, for one's own expression of the mind that kills, and compassion for others caught in the cycle of domination.

How then does one deal with animal deaths? All life forms depend on the death and transformation of other lives. As Gary Snyder says, "There is no death that is not somebody's food, no life that is not somebody's death"(3). Everything rises and passes away. One practices compassion for the impermanence of all existence. Snyder suggests that it is possible to approach an animal's death with respect and compassion. He speaks of native American hunting traditions in which the act of killing is a seamless part of a well-established relationship with the animal. Here hunting is not an economic activity but a religious one based on a spiritual view of the relationship between humans and animals.

For many Native American cultures, a person's relationship with animals is rooted in a pre-adolescent vision quest which marks the passage out of childhood(4). During the vision quest, the child is approached by an animal who speaks to him or her. In a state of altered reality, the child receives knowledge from the medicine animal. Hunting is one aspect of the actualization of the dream potential met in the vision quest. Respectful acceptance of the animal's meat allows the animal spirit to continue its journey unobstructed through the cycle of creation.

One's own death, in fact, can also be seen as an offering — to be consumed by the small animals of the soil. Thich Nhat Hanh points out the Buddha taught that four erroneous perceptions are at the root of human suffering — false perception of one's identity as a self, as a person, as a living person, and as a life span(5). "To think that we begin our life at the moment we are born and end it the moment we die is called the 'view of life span'" Lifting a single individual life up as centrally important is a form of killing mind. Human lives, in fact, are made of the lives of animals — a seamless lineage across millions of years of evolutionary time.

One's own death can also be seen as an offering — to the small animals of the soil.

Dogen Zenji, ninth century Zen master, suggests in the *Genjo-koan* that to be fully human, we must be confirmed by the non-human: "That the self advances and confirms the myriad things is called delusion; that the myriad things advance and confirm the self is enlightenment."

He presents a challenge for understanding our relationships with animals. To confirm the original intimacy with animals we must look deeply into each relation, each action, each thought. With species disappearing at an alarming rate and animal habitats being destroyed by the thousands of acres daily, human/animal relationships desperately need our attention — before all the elephants and jaguars are gone, before all the rainforests are converted to cattle pasture, before all the agricultural soil is sterilized. ❖

Footnotes

1. Robert Aitken, *The Mind of Clover,* San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984, p. 22.

2. Stephen R. Kellert, "Perceptions of Animals in America," in *Perceptions of Animals in American Culture,* R.J. Hoage, editor, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Press, 1989, pp. 5-24.

3. Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild,* San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990.

4. Sam D. Gill, *Native American Traditions: Sources and Interpretations,* Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1983, pp. 21-27.

5. Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion,* Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1992, pp. 40-41.

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THE LEECH HALL OF FAME

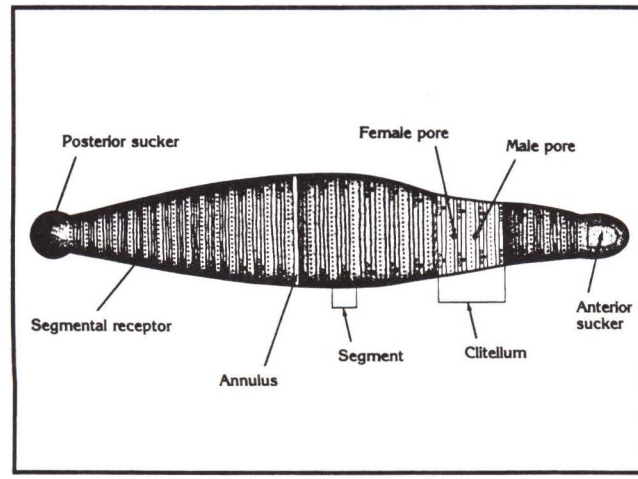
by Marilyn Stablein

Not far from the base of the world's highest glaciers in the Himalayas, the terrain is dense with tropical banana trees and century plants. Once, when I trekked out of Darjeeling and crossed the Indian border into Nepal, I found that leeches thrived in the moist meadows of snow melt. Leeches lived in the grasses and ground cover and sometimes dropped from overhead branches.

When I walked in leech country, every tickle or twitch was cause for concern. I scrutinized the surface of my skin each night for black bodies. Where I couldn't see, I felt for suspicious knobs. I inspected every crevice before I slept: under my chin and arms, behind my ears and knees, between my toes. I didn't want to wake up and find a gluttonous leech attached to my flesh.

I first saw leeches in a movie — I think it was "The African Queen." The leeches were a sinister waterborne menace. The actors pulled the blood-suckers off the skin carefully to avoid hemorrhaging.

Pioneer American doctors carried jars of leeches to apply to patients' skin as a blood-letting remedy. At the first sign of inflammation, an old medical text suggested, "apply leeches in good numbers equally distanced from one another."



When I walked in leech country, I worried about my most vulnerable area, only a part of which I could see. To pee outdoors, I had to squat perilously close to the grass where the leeches abounded. What if a leech attached itself to a sensitive spot and bored into a deep place I couldn't see?

And what about menstrual blood? A leech affixed in the appropriate cavity in a woman's body might even be useful when the flow is heavy. And it's possible the gentle, consistent sucking of a leech might even be pleasurable depending on the area of attachment.

Walking in leech country was spooky. The constant menace lurked in the back of my mind. I compared the parasites to hungry ghosts who, because of bad karma, are reborn into one of the hellish Buddhist realms where they suffer constant thirst or hunger. Whatever these hungry ghosts or *pretas* drink, a continual fire still rages in their stomachs. Their gullets are so small they can't swallow enough food or drink to appease the fierce gnawing within.

Leech stories were common in the mountains. A traveling pilgrim told me about a mother who was awakened by her baby's howling one night. When she went to see why the child was so upset, the mother found a leech firmly attached to one of the baby's eyes. The leech had expanded from the size of a chick pea to the length and thickness of the mother's thumb. The baby never regained sight in the eye that was sucked clean by a leech.

I heard another leech story from a fellow American traveling in the Himalayas. For weeks he suffered from piercing headaches and a bloody nose. He consulted an *ayurvedic* doctor, who gave him a medicine, but it had no effect. The headaches continued, and one day after the man blew his nose, a friend spotted the tail end of a black leech retreating back up one of the nostrils. A group of villagers gathered and with a skill only they possessed, extricated the leech from the depths of the man's nasal passage. Since the leech was the largest ever seen, it was put in a jar of formaldehyde and packaged carefully to survive the long journey over land and sea to the Smithsonian Museum where it now resides. The man's headaches and nosebleeds continued for a day, then cleared up.

In one of the Jataka tales, the Buddha was born as a tigress in an early incarnation. During meager times, the tigress was unable to find sufficient food for her two cubs, so, in a supreme gesture of compassion, the tigress gave up her body to nourish her offspring. Before my trek, I'd visited the site on the outskirts of Kathmandu where this sacrifice took place. Only a few trees and a shrine marked the spot the Nepalese and Tibetans call *Stamo Lujin*, the place where "the tigress offered her body."

After that historic sacrifice, Buddhists considered the gift of flesh a noble offering, whether the flesh was consumed or not. Fingers, for instance, were considered noble sacrifices. It was not uncommon to see a monk on pilgrimage missing a finger. In the grand scheme of divine retributions, the karmic rewards for such extreme offerings are far greater than for more ordinary offerings of, say, money, incense or fruit.

Sometimes I wondered if a compassionate Buddhist

would consider intentionally nourishing a parasite like a leech. A Buddhist would never kill a leech, but possibly the sacrifice of a few ounces of blood from an extended arm could be construed as a meritorious act.

On my trek through the land of the leeches, I resolved to offer prayers to the leeches I encountered. I wouldn't hold out my arm and invite a leech onto my skin to taste my blood, but I prayed for those leeches who were lucky enough, in spite of my surveillance, to find a patch of skin and gently bore through my flesh, mingling our bloods.

If I found a leech soon after it punctured my skin, it was easy to disengage. When a leech went undetected for a time, however, the body puffed up and was harder to detach. If I forcefully yanked a bloated leech off my skin, it left a gaping wound that bled profusely.

On one occasion a leech became so large I was afraid to pull it off. What if some of the body remained behind? Or was I confusing a leech with some other parasite like a tick? My prayers then were gentle, practical and persistent urgings. "Be thankful for the gift of nourishment," I chanted, "and relinquish your firm hold so both of us can go on with our lives." To hasten the process, I poked around the area of attachment to help loosen the suction.

"Relinquish your firm hold," I chanted,
"so both of us can go on with our lives."

Finally the leech gave up its grip. The wound bled but didn't hemorrhage. The leech, about the thickness of a pencil, rolled off my skin and I placed it to the side of the path, out of the way of passing travelers.

I let go of anger. What good would anger do anyway? Rather, this was an opportunity for me to practice giving, even if my gift was involuntary. The blood was an offering, I convinced myself. I prayed that my blood would nourish the leech and help us both achieve a better rebirth in the next incarnation.

I wondered also if I would gain greater merit the more blood I lost. After the wound stopped bleeding, I thanked the leech, but not for the amount of merit I may have attained, as that would constitute greed on my part. My desire for merit was no better than the leech's desire for nourishment. Desire was a poison to avoid. I thanked the leech for the gift of its teachings about sacrifice and compassion. ❖

Marilyn Stablein is a longtime practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, currently living in Lake County, California. She is the author of The Census Taker: Tales of a Traveler in India and Nepal. *This story is from a new collection called* Thinking and Sleeping in Caves: Six Years in the Himalayas.

THICH NHAT HANH ON THE FIRST PRECEPT

Following are excerpts from a lecture on the First Precept given by Thich Nhat Hanh at Plum Village in the summer of 1991. It will be included in a forthcoming book by Nhat Hanh on the Five Precepts from Parallax Press.

The First Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, and plants. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking and in my way of life.

There are two kinds of suffering. One kind is not necessary at all. This is the majority of the suffering that we endure every day. Perhaps 95% of our suffering is useless. Because of the lack of insight, we cause suffering to ourselves and to other people, including our beloved ones. But the remaining 5% of our suffering is born out of the contact with the suffering that is going on around us and inside of us. Awareness of this kind of suffering is very helpful. It will bring about compassion, the kind of energy that is absolutely necessary for us to transform ourselves and to help relieve the suffering of the world.

Do not lose awareness of the suffering that is going on in the world. Nourish that kind of awareness by many means: sounds, images, direct contact, visits, and so on. But suffering too much is not good. Medicine must be taken in the correct dosage. You need to get in touch with the suffering just enough that you will not forget. Then compassion will flow within you and be a source of energy for you, and that compassion will be transformed into action. . . .

To not kill is not enough. We have to learn the ways of preventing others from killing. This precept does not allow us to say, "I am not responsible. They did it. I did not do it." Imagine you were in Germany at the time of the Nazis. If I asked you why things were like that, you could not say, "They did it, we did not." You could not say that if you really practiced this precept. If, during the Gulf War, we did not practice this precept, we committed an offense. Because during that time, if you practiced the precept, you should have said or done something to prevent and stop the war. Even if what you said and did could not stop the war, the important fact is that you did something at that time. You cannot say, "They did the killing. I did not. My hands are clean." It is not possible to say that with this precept. ❖

The Blue Bear of the Mountains

Once, long ago, many ages past, a bear with blue fur, silver claws and ruby-red eyes dwelt among the snow-covered Himalayan peaks. Kings and princes offered great rewards to anyone who could capture this bear. They wanted its blue fur and silver claws. And they wanted to eat of its flesh, which was said to be as sweet as honey. But no one ever brought accurate news of the bear.

One day, a hunter who had come in search of this miraculous bear became lost in a snowstorm. He staggered on through the drifts and whirling snow, calling for help.

The great blue bear, curled up in its den, heard those cries and awoke. It was a beast, but somehow those helpless cries pierced its heart. Rousing itself, the bear raised its paw, and with one blow broke down the snow-wall which blocked its den. Sniffing the air, it shuffled off through the howling storm to find the creature whose cries had awoken it from its winter's sleep.

In time the bear found the hunter. He was near death, half-buried in the snow. Scooping the man up in its paws, the bear carried the hunter to its cave, wrapped its great, furry arms around him, and breathed warmth back into the hunter's near-frozen body.

The hunter's eyes flickered open, and he looked into the face of a bear — the very blue-furred bear he had been seeking. Trembling with fear, he gazed up at the furry face, at the wet muzzle and the ruby eyes. He saw sharp teeth hovering over his own throat. But the bear's eyes were soft and the breath flowing from its mouth was as sweet as lotus honey.

Then the bear spoke in human words. "Hunter," it said, "when I heard your anguished cries, I thought my own heart would break. When you are strong enough to travel you may go freely, friend. Only promise that you will never reveal where my den is hidden."

And the hunter promised.

However, once the hunter had descended safely from the mountain, he thought of the reward, and the desire for riches again grew strong within him. "A man is greater than a bear," he growled. "A promise to a beast cannot compare with a man's welfare and comfort. I alone know where this bear's den lies. The gold is mine." And off he marched to tell the king.

The king was overjoyed. "However, if you are lying," said the king, "I'll have your head. Others have tried to trick me before this. Wait here while my huntsmen seek the bear." And he sent off three of his huntsmen to the den on the mountain that the faithless hunter had described.

The three hunters crept stealthily up to the bear's den, draped a net over the opening and sounded their horns. The bear awoke and rushed out from the darkness of its cave into the bright sunlight. Blinded by the light, it stumbled into the net, and was caught. The hunters tied the bear's silver-clawed paws together and lifted it up, still alive, onto a pole. But, before they tied its jaws shut the bear spoke. "Hunters," it said, 'I have been betrayed. Take me to the king and I will reveal the treachery."

The hunters were startled, but they agreed. Then they set off through the snow and down the mountainside. Arriving at the palace, they set the bear before the king, cut its cords, and let it speak.

"Your Majesty," the bear began, "I saved a hunter from death, and in return asked only that he keep the secret of my den hidden. But, for the sake of your gold, he has broken his word, and thrown away his honor and my life. Even a beast knows better. I pity him."

The king was astonished to hear the bear speak. And he was angered by its tale. "Bring the hunter," he ordered.

Surrounded by guards, the hunter was brought to the throne room. Seeing the bear alive he sought to escape. "Hold him!" ordered the king, "and bring him near."

"Man," said the bear, "do you not see that you have done an evil thing? Did I not give you your life, and did you not promise, in return, to protect me?"

But the hunter turned angrily away. "Your Majesty," he said, "you have the bear. Though it may talk, remember, Sire, that you are a king and it is just a beast. You may kill it, cut off its fur, and eat its flesh just as you please. What is that to me? Give me the reward I deserve."

Then the king said, "Release the bear and with all honors escort it back to its home in the mountains. And as for this hunter, he shall, indeed, receive the reward he deserves. Take him from our city immediately. We shall not harm him. The treasure I give him is his own life, a gift greater than all gold. From this bear I have learned a little of honor and kindness."

The hunter's lips snarled and his beard bristled in anger. "I'll be revenged," he roared, "revenged on you all!" But before he could lay hold of his weapons the king's men drove him from the palace and beyond the city walls.

The king bowed to the bear, and with his own hands placed a garland of flowers around the wise beast's neck.

Escorted safely by the king's soldiers, the bear returned to the mountains, where it chose another den and lived in peace for many years. ❖

[From *The Hungry Tigress: Buddhist Legends and Jataka Tales* as told by Rafe Martin. Reprinted by permission of Parallax Press.]

A Fish Swims Like a Fish, A Bird Flies Like a Bird

by Quiet Virtue, Charlie Henkel

On a trip across the country one summer, I pulled off the road onto a grassy meadow to spend the night. In the early morning I awoke and sat zazen. When it was time to arise from sitting, I looked up to find myself face to face with a large cow. Many cows had wandered over while eating their breakfast of grass, and were now all around me, moving slowly about the field. They were all grazing except the one right in front of me, who just stared, shiny-eyed, into my eyes. Being in an open state of mind, I immediately felt a deep connection with this fellow animal, a shared moment of wonder at each other's existence.

Buddha and early Buddhist texts had quite a lot to say about the eating of animals. In *The Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha says, "Someone who has set out in the vehicle of a bodhisattva should produce a thought in this manner: 'As many beings as there are in the universe of beings, comprehended under the term "beings" — egg-born, born from a womb, moisture-born, or miraculously born; with or without form; with perception, without perception, and with neither perception nor non-perception — as far as any conceivable form of beings is concerned: all these I must lead to nirvana, into that realm of nirvana which leaves nothing behind."

It seems to me that one of the simplest ways to begin to free all beings from suffering and lead them to nirvana is to stop eating them. The Buddha and the early Buddhist texts make a number of references to the eating of animals. According to the Pali Canon, Buddha allowed his monks to eat animals if they had no reason to believe that the animal was killed specifically for them. But, as Roshi Philip Kapleau writes in *To Cherish All Life,* "This view is flatly contradicted by the Mahayana sutras, also purporting to be the spoken words of the Buddha, which categorically assert that flesh eating is contrary to the spirit and intent of the first precept [not killing] since it makes one an accessory to the slaying of animals and therefore contravenes the compassionate concern for all life that lies at the core of Buddhism." Other Pali sources report that the Buddha never drank milk from a cow until her calf was at least ten days old.

In the Mahayana *Brahmajala Sutra* Buddha says, "A Bodhisattva must not deliberately eat the flesh of any being, for if he does so he thereby cuts off the great compassion, the seed of the Buddha-nature, and causes all beings who encounter him to feel fearful and depart." Later in the sutra he says, "Whenever a Bodhisattva sees a man preparing to kill an animal he should devise a skillful method to rescue and protect it, freeing it from its suffering and difficulties."

In the *Surangama Sutra* Buddha says, "How can those who practice great compassion feed on the flesh and blood of living beings? If Bhikshus do not wear garments made of Chinese silk, boots of local leather and furs, and if they refrain from consuming milk, cream and butter, they will really be liberated from the worldly realm . . . Why? Because by using animal products, one creates causes which are always followed by effects."

In the *Lankavatara Sutra* he says, "For innumerable reasons, the Bodhisattva is not to eat any meat. I will explain them, Mahamati. In this long course of transmigration here, there is not one living being that, having assumed the form of a living being, has not been your mother, or father, or brother, or sister, or son, or daughter . . . This being so how can the Bodhisattva Mahasattva who desires to approach all living beings as if they were himself and to practice the Buddha-Truths eat the flesh of any living being that is the same nature as himself? . . . Mahamati, there may be some irrational people in the future who will discriminate and establish new rules of moral discipline, and who, under the influence of the habit-energy

belonging to the carnivorous races, will greatly desire the taste of meat . . . They will string together in various ways some sophistic arguments to defend meat eating . . . From eating meat arrogance is born, from arrogance erroneous imaginations issue, and from imagination is born greed."

Later ancestors in the Buddha's lineage also felt strongly about non-human life. In the *Shobogenzo*, Dogen writes that Mahakashapa "ate neither meat nor dairy products" as his "continuous practice." In *The Transmission of Light*, Keizan says, "Shitou is known for having stopped animal sacrifices among hunting people in his area when he was just a youth."

In *Essentials of the Sramanera Vinaya* Lien Ch'ih writes, "In the texts it is said that if one gets lice in the winter months, one should put them in a bamboo tube, keep them warm with cotton, and feed them on greasy food, for fear that they will starve or freeze to death."

There's a well-known koan in *The Book of Serenity*: "One day at Nanquan's the eastern and western halls were arguing over a cat. When Nanquan saw this, he held the cat up and said, 'If you can speak I won't cut it.' The group had no reply; Nanquan cut the cat in two." Perhaps we can take this koan as a warning about the dangers of getting stuck in any view, and the harm that can come from not letting go.

Can we come forth and live fully in the moment, with no hesitation? Can we look deeply enough to see that our suffering cannot be separated from others' suffering and that our liberation likewise cannot be separated from the liberation of all sentient beings? Let us go straight ahead, and take care of this great matter of birth and death as best we can, together with all beings. ❖

Charlie Henkel is in his third year of practice as a monk at Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery in California, and is a member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Flesh eaters often say, "If you eat only vegetables you are also taking life. What, then, is the difference between taking the life of, say, a pig and that of a vegetable?" Answer: All the difference in the world. Does a potato cry out when it is taken from the earth the way a calf does when it is taken from its mother? Does a stick of celery scream in pain and terror when it is picked the way a pig does when it is being led to slaughter and is having its throat cut? And how sad, how lonely and frightened can a head of lettuce feel?

— Roshi Philip Kapleau, in *To Cherish All Life*

Some Resources on Animal Rights

These are only a few of the many books and organizations that might be of particular interest to Buddhists and other humans interested in animal rights.

Books

Roshi Philip Kapleau, *To Cherish All Life, A Buddhist View of Animal Slaughter and Meat Eating,* The Zen Center, Rochester, New York, 1981. A pioneering work, this is the first book about animal rights by an American Buddhist.

John Robbins, *Diet for a New America,* Stillpoint Publishing, 1987. This bible for vegetarians tells "How Your Food Choices Affect Your Health, Happiness and the Future of Life on Earth."

Jeremy Rifkin, *Beyond Beef, The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture,* Dutton, 1992. Effects of the cattle industry on global economy and ecology.

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation,* Random House, revised 1990. The book that got the animal rights movement rolling in the 70's.

Jim Mason and Peter Singer, *Animal Factories,* Crown, New York, 1980. Documentation, with photos, of conditions on factory farms.

Susan Sperling, *Animal Liberators, Research and Morality,* University of California Press, 1988. Useful presentation of the viewpoints of both animal rights activists and scientists who use animals for research.

Jay B. McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans, A Theology of Reverence for Life,* Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. A Christian theologian looks at animal rights.

Organizations:

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
PO Box 42516, Washington, DC 20015

The Fund for Animals
200 West 57th St., New York, NY 10019

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
441 East 92nd St., New York, NY 10128

Humane Society of the U.S.
2100 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20015

Humane Farming Association
PO Box 3577, San Rafael, CA 94912-8902
tel: 415/771-CALF

In Defense of Animals
21 Tamal Vista Blvd., #140, Corte Madera, CA 94925
(for laboratory animals)

San Francisco Vegetarian Society
1450 Broadway, No. 4, San Francisco, CA 94109-2635

On Not Chickening Out

Mindfulness Practice in the Poultry Yard

by Wendy Johnson

For thousands of years, the domestic chicken (*galleus domesticus*, as the Romans called it) has lived in the backyards, barnyards and even houses of human beings. The hen has provided us with a steady bounty of eggs and her own meat, while the strutting cock has been waking us up with his clarion cry since 3000 B.C.E.

For more than 10 years we kept chickens at Green Gulch Farm Zen Center, in the days before high-cholesterol panic made eggs unpopular.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited us in the late 70's he asked us to consider our responsibility for the well-being of animals domesticated for our use and pleasure. Looking back, I would have to say that we did not do well by our birds, but they were provocative teachers for us. Here are some of the lessons we learned.

— *Rebecca Sutherland*

"Watch your chickens or they'll never hatch," or "The early raccoon catches the bird."

Our 100-plus chickens ranged on the hillsides above Green Gulch Farm, a little out of sight and sound. Once you domesticate animals, they depend on you for protection. A rotation of Zen students took responsibility for closing the chickens up at night and opening their houses in the morning. If we were late putting the chickens to bed they were claimed by raccoons, foxes, or neighborhood dogs. And this closing up had to be done with attention. One evening the chicken person arrived after dark and closed the chicken houses in a hurry. As he left, he heard a racket. It turned out he'd locked a raccoon *inside* with the chickens.

It worked best when one person took over the full responsibility for their care. We used to believe that such job specialization created an attachment, but the chickens showed us that without such attachment we were chickening out on our duty to them.

Nothing Comes from Nothing

In order for a hen to lay an egg a day, she must not be "broody." It used to be that a hen on a new clutch of eggs would stop laying entirely and sit still, keeping her eggs warm until they hatched. But modern poultry farmers have bred out of chickens their natural inclination to brood over their chicks.

At Zen Center, the desire to sit re-occurred to our hens (perhaps because we humans were sitting so much). One of our most difficult daily tasks was disturbing the warm hen sitting on her eggs. I remember many a hen squawking in displeasure as I upended her and gathered her treasure. Some of us began to follow an egg-free diet, inspired to do so by the icy stare of an un-nested, broody hen.

We learned that egg productivity decreases as chickens age. To check if a hen is still laying, you examine her "laying vent." Just turn her upside down and measure the hole with your knuckles. Two knuckles or wider means she's still laying; less than that and she's not. Not for the faint of heart was the task of going to the hen house late at night and pulling the sleeping chickens out for their yearly vent exam. Implicit in such an exam was picking and choosing, that famous Zen no-no.

It's not hard to guess what our reaction was at Zen Center to choosing a death sentence for the tight-vented hens. Who would take the old hens? Who would kill them? For a while our chicken yard became something of an old age home.

We were saved from being chicken executioners by a woman who lived near San Francisco Zen Center, and cooked food for hungry people in the neighborhood. She received our yearly cull of old hens and did our dirty work for us. Had we been our own executioners I believe our chicken farming would have ended earlier. We kept the wheel turning by purchasing newly hatched chicks to replace old hens.

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

Was our endeavor to raise poultry a complete failure? This question arises now with the persistence of the ancient theological question: which came first, the chick or the egg? When we look deeply, we can see that the egg is always contained in the chick and the chick in the egg.

I close with this tribute from Thich Nhat Hanh to the universal broody hen in each of us:

What we need are people who are capable of loving,
of not taking sides
so that we may embrace
the whole of reality
as a mother hen embraces all her chicks
with wide open wings. ❖

Wendy Johnson lives at at Green Gulch Farm Zen Center in Marin County, California, and takes care of the garden there. She has been practicing with Thich Nhat Hanh for ten years.

REPORT FROM A BURMA BORDERHEAD

by Jon Berkowitz

Armed resistance to the Burmese military dictatorship is based in jungle camps on the Thai/Burma border, where this eyewitness account was written.

It was Tuesday, March 17, 1992. I was sitting on the verandah of the guest house at Manerplaw, on the Burma border, scribbling out some notes. The SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Committee — the military government of Burma) had taken Chwi Pawi Jo, the highest point in the area, on Saturday, and Intercept (intelligence for the resistance) had informed everyone they would start shelling us between 12 and 1 that day. It occurred to me that if I were at home in Massachusetts and a reliable source had informed me that my town would come under attack at noon, I'd be in the car headed toward Logan Airport at ninety miles per hour. But here I was, scratching away in my notebook, not particularly worried about the nature of Intercept's information. At 1 PM, I heard a dull thump, distinctly different from the normal artillery echoes from the ridge, and five seconds later a shell came ripping over the guest house. It exploded about 250 meters away on the Thai side, halfway up the steep, wooded bank across the Moei River which forms the border between Thailand and Burma.

Village child, Jo Jo Nai, John Paul, Jon Berkowitz

"That's our cue," I muttered. I scooped up my paperwork and began fumbling with my hiking boots as the next shell hit, causing me to quicken my pace considerably. I was heading for the bunker, built into the hill beside the river. When I got there it was already crowded with Karen, the ethnic minority who live in the area.

The rounds came in every few minutes, hitting the same spot each time. It was clear that the SLORC were not laying down a serious barrage but merely testing their new gun emplacement and leaving their calling card at Manerplaw. The Karen were calm, used to being under fire. The 70-year-old checkpoint guard sat calmly at his post, smoking a cheroot, and not even bothering to duck. He had seen action with the British and with General Aung San against the Japanese, and had been fighting for Karen independence since 1949.

"No problem," he said, pushing up his glasses, "this is nothing."

Perhaps, but being under fire was not in my plans when I left for Thailand in October of 1991. I was just another traveler, following the advice of the *Lonely Planet*, until I blew into the border town of Mae Sot, Thailand, and set up in No. 4 Guest House. No. 4 is a crossroads, an unofficial R & R center for relief workers, journalists and hard-core "borderheads" who work with Karen refugees. I became fascinated with the area and decided that the only way to learn about it properly was to become involved. I found an opening in the village of Paw Pah Ta and taught for four months.

Paw Pah Ta

Paw Pah Ta is a Burmese border town, sitting high on the west bank of the Moei. It is home to about 500 Karen refugees, and to Regiment 207 of the All-Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), which numbers about 200 soldiers. The students are new on the border. They arrived late in 1988, after the savage government crackdown on the pro-democracy demonstrations in the capitol of Rangoon and elsewhere, and the ensuing military coup by the SLORC. They joined the ethnic insurgents on the border – Mon, Karen, Karenni, Katchin – to continue their struggle as a student army.

Historical Background

Student activism is a tradition in Burma dating back to the British Colonial period. In 1936, a Rangoon University demonstration resulted in the firing of the dean and the reinstatement of an expelled student radical named Aung San, who went on to become the father of Burmese independence.

Aung San joined the hard-core nationalist group, the Thakins (masters). When World War II started, he spread the word that the Burmese should support the British war effort only in exchange for independence. The British responded by arresting every Thakin in

sight, but Aung San slipped away.

He returned to Rangoon in 1941 and recruited 29 other Thakins for military training in Japan. The group dubbed themselves "The Thirty Comrades" and adopted military titles. Aung San was Bo Theza ("The Powerful General"); Shu Maung, a young hard head with a taste for booze, gambling, and fast women became "The Sun of Glory General," Ne Win.

The Thirty Comrades underwent strenuous military training and returned to Burma with the Japanese forces. Thousands joined General Aung San's Burmese Independent Army and helped blast the British back into India and capture Rangoon in 1942. The Japanese declared Burma an independent nation, but set up a puppet government, so Aung San contacted the British, and in 1945 the Burmese Army joined the Allies in crushing the Japanese resistance. By June 15, the war was over — but the British were back.

Aung San entered into negotiations with Lord Mountbatten for independence and at the same time tried to control rising Burmese factionalism. Everything was running smoothly until July 19, 1947, when Aung San and half of his cabinet were gunned down by political rivals. Independence came in January of 1948, but without Aung San to hold it together, Burma was plunged into a nightmare of factional strife and ethnic and political rebellion.

A parliamentary government stumbled along until 1962 when Ne Win, now Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, staged a coup and took control. He organized the government along the lines of orthodox communism, with the military as an elite ruling class. All private industry was nationalized and supervised by an officer corps that had not a clue about how to run things.

Ne Win's intense xenophobia fueled a policy of isolationism that, combined with dismal economic mismanagement, reduced Burma's status from one of Asia's richest countries to one of the world's ten poorest, right above Upper Volta. Everyone but the army was just eking out a living; a black market thrived along with corruption and bribery. By 1987 things were ready to blow. The students lit the fuse.

It began in a tea shop with a fight between university students in Rangoon and some young government officials over a cassette tape; that snowballed into a series of anti-government student protests. The rallies peaked on August 8, 1988, with a national strike, a massive pro-democracy march in Rangoon, and parallel demonstrations in almost every city and township in the country.

Even the Chinese Army in Tianamen Square would not match the barbarity of the Tatmadaw's (Burmese Army's) response: 6,000 people were killed in Rangoon alone and countless others were wounded. A former Tatmadaw sergeant — someone I came to know after he fled to the border — told me he had been assigned to help dispose of the bodies. He claimed that over 70 trucks, packed with dead to be buried in mass graves, left Rangoon. When space ran out, they took bodies to the crocodile farm; when the crocs were full, the remainder of the corpses were dumped at sea. The military government re-asserted itself as the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC) and clamped down with martial law. Thousands of students made a run for the borders and ended up in places like Paw Pah Ta.

That was where I was teaching English and bunking out in the small room behind the library. Every regiment camp has a library, and ours was pretty well stocked with an old *World Book Encyclopedia*, a slew of

The rounds came in every few minutes, hitting the same spot each time. The 70-year-old checkpoint guard sat calmly at his post, smoking a cheroot, and not even bothering to duck.

National Geographics and a collection of *Dawn* magazines, the unofficial newsletter of the All-Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF).

John Paul

My roommate was John Paul, the primary school headmaster. His name is actually Co Paw (friend of Paw), but it was anglicized by Mad Mark the Brit, who had taught there the year before. John Paul was an electrical engineer and a bamboo exporter before deciding to take on the government; he got his headmaster's job on the basis of his personality and manner. He talks straight to the kids — who respect him like an uncle — with experience, street-smarts and cool. John Paul has a reputation for fearlessness and good spirits under fire. He is ten years older than most of the student soldiers (who are an average age of 23) and to them he's an indestructible older brother who lives on the edge.

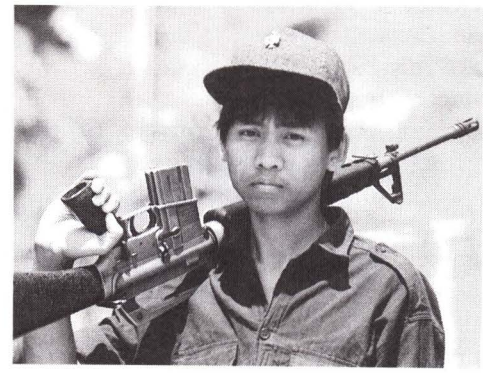
John Paul speaks English, but he's developed a syntax of his own and a highly theatrical presentation; it drove me half-crazy when he would "help" me by teaching his personal idiom to my night class. From 5 to 7 PM I taught English to a group of soldiers, medics, teachers and older kids from the Karen village. I got my ideas from textbooks donated by an Australian traveler, and developed my own curriculum. Aside from John Paul, the only problem was the range of levels I had to accommodate: some of my students were at square one, while others could pretty much understand everything I said but had problems expressing themselves. When one of my students and fellow teachers, the 21-year-old Ma Tha Zin, grew bored with the pace, I agreed to teach her some grammar. I didn't tell

her that I knew as much about grammar as about quantum mechanics; luckily there was a book, and I taught myself as we went along.

Teaching School with Jo Jo Nai

During the day, I taught primary school with Kyaw Kyaw Naing (pronounced "Jo Jo Nai"), the senior teacher and one of the original ABSDF members from the demonstration days. He moved into the library also and became one of my best friends. At 6'1", Jo Jo Nai is the tallest guy in the regiment, a fact he is quite proud of. He's into computers, *Dire Straits* and power politics, and is one of the most amiable, good-natured people I have ever met. When he talks about how much he hates the SLORC, or getting hold of remote control circuits for a bomb to take out Ne Win, he laughs and shakes his head, not believing the violent thoughts that are so antithetical to his nature.

Jo Jo Nai attended Rangoon Institute of Technology, where he majored in physics, lettered in crew and participated in pro-democracy demonstrations. On August 8, 1988, he was up at the mike in front of City Hall, addressing a crowd of 500,000. That's when the 22nd Light Infantry showed up and ordered the crowd to disperse within ten minutes or they would open fire.



Student soldier geared up for the front

Jo Jo Nai jumped off the stage and behind a garden wall as all hell broke loose. As the troops opened up into the crowd with their whole arsenal – 40 mm grenade launchers, German G-3 and G-4 rifles and a .5 medium machine gun mounted on an armored personnel carrier – Jo Jo Nai escaped into the alleyways.

On September 19, 1988, the SLORC took power. The next day, Jo Jo Nai and friends met and decided to join the Karen and take up arms against the government. Three weeks later, they undertook the dangerous journey to the liberated territory along the Thai border. Plenty of others had the same idea, and the SLORC army threw a net over the area. Jo Jo Nai disguised himself as a bus conductor to avoid the checks and made it to the border zone.

"I miss my school days." Jo Jo Nai said forlornly. We had just passed out the English exams and were sitting on the bamboo floor of the teak primary school while we watched the kids scribble away.

"Even the exams?" I asked.

"Even exams," he answered with conviction. He smiled.

I shrugged my shoulders. *The only way you'd get me back in school is on the point of a spear*, I thought, but I enjoyed teaching the kids.

I had 17 in my section, ages ranging from about six to twelve years. All but one of my primary students were Karen. The ethnic Burmese who came to the border were young and single, so their oldest kids are just three years old. Paw Pah Ta is chock full of young families with babies born on the border. It's situated near a trade route, so all sorts of goods filter in: onions, clothing, chili, coffee, canned milk, and cheroots. Any borderhead knows that you can pick up a carton of Winstons at Paw Pah Ta for less than $7 U.S.

Life in Paw Pah Ta

This direct lifeline to the interior of Burma makes Paw Pah Ta better off than many of the camps. The villagers grow cabbage, radishes, and "boodie," a giant gourd, and the wood shop turns out classic cabinets that sell in Mae Sot at 10,000 Baht (about $400) a pop. But Paw Pah Ta is still not self-sufficient. Rice, the undeniable necessity, the main staple of their diet, is rationed and supplied by the Karen National Union and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

Everyone eats rice, including the animals. Burmese style curries, oil fried with onions and mountains of garlic, go over the rice; then the whole dish is hot-wired with fish paste, a sauce made from fresh water fish pounded into a mush and cooked with water and chili. Fish paste to the Western taste buds is what a Mike Tyson body shot is to the ribs. There is enough food to fill everyone's belly, but many cannot afford curry and have to settle for the straight rice and fish paste twice a day. The lack of vitamins hits the kids harder than the adults.

I got hooked on the Burmese coffee, which is made with sweetened, canned milk. Alcohol is illegal in Paw Pah Ta, so coffee and tea are the drinks of choice. The few who want to get seriously ripped can go to the Thai side and buy a 15 Baht (or about 60 cents) plastic bag of "jungle juice" — rice whiskey brewed up by a gnarled old Karen woman.

The tea shop is the center of activity throughout the day, and at night the short-wave comes out, and everyone crowds around for the BBC in Burmese.

Women run the tea shop, but rarely do any women customers drop in, and if they do, it's in a large group, and they sit together at one table. Burmese culture keeps men and women separate. When Merete the Dane who taught down the road at Shock Loh camp would come visit, we'd sit in the tea shop, swill coffee and exchange stories. After she'd leave, the whole tea shop crew would start asking me about my "girlfriend" and when we were getting married. At first I thought they were just teasing me affectionately, but soon I real-

ized that in Burma, if you sit with a girl in a tea shop, it is because *you are going to be married!* For me, even casual friendship with a Karen or Burmese girl was perilous, for the locals might either lose respect for me as a teacher, or expect me to marry and stay forever.

That was not in my plans, so I concentrated on chinloh, basically a game of volleyball with the feet, over a low net with a woven bamboo ball. John Paul was a master of the game, the "Maradona of Burma," and had a set of moves no one could touch. There were also movies at night, run off a generator-powered VCR, mainly Hong Kong violence or low budget Burmese videos with lovers quarreling passionately in open fields. My dad had sent a copy of the Washington-Buffalo Super Bowl, and we actually got through the third quarter before people got bored. There is no more surreal experience than listening to John Madden's voice booming out into a bamboo hut to a bewildered Burmese audience, some of whom are heavily armed.

Ma Tha Zin rarely went to the movie after our grammar sessions, but waited around until it had finished to walk back to the camp with her friends. I asked her why she didn't go home by herself, expecting that perhaps she didn't have a flashlight, but the answer I got was more bizarre: "I cannot go alone, I afraid of the ghost."

I let it pass, not quite sure that I had heard her correctly, but later I stopped by the tea shop to run it by Jo Jo Nai.

"Yes," he said. "They believe in the ghosts that live in the cemetery."

That was the end of any sensible conversation for the rest of the night. Stories flew about the long-haired ghost that lives in Company B barracks, the bald ghost that appears in the carpenters' house at midnight, and the riverside ghost that looks like a gorilla but speaks Karen.

The Burmese are a superstitious people, but the SLORC potentate Ne Win takes superstition to extremes. The ninth quality of the Buddha is strength, and therefore 9 is Ne Win's favorite number. He syncs up any major political or military move with 9: the SLORC came to power on September 18 (1 + 8 = 9); he set the deadline to capture Manerplaw, the Karen headquarters, for March 27 (2 + 7 = 9); and he altered the Burmese currency so that only 45 and 90 Kyat notes are printed.

Ne Win appears to me to be a bat-crazy old man, wallowing like a sow in the blood of his country while trying to use numerology like the dark side of the Force. The people at Paw Pah Ta laugh when they talk about Ne Win, but they know they may have to deal with his army at any time. Regiment 207 is on the SLORC's hit list, and three times during my stay the Tatmadaw tried to hit Paw Pah Ta. Every time, they were beaten back by the home guard and Karen units, but the villagers were not taking any chances. Each time, they packed up their belongings and headed for the safety of the Thai side, across the bamboo bridge.

The bridge is washed away every rainy season and rebuilt. The bridge is technically illegal, but the Thais turn a blind eye because of the Burmese teak, gems and other goods that flow over it into their country.

Medical Problems

Flooding was not the only danger posed by the Moei river. Bathing in it gave me a raging case of eczema, and the itchiness was sending me over the edge. I went up to the hospital to see Dr. Kyaw The Oo ("Jo Teh Oo") who was busy cleaning his silver Smith and Wesson .38.

"You have serious eczema with secondary infection," he said after a brief glance, spinning the cylinder and putting a bullet into the chamber. "You need topical cortisone cream, an antibiotic cream and a course of oral antibiotics." He sent one of his medics to fill the order, thus ending the shortest doctor's visit in history.

On the move: With SLORC soldiers 5 km away, Paw Pah Ta villagers are evacuated to the Thai side.

Dr. Jo Teh Oo was a hot-shot surgical resident at Rangoon General Hospital when the protests began in 1987, and he became increasingly politicized after weeks of digging Tatmadaw lead out of scores of young demonstrators. Unfortunately, his wife of three months was ardently apolitical. When Dr. Jo Teh Oo decided to go to the border, she refused to accompany him.

"She wanted to live a quiet life, you know," he told me over a plate of tea leaf salad. "She did not like for me to take part in the democracy movement."

As I waited for my prescriptions, a young Karen girl, suffering from the painful sting of a black scorpion, was carried in. I felt for her, having had a run-in with one of those savage, alien creatures myself. One evening, as I lay on the cusp of sleep, I thought I felt some movement near the opening of my sleeping bag. I dismissed it as hallucination, but thirty seconds later I was hit three times, twice on the leg and once on the forearm.

I think the experience was even more shocking for Jo Jo Nai, who was correcting papers by candlelight at the

time. From his point of view I was lying there still as a mummy one moment and the next I was clawing feverishly out of my bag, buck naked, howling in pain and cursing like a Marine drill instructor. I caught the little monster in the beam of my flashlight, and Jo Jo Nai crushed its exoskeleton with a Burmese copy of *War and Peace.*

But the biggest medical problem in Paw Pah Ta is malaria. The Thai-Burma border is one of the most malaria-ridden spots on the globe. It is as common in the rainy season as muscle aches are in the N.F.L., and far more dangerous. At least one of my primary students was on the malaria-disabled list every day, and it became a staple of the roll call.

"Where is Aye Aye Kai?"

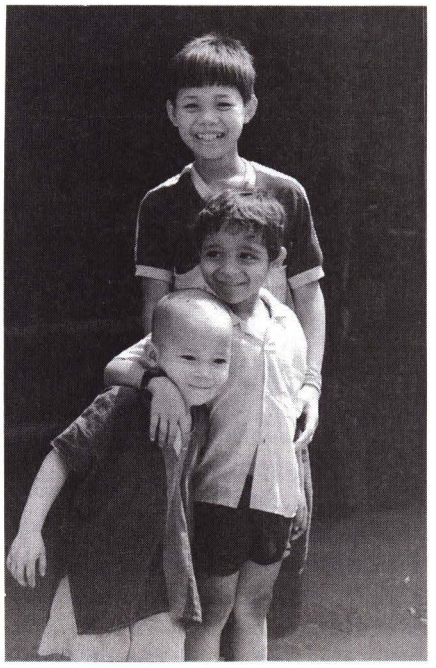
"She has malaria!" the class would chant back.

About a month and a half into my stay, I experienced two days of uncontrollable chills and brain-cooking fever. I dragged myself down to the hospital where I had a blood test and big laughs from Dr. Jo Teh Oo's medics. Back in the library, no one was impressed with my parasite count, a mere +1. Jo Jo Nai had spent three months the previous rainy season laid out with +3 malaria and blackwater fever.

Quinine kills the malaria parasite, but has some mean side-effects. The one week I spent dosed left me with a constant tone in my head and one silly thought away from hysterical laughter. Long-term exposure to quinine results in memory loss, and everyone in Paw Pah Tah complains of blanking on vocabulary and people's names.

The quinine and other medicines are supplied in large part by Medicins Sans Frontier, a French organization whose doctors and nurses are based in a Thai refugee camp. They deal mainly with jungle-borne diseases: malaria, dysentery and cholera. A hospital near Manerplaw gets the combat wounds. They have an x-ray machine and an operating theater with spinal anesthesia for amputations. Belly and chest wounds are evacuated by long-tail boat and four-wheel drive to Mae Sot hospital where the Karen National Union or ABSDF picks up the tab.

The casualties have been higher this year, and Paw Pah Ta has taken its share. The Karen, too, have lost many people in heavy barrages, but they understand the political importance of salvaging their two main bases. Abandoning them and returning to guerrilla tactics might cause supporters to view the Karen as a losing cause, and they have been fighting too long to fall back into obscurity.



Children in Paw Pah Ta

The Karen People

The Karen are originally a tribal people with a unique language, culture and tradition. They are an attractive people, and their gentleness and hospitality have turned many a traveler into a Karen enthusiast borderhead. For the Karen, the student-teacher relationship extends outside the classroom, and I was always hanging out with my high school class.

One rainy day they took me on a field trip, and we spent the time caving at Mae Usu with Thai pop music and "Jane's Addiction" blaring out of the tape player. Later, while we waited in the downpour for a ride back, one of the kids turned to me and said with a completely straight face, "Don't worry, sir, the Lord will provide a truck."

And He did. The Christian missionaries did a job on the Karen during the colonial period, but in actuality, the majority of the Karen are Buddhist or Animist.

The Karen see Burma's civil war in simple, focused terms — Burmese versus Karen. The Karen and the Students co-exist peacefully on the border, there's no trouble among friends, but culture clash and years of enmity breed some tension. In the most simple, unattractive terms, the Burmese see the Karen as a bunch of country yokels and the Karen see the Burmese as a crew of half-mad barbarians. The school headmistress at Quakelow camp summed up the basic Karen attitude towards the Students: "They are our enemies, but it was the Christian thing to feed and shelter them."

The Students arrived on the border as a bunch of green, city kids with high hopes of being trained quickly so they could begin their struggle. What they got instead was fish paste and malaria. By February 1989, cold, hungry and sick, nearly a third of them had thrown in the towel and headed home. The Rangoon hard-cores saw the movement breaking up; they called an emergency conference and established the All-Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF).

History of the ABSDF

As 1989 wore on, the situation stabilized. The ABSDF began to receive rice, cooking oil, beans and medicine from religion-based, non-governmental organizations, and the Karen began to trust them enough to start training them. In 1990, their numbers were bolstered by a cross-section of the population, mad as hell at the SLORC's flat disregard of the National League for Democracy's (NLD) overwhelming election victory.

To calm the people down after months of unrest, the SLORC had promised free elections and actually went through with them because they believed that no one party could win a majority. But Aung San Suu Kyi — the party secretary of the NLD — emerged as a wild card. Her father, General Aung San, is George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy combined to the Burmese, and his daughter gave the movement an air of destiny. More concretely, Aung San Suu Kyi was the first to articulate the people's dissatisfaction with Ne Win's regime. She focused their wild anger on specific demands for democracy and human rights, concepts people knew little about. Her speeches rallied the whole country, and the NLD powered through all opposition in the 1990 election, capturing eighty-one percent of the vote. The SLORC refused to honor the outcome; it put Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest, and began rounding up hundreds of NLD party members. [Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.] The struggle was joined.

Porters are frequently used as human mine sweepers.

Manerplaw

I was urged by friends in Paw Pah Ta to visit the front at Manerplaw, so that I could take pictures and get the story out. After two difficult interviews with officers of the Karen National Union, I was finally given a pass to visit the front. I traveled by pick-up along a spine-shattering road, and then by long-tail boat, a half hour down the river. After reading the doomsday reports in *The Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*, I had expected Manerplaw to be like a scene in *Apocalypse Now:* constantly under fire, people living in bunkers, utter chaos. Instead, it was calm: business as usual, with uniformed men strolling in twos and threes across the sepia field, around which stood simple, nearly empty staff buildings.

ABSDF's quarters in Manerplaw resemble a dorm room more than a barracks: posters on the wall, John Denver on the tape player and a jam-packed bookshelf. At night, the students stretch out and read by candlelight with the intensity of pre-meds during finals week.

Their youth fosters camaraderie, commitment and high intensity, but it can be a point of dispute with the Karen National Union, whose leaders are in their fifties and sixties. The Karen used to worry that the Students were going to bug out at the first sign of hardship. They didn't, but ABSDF became the perfect organization for the SLORC Military Intelligence to infiltrate, and the Karen worried about spies in the ranks. The Students used to be so eager to explain their situation to foreigners that they leaked information, and that exasperated the Karen National Liberation Army.

Karen-ABSDF relations have improved dramatically in the last three and a half years. The Students are now well respected members of the Democratic Alliance of Burma, which is the broadest coalition in modern Burmese history and the overall policy maker in the revolution. For its part, the SLORC recognizes that the Students are its most vocal, energetic and dangerous opposition, and in response it has closed the universities indefinitely.

Porters

The SLORC has adopted savage measures to retain power. The porter situation, which I knew something about, turned out to be more devastating than I could imagine. The porter-soldier ratio is slightly more than one to one. Porters survive for only between one and three months because of the brutality they face, and the SLORC army must constantly replace them.

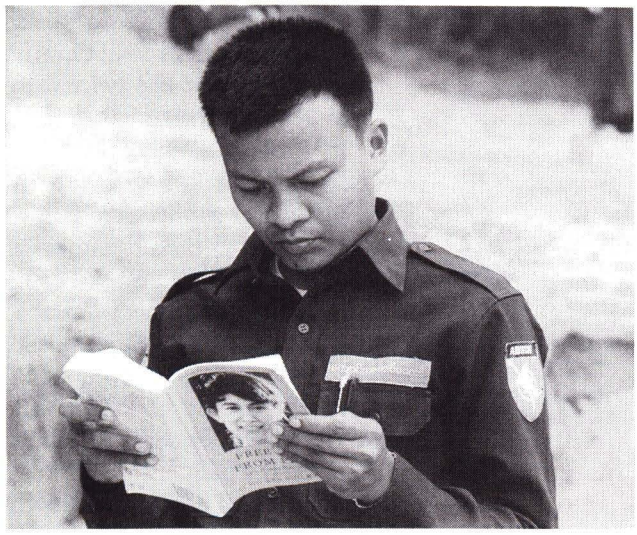
Porters are taken mainly from villages in the fighting areas, but the SLORC has even started using prisoners and rounding people up in Rangoon movie theaters. Both men and women are used, as young as 12 and as old as 65. Porters are forced to carry shells and supplies for the army. A load weighs 25 to 30 kg, and they must carry it over mountain trails from dawn to dusk. The food allotment is one cup of rice twice daily. The rice is frequently rotten, and the porters are given no salt or chili to eat with it. Moving slowly earns them punches to the face and combat boots to the body. Women carry nearly the same load as the men and are raped at night — all night — by both officers and enlisted men. The next day, they must carry as before. Porters are frequently used as human mine sweepers or forced to walk in front of the column when Democratic Alliance for Burma forces are nearby. Porters suffer from starvation, disease and fatigue. When they can no longer walk, they are beaten with the butts of rifles, kicked, stabbed with bayonets and left to die on the path.

A particularly heinous method of dealing with spent porters is to burn them. One eyewitness, a 45-year-old farmer, reported, "Sometimes, when porters collapsed from exhaustion, the soldiers hit them with a rifle butt and then covered them with leaves as they lay on the ground. Some of these porters were half conscious and some wide awake, but all of them were still alive. Then the soldiers set fire to the leaves. The porters started screaming, and some managed to roll out from under the leaves, but those who were too weak just burned to death without moving. Any who survived this were left to die, badly burned and in agony, while we moved on. We saw the soldiers burn porters this way often."

The SLORC is slowly eating away at the Karen territory. By the end of the dry season, it had captured Chwi Pawi Jo (Sleeping Dog Mountain), the highest point in Manerplaw's defense area; from there, it is able to pump shells into Manerplaw itself.

International Pressure

At the same time, however, outside pressure against the SLORC is mounting. Singapore and Malaysia, primarily Muslim countries, at first supported the SLORC but now openly condemn it for its treatment of Burma's Muslim minority, which the SLORC has been driving into Bangladesh through a program of murder, rape, pillaging and expropriation. Norway recognized the National Coalition Government as Burma's legal government and donated eighteen million Baht ($720,000) to it. The Thais, who in the past could be counted on to ignore SLORC's injustices, have been zealously defending their border. Tatmadaw tactics had been to cross to the Thai side and attack Karen positions from behind, but the Thais have stationed major forces near the border, and they now shell any territorial encroachment by the Burmese. The Thais have become more sympathetic to the Burmese Students as well, and have set up a safe camp for them to ride out the storm. Even the U.N. has begun to take notice; it sent an envoy to investigate the Bangladesh refugee situation, and UNICEF has proposed a plan to end the civil war.



ABSDF Regiment 207 commander leafs through Freedon from Fear, *by Aung San Suu Kyi*

Back in Paw Pah Ta

When I returned to Paw Pah Ta, things were changing there as well. Ma Tha Zin had married a young soldier, and stopped coming for grammar lessons. Jo Jo Nai and John Paul secured some Burma Relief Council funds to build a new primary school out by the hospital. 98 escaped porters arrived in Paw Pah Ta. John Paul couldn't believe it when he recognized a good friend from his old neighborhood who had been rounded up at a kung fu movie.

Scenes like that are not uncommon. Burma's civil war has ripped the country apart, bringing to mind the old cliché, "brother against brother." ABSDF and SLORC soldiers, yelling insults across the trenches — "Hey, Brother-in-law! You are Ne Win's dog!" — find out they lived on the same street in Rangoon. Dr. Myint Cho, head of Health and Education for the ABSDF, has lost two uncles and ten cousins on the porter trail. His younger brother is a cop, his older brother a Tatmadaw major. While working with the Karen, Myint Cho received a message through a merchant. It was from his older brother apologizing that his division was about to attack the stronghold.

Many Burmese are able to deal with the turmoil of their country on some level because of their general attitude and approach to life. They believe in the concept of *Gan* — fate, and any hardships they must endure were meant to be. But Jo Jo Nai, young and pragmatic, could not take any solace in *Gan* and was in a major funk when I returned from Manerplaw. I asked what was wrong, and he told me the bad news. The Students had patched into a SLORC communiqué and overheard orders for Paw Pah Ta to be shelled and cleared. The Tatmadaw is building a series of supply roads connecting their scattered conquests in Karen State, and if construction goes according to schedule, Paw Pah Ta will be destroyed for security reasons by the end of the dry season.

It was 7 PM, and I was having dinner with John Paul at the library roundtable. Jo Jo Nai had gone to Mae Sot to buy supplies for the porters. The night was cool, the lights were on and a crowd milled about in front of the theater listening to Joan Jett's "Have You Ever Seen the Rain" piped through the loudspeaker. Soldiers hung out in the library flipping though *National Geographics* and chatting with me in simple Burmese. John Paul and I talked about possible U.N. interventions in Burma, and I asked him how long he thought it would be until Democracy.

"For me to say, not possible," he replied, "I can no think, you know? I have duty. I am librarian, primary school headmaster, and student soldier."

Fair enough. "What will you do After Democracy?"

John Paul — Co Paw — took a sip of tea. "I will return to Rangoon and open a restaurant, you know?"

"Yes, I know, Restaurant 207!"

Co Paw laughed. "Restaurant 207, very good name. After Democracy, you come to Rangoon and eat at my restaurant."

"Of course, I'm on the first plane. As long as you don't feed me any goat brain."

"Oh, no problem, no brain goat. I make you traditional Burmese food."

"OK." I scooped up the last handful of rice and curry; Co Paw makes the best food on the border.

Mae Sot, Thailand, April 10, 1992 ❖

Jonathan Berkowitz, a native of Philadelphia, graduated from NYU in film in 1988. His many travels include a bicycle trip across the U.S., and he is now on an extended journey in Southeast Asia.

ALL ABOARD

by Maylie Scott

"Civil disobedience, if it is really civil, must appear so even to the opponent. He must feel that the resistance is not intended to do him any harm."
—Gandhi

The Concord Naval Weapons Station is the primary weapons-shipping facility on the West Coast. The station shipped 80% of the weapons used in the Vietnam War, and 30% of those used in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Nuclear weapons are stored nearby, and weapons continue to be shipped daily.

The Weapons Station has been the site of continuous protests since June 1987. In September 1987, the Site gained national notoriety when the protester Brian Willson was hit and seriously injured by a weapons-bearing train he was attempting to block.

It is a bright morning at the Concord Naval Weapons Station. Blackbirds and linnets gurgle and flute on the barbwire fence that restricts access to the port. The Base is having an average sort of day, business as usual; vehicles drive in and out and small groups of people chat around the station.

As he does every Thursday, David Duncombe stands in front of the gate wearing an orange vest, ready to stop any weapons-bearing truck. David, a pastor and Director of the U.C. Medical Center Counseling program, was one of two other men who blocked the train that hit Brian Willson in 1987. A stubborn man, David has returned nearly every week since then to block weapons-carrying vehicles. He has served two three-month jail sentences in Martinez prison for his activities and, drawing from this experience, helped to develop the prison chaplaincy there. Lately, perhaps because of his presence, weapons have not been sent through this gate on Thursdays.

Abe Zwickle walks up and down in front of the Base with his prayer drum, chanting *Namu Myo Ho Renge Kyo.* Abe also was present the day Brian was hit. He comes to the Site several days a week. It is the place, he explains, where he feels "most at peace." Abe has been a peaceworker all his life, serving years in jail as a CO during World War II. He's 88. He greets me warmly as "Sister." "Here we are on such a beautiful day at this site of 'Con-Cord' [with peace] to come, God's cathedral, domed by the sky, walled by the wind." He has a new hearing aid his son bought at an electronics store: a control-box strapped around his stomach attached to earphones. When we stop speaking, he removes the earphones and says that now he'll enjoy "celestial music."

Marion Spotswood and I have come to resurrect the Protest Site prayer flags that have flown for nearly two years. The Site has been repeatedly vandalized, the flags damaged or destroyed. Now we have twenty new flags that were produced by participants at the recent BPF Meditation in Action Institute. Marion and I begin to sew the flags to a rope.

Three women sit beneath the shade umbrella. "I've brought a cake," says Dorothy, who comes in from Davis. "David and Abe both have birthdays this week. David is 64 and Abe is 89, so we'll have a party." She smiles. "I invited the Base Commander, but don't hold your breath."

Commander Owens, Abe Zwickle, David Duncombe

She brings out the cake, a whipped-cream beauty with fresh peaches and plum glaze. David and Abe are amazed. We are all exclaiming and congratulating when the Commander's car pulls up smartly. The driver jumps out and opens the door for the Commander. The men are trim in their khaki suits and bands of ribbons. Their black, glistening shoes reflect the sun.

The Commander has a mischievous look. He greets several of us by name. The driver returns to the car for gifts and cards and passes them to the Commander, who hands out the cards first.

David reads his out loud. "Best wishes for a happy birthday. You and I both work for peace; we use different means. Richard Owens."

Now Commander Owens gives out presents. For Abe, who usually wears T-shirts with a message, there is a shirt with an American flag that says, "I love America." There is also a bronze trophy entitled, "For a living monument." We help Abe, unsteady from his Parkinson's, remove his cap and hearing-aid so he can pull the shirt on.

Abe bows to the Commander. "May I live to the new millennium, to see this green and peaceful land restored from the jaws of the war machine to become a park where all my sisters and brothers walk in the harmony of nature."

The Commander smiles and nods and turns to David, offering his gift. "Before you open this, I want you to know it took me a while to find it. I really don't want you to be offended. Indeed, you don't have to accept it, but I do want you to know how much time I put into this project."

David opens the box and the Commander holds the discarded wrapping paper. From the tissue paper beneath, David pulls out a foot-long model of a black train engine. The face of a clock is embedded in the center of the engine.

"It's an alarm clock," says the Commander. "Push the button on top and you'll hear the alarm."

David pushes the button. The voice of the train says, "Choo-choo-choo-choo-choo. GET UP."

David's normally composed face is askew with astonishment. He scratches his head, retrieves the wrapping paper from Commander Owens and just stands there. The Commander looks as if he's swallowed a canary. Somebody suggests we sing "Happy Birthday." The singing normalizes the occasion and is a relief, although we never manage to all get on the same key. Dorothy produces candles for the cake and just as we are struggling to light them in the breeze, a full rig A1 Explosive truck bears down, crosses Port Chicago Highway, and enters the Port. This one gets by with no resistance.

Dorothy offers the Commander a piece of cake. He raises his hand. "I can't afford to eat sweets. I'm on my way to the gym now." He pats his flat stomach.

We thank them for coming. The men get into their car and drive off. We all wave and they wave back.

Marion and I begin to gather up our needles and thread and rope when another explosive truck drives out from the Base. David tears off, full speed, to meet it before it reaches the Highway. He suceeds in stopping the truck. Dorothy and, more slowly, Abe go to join him. Marion and I get into her truck, and as we head home, the scene has again arranged itself in a familiar way; David and Dorothy and Abe are in front of the big truck. Abe is kneeling, beating his drum. Greg is recording the action on the video camera and a sheriff's car with flashing lights is just pulling in for the arrest. . . . ❖

Maylie Scott is a priest at the Berkeley Zen Center. She has been participating in activities at the Concord Naval Weapons Station since 1987. If you are interested in going to the Weapons Base, call Maylie at 510/848-2924.

SHARK FIN SOUP: *Reflections on Living and Dying*

by Pam Weiss

I thought death was something. But I was wrong. Death isn't something at all. It is pure absence.

The first time I met Bill Wong he was standing in the doorway of his room, stark naked. Walking down the broad hallway of the hospice unit, I heard a voice: "Hey. Hello. Hey you. Who are you?" It was an unusual voice, with a touch of sarcastic cackle and a penetrating urgency.

I turned to face the voice. And there was Bill. A slight, impish man with yellow, sagging skin that fell away from his hips and shoulders like fabric. His face was eager, pressing out into the world: "Hey. Hello." His brown eyes were full of light, playful but commanding: "Hey you. Who are you?" A formidable burst of pale gray hair stood atop his head.

I approached him, offering my name, my hand, my arm for him to lean on as we maneuvered him back to bed. He had just completed a successful trip to the rolling toilet at the end of the bed, and now, in the wake of his accomplishment, was feeling self-assured, and ready to entertain a visitor: me.

In the months that followed, I visited Bill every week. Our main activity together was Chinese checkers. Checkers and visits from his sister who devotedly brought him shark fin soup every Wednesday for lunch. Bill was a fierce checkers player. He never missed an opportunity to inform me when I made a stupid move. And he howled with glee as he jumped one-two-three-four of my marbles, and plucked them off the board, laughing. My game improved significantly under his lively tutelage. And as time passed, and Bill began to slow and fade, I made more and more intentional errors, always allowing him to win. He knew, of course, but he never argued. He liked to win. And I didn't mind losing.

Each week when Bill's sister arrived he would undergo a sudden and dramatic transformation. Recoiling into the far corner of his bed, curled and ready to strike, he spewed a steady stream of insults and profanities in Cantonese. She tried to ignore what he said, in fact to ignore Bill entirely. She would simply unpack the shark fin soup from her bag and place it, with a napkin and spoon, on his bed tray. "It's hot," she would warn him,

looking at me. And then she would chatter nervously about the high price of the soup, the special trip she had made to get it, and how he never appreciated it anyway. She never looked at Bill. But she always brought his soup. And he always drank it.

I stood between them, wide-eyed and very still, receiving his snarls in one ear and her platitudes in the other. I was locked in tight. Clearly my role was to buffer and to bear witness.

After some time I became privy to her high-spirited descriptions of the traditional Chinese familial patriarchy in which they were both raised. About how Bill used to chase her (many) boyfriends out of the house, how he had never been kind to her, never liked her anyway. "But," she would say, smoothing her skirt and adjusting her glasses, "he's my brother."

I spent the morning with Bill on the day he died. He was mostly incoherent, writhing with pain. All morning he rolled from one side of the bed to the other, wrapping and unwrapping his legs and then his arms around the metal safety bars on the sides of the bed, wrestling with his pain, moaning. He was literally hanging on, refusing to give up, to let go.

And then suddenly, as though out of a fog, he'd come to. He would open his eyes wide, look at me, ask a question, tell a fragment of a story, and then fade back into his pain again.

I sat at his bedside all morning, helpless. Wanting to do something, anything. But what could I do? So I sat. I watched. I bore witness.

Several times he sat up, still and poised, watching. His face went flat, his eyes filled with an incomprehensible terror. It was a fear so deep that it enveloped his entire being, and held him frozen. He had the look of a caged animal.

That night I received a phone call that Bill had died. I drove into the city to see him one last time. I had never spent time with a corpse before and didn't know what to expect. But I had to go, to see.

When I arrived, I met the uncomfortable dissolution of expectations I hadn't known I was carrying. I thought death was something. But I was wrong. Death isn't something at all. It is pure absence.

I sat alone with Bill's impossibly still body, curious and undone. My mind spun circles, grasping for something to hold on to, some way to make sense of this wholly unreasonable vacancy.

I was sure I saw him move, sure I saw his solar plexus rise and fall. I reached out to touch him, placing my hand on his sternum. But there was nothing. No breath. No life. So simple. So profound.

I still carry the expression of blind terror I witnessed in Bill's eyes as he faced his death. We spend so much of our lives, our breath, trying to understand, to make sense of, to become. But in the end there is nothing. Nothing saved. Nothing sacred. No thing at all.

Can we bear it? Can we stand to live, poised, at this nexus between thing and no-thing, between inhale and exhale, between gathering in and letting go?

Of course, we have no choice. But do we have the courage to stand upright and determined, to fully meet our life, to fully meet our death? To stand in the doorway, stark naked, and to greet each thing: "Hey. Hello. Who are you?" ❖

Pam Weiss has been living and practicing Zen at Green Gulch Farm and Tassajara for the last five years. She met Bill Wong while working as a volunteer for the Zen Center Hospice Project.

— Rebecca Sutherland

A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War

by Susan Griffin

Doubleday, 1992.
$22.50

Reviewed by Anita Barrows

I have come to believe that every life bears in some way on every other. The motion of cause and effect is like the motion of a wave in water, continuous . . . so that all consequences, whether we know them or not, are intimately embedded in our experience.
— A Chorus of Stones

The separation of the personal from the collective is one of the liabilities of our usual interpretation of history. Only rarely do we observe how inseparable individual and family narratives are from the general trends and events by which most historians might characterize a given age. Such decontextualization is the legacy of a way of thinking which isolates self from other, "subjective" from "objective," and ultimately leads to the feelings of impotence many of us experience in the face of structures and movements from which we perceive ourselves as alienated. In *A Chorus of Stones* Susan Griffin explores patterns of abuse and denial operating reciprocally in public and private settings connected with the wars of the twentieth century. She looks intimately into the lives and psyches of some of the major figures of our time — Himmler, Gandhi, Hemingway, Fermi — as well as at the lives of some who generally go nameless: a nuclear power plant worker at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, a Holocaust survivor encountered by chance in a Parisian park. Interwoven with the rest are Griffin's reflections on her own childhood, the lives of her parents and grandparents, the chronic illness which becomes for her a vehicle for comprehending particular kinds of suffering.

Lyrical and passionate, the book at moments reads very much like a chorale. Each story Griffin tells is enhanced and illuminated by the others. Undertones of the beauty and sacredness of organic processes — cellular differentiation, the architecture of DNA — are set against facts about technological advances in warfare. On the other hand, juxtaposition itself sometimes becomes for Griffin a means of pointing out similarities. "Lately I have come to believe that an as yet undifferentiated human need and even a property of matter is a desire for revelation," she says. As each of the lives here is revealed, motivations and webs of circumstance grow clear and the reader begins to experience compassion. What is most remarkable about this book is that Griffin's portraits — even of the most contemptible of characters — ultimately elicit not judgment but understanding.

Griffin emphasizes that violence and isolation result when feeling is disengaged from thought and action. In one of her most poignant and disturbing vignettes, she depicts Enrico Fermi in the course of the first tests of the atomic bomb. "The blast was far more powerful than the scientists had predicted. Nature exceeded their calculations so far that the instruments designed to measure the explosion were destroyed by it . . . He was perhaps like another physicist there that day named Frisch who told himself he could memorize the phenomena without being affected by emotion . . ." Yet, as Griffin points out, Fermi was not unaffected; unable to drive himself home from the test site, he confessed to his wife how deeply shaken he was, though he did not tell her the magnitude of what he had seen. A "chasm of speechlessness" opened between the couple. The tests continued.

"In disowning the effects we have on others, we disown ourselves," Griffin says. The transformation of the self cannot proceed without responsible action in the world; knowledge of the self and the reclamation of denied aspects of one's being and experience are inextricable from the acknowledgment of one's connectedness to others. Insisting throughout on the importance of stories, Griffin affirms that consciousness itself is constructed by the process of hearing, taking in, augmenting, and responding — with the body as well as the mind — to the stories we witness. In this sense, she says, "We all are witnesses. Hunger, desperation, pain, loneliness, these are all visible in the streets about us . . . And out at the edge, beyond what we see or hear we can feel a greater suffering . . . and even if these cries do not survive in our waking knowledge, still they live on in the part of ourselves we have ceased to know."

I have found that Griffin's way of interpreting the seamless web of public and private events has continued to inform my thinking since reading her book. Although what she writes of is often painful to read about, one comes away from *A Chorus of Stones* with a feeling of exhilaration that these issues are finally being addressed. This is an eloquent, courageous work. ❖

Anita Barrows is a poet, translator, and psychotherapist, who practices Vipassana, and lives in Berkeley, California. She is presently adapting "despair and empowerment work" for use with children, and is writing about the uses of anger for social change.

Animal Dreaming: Encounters in the Natural World

Written and read by Rafe Martin
Audio tape, $9.95
Yellow Moon Press
P.O. Box 1316, Cambridge, MA 02238

Reviewed by Bill Anderson

In this audio tape, Rafe Martin tells stories from his own life and from the lives of people he has met, about human relationships with the animal world. The stories, told from a Buddhist perspective, are intimate descriptions of personal experiences with animals and nature in our civilized and materialistic culture.

The tape begins with an introduction to Buddhist ideas of interdependence and the *bodhisattva's* vows of compassion towards all living beings, and provides a base for understanding the Buddhist cosmology about animal and human realms that is explored in the stories.

Martin's encounter with a Beluga whale in a Connecticut aquarium is a compelling example of conscious connection between a human being and a whale. A lawyer's description of a ghostly encounter with cows at an abandoned upstate New York farm, and how it led him to be a vegetarian, is chilling. (It was especially good to listen to around Halloween.) Martin's story of the life and death of his son's white rat Lenny contains wonderful images of old age and our possible relation to that period of our own lives.

I found *Animal Dreaming* entertaining and stimulating. It brings Buddhist conceptions of human and animal interconnectedness into the context of our contemporary lives. Martin's stories are part of a conversation we all need to have. They challenge us to think personally about our own relation to animals and the natural world. ❖

Briefly noted:

Fire Dance, and Other Poems by Christopher Titmuss

Insight Books (UK), 1992. Distributed in North America by Dharma Seed Tapes Library, Box 66, Wendell Depot, MA 01380. $8

Here are 83 poems from an international meditation teacher and British Green Party parliamentary candidate. The range of subjects and treatments is wide, reflecting the author's own tastes, from William Blake to Pablo Neruda. Here are everyday narratives, war and peace, social and ecological injustice, at-oneness with nature, men/women, parent/child relationships, and the first cup of coffee of the day. Some of the poems will be instant favorites, others will grow on you. —*Ken Jones*

Plutonium Speaks

by Joanna Macy

Now that some nuclear weapons are beginning to be dismantled, scientists, policy-makers and concerned citizens have been talking about what to do with the plutonium that's left over. In the U.S., "pits" of plutonium the size of grapefruits are being stockpiled at Pentax, in Texas (where they came from in the first place). There's a big push to use it for a new generation of dangerous plutonium-based breeder-reactors, thereby producing more toxic waste. (This is what the Japanese government is doing. Japan has contracted to send its used high-level fuel half way around the world to France and England for reprocessing, and to have the plutonium sent back to Japan for use in fast-breeder reactors.)

Furthermore, the U.S. government won't join with other countries in promising not to use the plutonium again in weapons.

The scientists seem to see two general possibilities: banishing the plutonium from the face of the earth by rocketing it out into space, or re-using it. The possibility of storing it as safely as possible and guarding it here on earth is not taken seriously by policy makers. This plutonium that we have created will be here for at least 24,000 years. We need to push for bilateral and multilateral inspection programs by citizen groups.

After studying these issues and reading scientific reports, I sat with the question of what to do with plutonium, and I heard the plutonium speak. This is what it said:

Look at me. You made me. I am your child. If you try to make me your slave I will rise up and kill you. But if you just look at me, I will become your teacher, and I will teach you of your interconnectedness with all beings, across all time. I will hatch you out of your separate egos. I will teach you faithfulness and I will teach you love. ❖

Joanna Macy is a Buddhist scholar, activist, author of many books, and founder of the Nuclear Guardianship Project.

Nuclear Guardianship Project: 510/843-2523
Plutonium Free Future: 510/540-7645

IN MEMORIAM

Petra Kelly, 1947-1992, founder of the German Green Party, and Gert Bastian, 1923-1992, both former Members of Parliament in Germany, activists for human rights in Tibet, and members of BPF.

Coordinator's Report

Today's the Winter Solstice, shortest day of the year. Unlike most of the world, California's hills are green only in winter, the time of our rains. Still, much of life has gone underground for these cold months, doing the work of death and regeneration more privately than in other seasons. I think it's the same for many of us. In this dark time of year, marked by sacred days, ritual, and the false bonhomie of retail sales, thousands of our brothers and sisters huddle in doorways and shelters barely beyond the reach of cold rain and snow. Phone calls bring news of the passing of loved ones and friends. Dry leaves and branches rattle in the wind.

My own practice also returns to its roots. I had knee surgery this week, nothing terribly serious, but for a while I can't even do crosslegged zazen. So I return to breathing and bare attention, drawing in from a wide and dizzying field of ordinary activity to renew and rebuild.

Two months back, at the height of autumn, I flew back to Massachusetts and Vermont to attend the BPF National Meeting and touch base with a number of old friends inside and outside the Buddhist world. New England hillsides were all aglow with autumn colors. On the so-called Columbus Day weekend, our National Meeting at Vermont Zen Center's beautiful Shelburne zendo was warmly hosted by Sunyana Graef Sensei and members of the Vermont chapter. There were about thirty or thirty-five of us, a good mixture of local members and others from up and down the East Coast, and national board and staff. Several distinguished guests presented aspects of their engaged Buddhist practice: Venerable Suhitadharma, our friend from California's Metta Vihara and hospice, spoke about working with homeless and mentally ill drug users in New York City; Shugen Arnold of Zen Mountain Center has been engaged with the developing Buddhist sangha in New York's prison system; Venerable Bimal Tishya spoke about the Chittagogng Hill Tracts and his work with exiled children in India. Although the hours went too quickly, we did have time to discuss our own pressing questions and talk freely with our guests. A ceremony of precepts and repentence focussed our thoughts on native peoples this weekend of empty quincentennial celebrations.

Last February at the International Network of Engaged Buddhists conference, several of us were deeply moved by accounts of human rights violations against the tribal people of Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, which had been a concern of BPF from very early on. Venerable Bimal Tishya, a Buddhist monk from the Hill Tracts, now in exile in India, was among the most eloquent voices at INEB. After many faxes from India, Venerable Bimal was able to join us at the Vermont meeting and then continue on for a fruitful tour of the East Coast, sponsored by BPF. Along the way he addressed several BPF chapters and grassroots groups, met with UN agencies and international missions, major non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and Asia Watch, and numerous friends from the exiled Bangladesh community in the U.S. In Washington he presented a case for his people at the State Department and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, which drafted a letter of concern to the president of Bangladesh over the signature of all the caucus members. In mid-December, Ven. Bimal addressed the UN General Assembly on the opening of the Year of Indigenous Peoples, and had useful follow-up meetings with Human Rights Caucus members. I feel honored that BPF had a hand in this work and look forward to deepening our work with Bimal Bhikkhu until there is a day of dignity for all forgotten peoples.

Finally, we have kept very quiet in print about the 1992 elections. The rules for nonprofits call for no electioneering and we hew closely to that path. But that doesn't mean we were unconcerned about the outcome. Now that a new Congress is seated and the Clinton/Gore presidency is about to be inaugurated, there's a moment of great hopefulness here in the U.S. Voters have expressed clear choices; seemingly honorable men and women of diverse backgrounds have been invited to positions of responsibility. I can't pretend that now everything is hunky-dory, or even that I support all the proposed policies. But it's a relief to see men and women in office who seem to be able to listen with compassion. I think it's a good sign. ❖

—Alan Senauke

Chapter News

The Portland, Oregon chapter held an election eve meditation on Monday, November 2, led by Kyogen and Gyokuko Carlson of the Dharma Rain Center. Its purpose was to breathe through fear and separation, creating a space for compassion and interconnectedness. Now that the election has passed, we are pleased that Oregon's anti-Gay Ballot Measure 9 was defeated, but there is still concern that these painfully charged issues will not easily fade away.

The Cherry Blossom Buddhist Peace Fellowship (formerly the Washington D.C. Chapter) sponsored a discussion with Ven. Bimal Tishya from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, concerning the current "ethnic cleansing" policy in effect against the region's indigenous peoples. They have also published a first newsletter of local and chapter events.

Fifteen **Sonoma County BPF** members and friends met October 18 in Santa Rosa to re-energize the chapter.

Present were Sonoma Chapter founders Mary Porter-Chase and Sam Masser, along with practitioners from the Zen, Vipassana, and Vajrayana traditions. Enthusiasm was strong to meet and sit together monthly, trusting that participation in already existing social action projects will arise. For more information, contact Tom Collins at 707/ 795-0692.

Gail Deutsch of the **Mendocino Chapter** writes that things are quiet lately, with several key members away in India. A local fundraiser with the singing group Alchemy & Joam McMillen brought in money towards an emergency fund for North Coast people on the verge of becoming homeless or coming out of homelessness.

Ken Simon of the **Yellow Springs Chapter** relates that the chapter has been processing "some stuff that we needed to work out of, and we've come 'back alive.' Every other month we have an open public meeting with a preannounced topic, such as meditation & peacework, sustainable economics, Tara, etc. A member responsible for that meeting brings in a speaker, film, or whatever." On alternate months we have a BPF business meeting with rotating leadership. BPF members also organized a successful three-day retreat in November with Dzogchen master Sonam Rinpoche, who presently lives in Toronto. Expecting 50 people, they had 130 from all across the Midwest and East.

The **Vermont Chapter** did a splendid, graceful job of hosting the BPF National Members' Meeting at the Vermont Zen Center in Shelburne, October 9-11. More about this meeting in the National Coordinator's column. The Tibetan Resettlement Project is looking forward to the arrival of their first group of Tibetans in early January.

The **San Francisco Chapter** is discussing a consensus-building symposium on local homelessness, following up on their concern regarding Mayor Jordan's "Aggressive Panhandling Proposition," which put forward a "police solution to homelessness."

East Bay (California) BPF is beginning a Discussion Group on Socially Engaged Buddhism, beginning with essays from *The Path of Compassion.* They are also welcoming donations for the chapter's Tibetan Refugee Children's Project, which supports the education of these children in Nepal's Tibetan Settlements. Donations can be sent to Gordon Tyndall, 88 Clarewood Lane, Oakland, CA 94618. A $60 contribution supports a child in school for one year.

The **New York Chapter** has been presenting a number of extraordinary engaged Buddhist teachers over the last several months. In August they joined with the Thai Student Network for a talk by Sulak Sivarksa. Rev. Suhitadharma shared his work with New York City's homeless and mentally ill. In October, Ven. Bimal Tishya addressed a large gathering about human rights violations in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts.

And Amy Krantz writes of **an extraordinary meeting** in November:

"Kuno" (Ngawanthondup Narkyid), official biographer of the Dalai Lama, was a guest at our meeting. The subject was compassion; more specifically how Kuno learned not to hate the Chinese and to practice love without discrimination. We were a mixed group, internationally and in terms of Buddhist traditions, including two Bangladeshi, one Thai and one Tibetan.

Kuno offered to lead the beginning meditation with a long version of the "Om Mani Padmi Hum" prayer his grandmother had taught him in Tibet. He set the scene by describing his grandmothet's home, with the "Thugpa" pot (soup) simmering on coals in the center of the room, always available for anyone who was hungry. We chanted the words very slowly. Kuno taught us as he had been taught, to do "Tonglen" between the words (exhaling, sending out loving kindness everywhere; inhaling, purifying all suffering and disease).

After this powerful Tibetan prayer of compassion Kuno asked those from Bangladesh to lead us in their meditation. Together we recited the refuges, the five precepts, and a dedication in Pali and in English. Kuno then spoke of the practice of "Recognizing All Sentient Beings As Your Mother."

When our hearts had been opened in this way, Kuno began the story of the transformation of his hatred and anger into love. In 1959 Kuno had been a monk working in the Potala Palace in Lhasa. During the shelling of Lhasa, Kuno "gave back" his monk's vows in order to fight against the Chinese. Kuno's vivid recounting of the depth of his hatred and anger toward the Chinese, his interactions, in his role as official biographer, with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, his experiences at the Kalachakra in Bodhgaya in 1985, his grave illness, and later his visit to Sarnath, offered us an unusual teaching. His compassionate presence underscored and clearly conveyed the transformation he described.

People who attended were very moved by the meeting. As Robert Kalin said, " Kuno's accomplishment in liberating himself from hatred of the Chinese encourages me that I too may be able to turn my anger toward those who have wronged me into a compassion that will lessen the suffering on both sides."

Another participant, Roberta Nassar, commented, "Once Kuno was able to overcome his hatred, he became aware he had been racist regarding the Chinese and was able to abandon racist feelings. It touched me because he had been through so much pain and anguish, and he was able to transcend these painful experiences and come to a place of inner peace."

All in all, our sharing of different Buddhist traditions in meditation, followed by Kuno's story, led us to a deep experience of community and loving kindness. ❖

— Amy Krantz

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

Announcements

TIBETAN DELEK HOSPITAL in Dharamsala, India, seeks assistance through the Delek Hospital Aid Foundation (DHAF) in Vancouver, B.C. The 45-bed Hospital, which provides care to the Tibetan and indigent Indian communities of Dharamsala, is overseen by the Ministry of Health of the Dalai Lama's Government in Exile. Additional funding will allow the Delek Hospital to improve its current limited services and offer free treatment to those who cannot afford it. DHAF has already sent antibiotics, local anesthetics and broncholidators to Delek Hospital. Please help by donating and becoming a member of DHAF! Send $10 or more (payable to DHAF) to: Andrew B. Cooper, M.D., Delek Hospital Aid Foundation, #103-876 West 16th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V5Z 1T1; tel. 604/872-4766, fax 604/875-4847.

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

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

LITERACY PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS NEEDS VOLUNTEERS. The Jobs for Homeless Consortium in Berkeley needs volunteers to tutor homeless men and women who are looking for work and need to improve their reading, writing, or math skills. For more information, please contact the Jobs Consortium at 510/486-0177 or call Thelma Bryant at 510/524-2468.

NEEDS OF HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN. Winter is the cruelest time for homeless people. The Women's Daytime Drop-In Center in Berkeley needs donations of the following items for homeless women and children: blankets, sheets, towels, coats, hats, gloves, socks, baby formula. For more information, please contact the center at 510/548-6933, or call Thelma Bryant at 510/524-2468.

Coming Events

"SEXUAL BETRAYAL IN SPIRITUAL INSTITUTIONS and Therapeutic Relationships" is the title of a community forum being held Feb. 11, 1993, 7-10 PM, at the UCSF Laurel Heights Center, 3333 California St. in San Francisco. Participants represent many faiths (including Buddhism) and therapeutic professionals. Donation requested. For more information, call Nancy Novack at 415/921-2969.

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

BURMA BORDER DELEGATION. Paula Green and Sam Kalayanee will lead a witness delegation to the Thai-Burma border to meet with refugees and others. Cost is $200 from Thailand, max. 15 people. Application deadline Feb. 1: contact Paula Green, Karuna Center, 49 Richardson Rd., Leverett, MA 01054; tel/fax 413/367-9520.

APPLIED DEEP ECOLOGY, a two-week summer school including Joanna Macy, Bill Devall, and Stephanie Kaza as faculty, will take place at the Shenoa Retreat Center in Philo, CA from August 1-14, 1993. For a brochure call or fax the Institute for Deep Ecology Education at 303/939-8398, or write Box 2290, Boulder, CO 80306.

Classifieds

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

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

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

TEACHING CIRCLE is a bi-annual journal by and for educators with a meditation practice. For more information contact Patrick McMahon, 2311 "C" Woolsey St., Berkeley, CA 94705.

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The Buddhist Peace Fellowship Board gratefully acknowledges generous contributions above and beyond membership between September 25 and the end of 1992:

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❖ To bring a Buddhist perspective to contemporary peace, environmental, and social action movements;

❖ To encourage the practice of nonviolence based on the rich resources of traditional Buddhist teachings;

❖ To offer avenues for dialogue and exchange among the diverse American and world sanghas.

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