



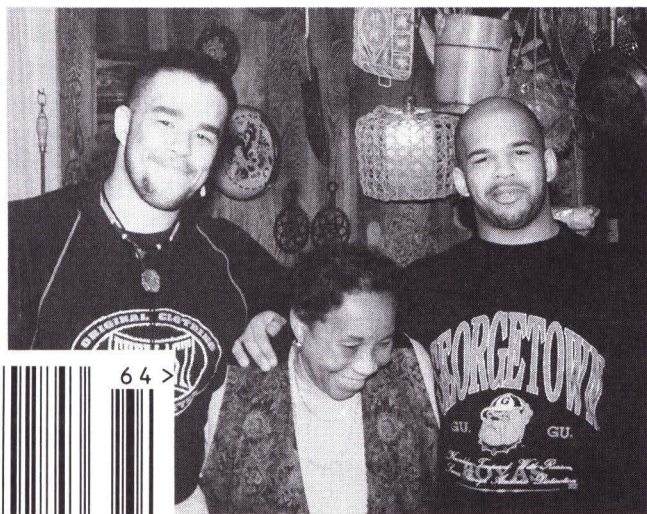
TURNING WHEEL

Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Winter 1996 \$4.00

FAMILY — WHAT IS IT?

*Extended & Distended Family
Practicing with Children
Caring for Aging Parents*



BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP
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FROM THE EDITOR

A family can be practically any combination of people; maybe the only thing a family can't be is one person. And now more and more people are without family as we usually understand it—people on the street, alone in their apartments, displaced from their native landscapes. So today I'm thinking about the people who, when you say the word "family," get sad. Times in my own life, lack of family, or lack of the kind of family I thought I was supposed to have, made me sad, too. No husband, no blood relatives around, children grown. Times when being with family meant somebody had to get on an airplane. When I sold my breadbox at a yard sale. When I didn't have anybody around I could call by a nickname. No Zeezee. No Roobiedoo.

To be human is to long for family, to take joy in family, to grieve the loss of family. We Buddhists like to say we're all interconnected, all part of the same family. But it's hard to feel related to people we know nothing of. We need a family at home to start with, so that the idea of being all one family has some happy meaning for us. If nobody invites you for Thanksgiving dinner, it may not help that much to know you're a jewel in the Net of Indra.

Where can we find our family? We've gotten used to the idea that we're all from dysfunctional families. (Did you see that cartoon of a solitary man sitting in a meeting room surrounded by empty chairs, while a banner on the wall proclaims: "Adult Children of Normal Parents"?) But a dysfunctional family is still a family. Bitterness and disappointment are tight bonds, containing possibility.

Inside our biological families, functional or dysfunctional, we can choose each other. You don't get to choose who your mother is, but you get to choose whether to call her up on Sunday morning. You don't get to choose who your children are, but you get to choose whether to sing them a goodnight song. Scoby Beer chose his mother as he cared for her in the last year of her life (p. 33). Lin Jensen chose his father as he sat by his hospital bed (p. 36).

The family is a living organism, nourished by butterfly kisses and toothbrush holders, family expressions ("Handsome is as handsome does") and family stories. When my kids were little, my mother delighted them by telling them stories about the "bad" things she—*Grandma!*—did when she was a little girl.

Some families have ancestors' portraits hanging on the wall, while others have had the names of their ancestors stolen from them. But if we go back far enough, our ancestors are the same. And the Buddhist lineage is there for us to claim if we wish, all the way back to the seven Buddhas before Buddha.

Whether or not our biological family is a place to rest in love, we always have the chance to create family for ourselves. These are the people we are related to not by birth but by choice and by commitments kept over years—the friends from childhood we stay in touch with, the friends we are bonded to because of what we have been through together—at the childcare center, on the picket lines, in the community garden, by the sickbed, in the temple. These longterm friendships become increasingly precious to me as I get older.

If somebody's in your family, your connection overrides differences of opinion, politics, even food habits! And that's how it is with sangha, too. You can't "disown" your sangha, and the good news is, they can't disown you, either. The *Metta Sutta* goes both ways. As you extend your lovingkindness out from small family to bigger and bigger family, so, too, you're part of other people's biggest family. Just as Buddhism helps us go from small self to Big Self, it helps us get from small family to Big Family, from the people under our roof to the people across the world, even to the beings under the sea and in the air. ❖ —Susan Moon

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*:

Summer '96: International Issue — Buddhist activism around the world.
Deadline: April 8, '96.

Fall '96: Home and Homelessness — Deadline: July 8, '96.

Submissions should be typed and double-spaced. Include SASE for return of ms.



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Susan Moon

Associate Editor

Denise Caignon

Editorial Assistant
& Advertising Director

Lewis Woods

Consulting Readers & Editors

*Thelma Bryant, Melody Ermachild
Chavis, Tova Green, Patrick
McMahon, Alan Senauke, Meredith
Stout, Elsie Okada Tep, & Peter Wood*

Production & Design

Lawrence Watson

Production Assistants

*Mary Barrett, Felicia Fields, Bob
Lyons, Jordan Thorn, Daniel Wing*

*For advertising information, please
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National Coordinator

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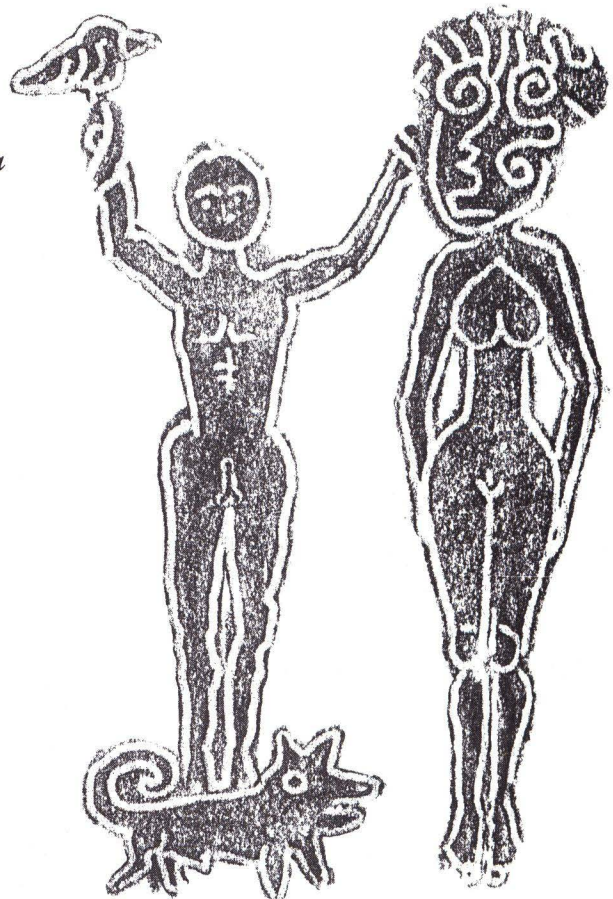
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William Clark, *A Boy and His Mother*

LETTERS

Fundamentalism

I just finished the issue on "Fundamentalism" and found it compassionate and thought-provoking. A couple of the articles refer to classic mind-control techniques used by cults. As I read the list—sleep deprivation, long work hours, isolation from the larger world, having very little free time to be with oneself or with family and friends, being dependent on the approval of sometimes capricious authority figures—I suddenly thought: This sounds a lot like life in the modern corporation! Even nutritional deprivation fits into the pattern (all that fast food!), not to mention the ever-present demand to put the needs of the organization ahead of one's own personal life.

Maybe the phrase "the cult of consumerism" needs to be taken literally—and maybe this cult-like behavior accounts for some of the pathology of modern mainstream society!

—*Yehudit Lieberman*
San Rafael, California

Thank you for your special issue on fundamentalism. I want to send the issue to every friend who has been involved in various psychospiritual communities/cults of one sort or another and all the politicians I've encountered in my years at publishing a conspiracy magazine.

The stories of actually listening to the "other side" are very moving. It revives our/my humanity rather than allowing the easy way out of hammering on an enemy, no matter how crazy they appear.

—*Bob Banner*
Editor of The White Heron Sangha Newsletter
Shell Beach, California

Simple Living

Thank you for the "simple living" level of membership. Living on a very small, fixed income is hard but also quite freeing. There have been times in my life when money was more plentiful, but the question is, "Was I happier then, or now?"

Having enough money for essentials is good, but having a little bit more is not necessarily better. When I had a few dollars more, I would succumb more easily to advertisers' claims while walking the aisles of the supermarket. When I got home and looked at my purchases in a different light, I wasn't really better off for having the name brand of this or that. Those name brands and pretty designs on the boxes encourage my grasping mind to reach for happiness on the outside,

once again, without tending the happiness on the inside that really matters.

So *Turning Wheel*, you do a lot of teaching in your pages, and even on your renewal form. Keep up the good work.

—*Jane J. Davis*
Waterliet, New York

Bay Area Snobbery?

I was disturbed by the flip editorial comment at the end of Joe Rookard's article "A Touch of the Divine" in the Fall '95 issue of *Turning Wheel*. The comment notes that Mr. Rookard "lives, oddly enough, in Orange County, California."

Maybe this was intended as "innocent" humor, but I find the comment offensive. The implication, of course, is that some kind of intellectual or moral superiority is present in the Berkeley editorial offices of *Turning Wheel*, and absent in Orange County or any other location that the staff wishes to put down. The remark seems especially inappropriate for a Buddhist publication.

As Bay Area residents and Buddhists, why do we maintain this parochial, self-congratulatory attitude? This stale illusion says more about us than about the complex places and people whom we put down.

—*Stephen Lafer*
Oakland, California

From the Editor: Joe Rookard's bio—like all biographical notes in *TW*—was provided by the author; the biographical notes do not reflect editorializing on the part of the editors or the staff. But your point is well taken. We should make an extra effort to avoid small-minded Bay Area snobbery, and we would have done well to cut this phrase since it is easily misconstrued. We certainly don't want to suggest that insightful people are more likely to be found in one place than another.

From a Friend in Prison

These days I am very much at peace with myself and the world around me. It hasn't always been like this, though. Most of my life I have tried to fill the nameless void in my life with drugs, alcohol, sex, money, and "things." The more I got, the more I wanted, but anxiety was all I really ended up with. About 15 years ago, after having lost a beautiful wife and daughter, business, and home, I fell in love with a woman who introduced me to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. I became a member and without a great deal of difficulty put drugs behind me. But I still continued to drink (massive quantities), and ended up getting myself a life sentence in prison as a result.

My drunken episode was a car crash in which I took the life of one person and nearly killed three others. Because of a history of three prior drunk driving

arrests, I was sentenced to 21 years to life. Rightfully so, I might add, given my reckless disregard for human life. I know that it is not possible to truly make amends for the pain and suffering that I've caused, but I do what I can in other areas and try anyway.

After I came to prison and was trying to get comfortable living inside of my own skin and stay sober at the same time, I recalled the teachings of Buddhism. Material on non-Christian spirituality is hard to come by in here. Over the years, I've bought, borrowed, and collected all the Buddhist writings I could. I read and re-read whatever I get my hands on and apply as much of the relevant material as I can to my life. I share with whoever is willing to listen. I've been blessed with donations and gifts of books and reading material from like-minded people and organizations.

So I guess that brings me full circle to the original purpose for this letter. I want to thank you all for your gracious gift of a free subscription to *Turning Wheel*. I am really enjoying this first issue and look forward to receiving future issues. Thank you all very much for turning the wheel.

—Paul Dewey
Ione, California

Editor's Note: Subscriptions to *Turning Wheel* are free for all inmates who request them, thanks to all of our dues-paying members and contributors.

Hope for Both Rape Survivors and Rapists

Susan Moon's interview with Mae chii Saansanee really hit home. I can relate to what she's doing with rape survivors and rapists because I'm incarcerated for rape. Even though the rape was not forceful, what I did was still wrong. It has taken me nine years of incarceration and about five years of meditation and Buddhist studies to understand why I did what I did. The interview with Mae chii Saansanee has shown me that there is hope for both the rape survivors and the rapist.

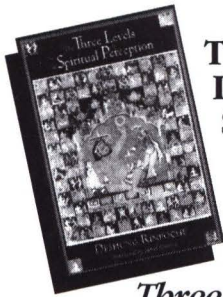
What caught my eye and got me to read the interview was the picture of Mae chii Saansanee and her apprentices. She radiates peace and compassion. The word *namaste* best describes how I feel about Mae chii Saansanee and others like her: *I recognize that place in you that is of peace, love, compassion, and light. When you are in that place in you, and I am in that place in me, we are one.*

—Bruce Grubb
Columbus, Ohio

Abortion

The most recent issue of *TW* contained several statements that have left me confused, angry, and concerned.

In the "Narrowed Mind" article, the editor and Sheila O'Donnell relay the feelings of "Jane Roe" who "switched sides" on the abortion issue, but they inaccurately portray the abortion clinic workers as cold-hearted,



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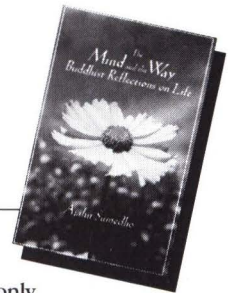


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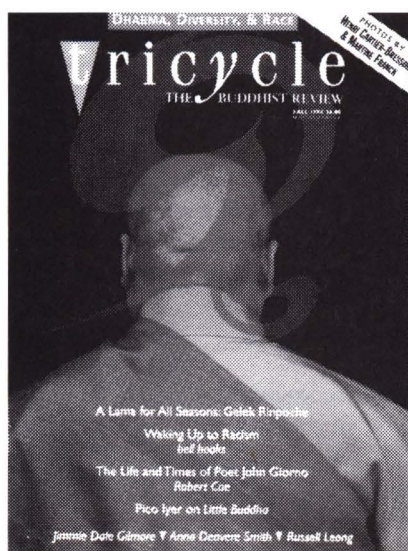
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non-caring people, compared to the open-hearted, cookie-making, family-loving “pro-lifers.” These stereotypes distract us from what I believe is the real question: Does a woman have the right to choose? And do we want abortion to remain safe and legal?

In light of these questions, you can understand what a stunner it was to open the journal and see the ad on page 4 from The Seamless Garment Network. A long list of notables endorses their mission statement, which puts abortion on the same list with war, poverty, the death penalty, and racism as being a threat to life. In fact abortion is only second on the list after war. That this group exists with their belief system does not surprise me. My distress lies in the inclusion of this ad in the BPF journal.

Please evaluate your policy in accepting ads. There are many gray areas and no easy answers, but on this one I’m taking a stand. I’ll do it as mindfully as I can, remembering what Gil Scott-Heron said, quoting his grandmother: “If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.”

—*Elaine O’Brien*
Sebastopol, California

From the Editor: Thank you for raising these important issues. In editing the Fundamentalism issue, my aim was to remain as open-minded as possible to people labeled as “fundamentalist;” I didn’t want to go the usual progressive-liberal route of enumerating the faults of those “we” typically are at odds with. I agree that right-wing Christians have no monopoly on friendliness or caring. But it *is* true that the fundamentalist “focus on the [traditional] family” has a certain power and appeal, especially for lonely or alienated people. We progressives would do well not to underestimate that power.

As for the Seamless Garment ad, you raise a difficult question for any magazine: Where do we draw the line in accepting advertisements we may not agree with? Being pro-choice, I personally would not have endorsed such an ad, but some people we respect did (to my surprise). In any case, the ad should have been clearly marked as a paid advertisement. —*Denise Caignon* ❖



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READINGS

Land Mines

According to United Nations figures, as many as 110 million land mines are planted in the soil of 64 nations in the world, including 3 million in Bosnia-Herzegovina (some 152 mines per square mile of land). Production, distribution and use of these inexpensive (as little as \$2) and deadly (26,000 civilians killed or wounded each year) weapons of slow-motion mass destruction continues.

Long after they are set in place and forgotten, land mines continue to maim and kill. The people of Cambodia have the highest percentage of land mine injuries in the world. There are over 30,000 mine victims in Cambodia, with an estimated 200-260 new land mine injuries every month. Land mines are an occupational hazard for farmers in large areas of Cambodia. In order to eat, they must plant rice, collect firewood, and herd their buffalo, but as they pursue their livelihood, they and their children and animals may be injured. Clearing the land of mines is an expensive, time-consuming matter, in which highly trained people must go over the land inch by inch. A related problem is that countries like Cambodia, where there are many land mine victims, lack the resources to help the injured: the medical care, the artificial limbs, the physical therapists. It is estimated that there is one land mine in the soil for every Cambodian.

For information on supporting the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines contact Clayton Ramey, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960 Tel: 914/358-4601 fax: 914/358-4924 e-mail: fornat@igc.apc.org.

Right Livelihood Awards

The Stockholm-based Right Livelihood Award Foundation announced the four winners of this year's Right Livelihood Awards, among them Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand. Sulak is a BPF elder; he's on the BPF advisory board and is the founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in Thailand. The jury acclaimed Sulak for "his vision, activism and spiritual commitment in the quest for a development process that is rooted in democracy, justice and cultural integrity."

The other recipients of the Award, which comes along with US \$250,000 shared between the four, are: Carmel Budjardjo of TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign; the Serb Civic Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina for "maintaining support for a humane, multi-ethnic, democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina"; and Andras Biro and the Hungarian Foundation for Self-Reliance for "resolute defense of Hungary's Roma (gypsy) minority."

The Awards, traditionally presented in the days before the Nobel Prize is awarded, were introduced in 1980 "to honor and support those offering practical and exemplary answers to the most urgent challenges facing us today." The Awards were created by Jacob von Uexkull, a Swedish-German philatelic expert who sold his valuable postage stamps to provide the original endowment in order to acknowledge the work vital for the survival of humankind, work he felt the Nobel Prize tended to ignore. Often referred to as "the Alternative Nobel Prize," the Right Livelihood Awards for 1995 honor four recipients who are engaged in exemplary struggles for human rights.

Tibet's Panchen Lama

The whereabouts of the six-year-old Tibetan boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was confirmed by the Dalai Lama in May as the new incarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, remains unknown. After the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama is the second most senior spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. Observers claim that both the boy and Chadrrel Rinpoche, head of the official search for the reincarnation, have been detained by the Chinese government. Chinese authorities are disputing the right of the Dalai Lama to name the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. Ironically, the Chinese government wants to be in control of choosing the reincarnations of Tibetan lamas. According to the Tibet Information Network, 48 Tibetans have been arrested by the Chinese in connection with this dispute.

—*Tibet News Digest*

NEW BPF INTERNET DISCUSSION GROUP

With the help of our friends at Peacenet/IGC, BPF has set up a mailing and discussion list, bpf-ineb@igc.apc.org, open to anyone with Internet access. This group is open for discussion and news about socially engaged Buddhism.


Here's how it works: Each subscriber receives as e-mail any message that is addressed to the list address. [Bpf-ineb](mailto:bpf-ineb@igc.apc.org) functions without direct moderation, and is open to all subscribers and contributors.

There is no charge for joining. All you need to do is send a simple message to the following address: majordomo@igc.apc.org The message must be formatted precisely as shown below:

subscribe bpf-ineb@igc.apc.org

You should receive back a short message confirming your subscription, a brief summary of what the list is about, and some simple instructions for sending messages, unsubscribing, etc.


If you have further questions, please write National Coordinator Alan Senauke directly at bpf@igc.apc.org. We look forward to a lively and useful exchange.



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Ken Saro-Wiwa

Nigerian poet, minority rights activist, environmentalist, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight colleagues were executed by hanging on November 10, 1995, in a prison in Nigeria. After being detained incommunicado for eight months, Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues were charged with plotting last May's murder of four Ogoni chiefs who supported the military government. The four were killed at a rally at which Saro-Wiwa was not even present. The hangings took place despite international condemnation of the trial procedures of the military tribunals, and in the face of urgent appeals to the Nigerian regime for a stay of execution.

Saro-Wiwa, 54, was leader of the nonviolent Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which has led the minority ethnic group's struggle against the environmental damage caused by the oil companies, particularly Shell, drilling in their region. Since 1958 when Royal Dutch Shell first struck oil on Ogoni lands in southeastern Nigeria, the Ogoni have been losing arable land, fish and wildlife resources to literally thousands of oil spills. The landscape is dotted with puddles of oil the size of football fields. MOSOP had demanded political autonomy, compensation for past damages, and a clean-up by the multinational oil companies responsible for the spills.

In a final statement to the military tribunal that condemned him, Ken Saro-Wiwa said, "I am a man of peace...I have devoted my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated. I have no doubt at all about the ultimate success of my cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on my journey. Nor imprisonment nor death can stop our ultimate victory...I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial...On trial also is the Nigerian nation, its present rulers and those who assist them...When we protect injustice and oppression, we empty our classrooms and fill our stomachs with hunger...Some have already cast themselves in the role of villains, some are tragic victims, some still have a chance to redeem themselves. The choice is for each individual." —*Friends of Nigeria* 415/781-8224, ext. 115.

SIPAZ

International Service for Peace (Servicio Internacional para la Paz, or SIPAZ) is an international coalition of groups working for a dignified, just and lasting peace in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. (BPF is one of SIPAZ's sponsoring organizations.) The goal of SIPAZ is to establish a long-term physical presence in Chiapas with an international team of people experienced in matters of conflict resolution and the practice

of active nonviolence. This team will be advised by local people. The first SIPAZ team will start work in Chiapas in December.

An example of what SIPAZ workers will do is to join Mexican citizens in the Civilian Peace Camps that have already been established in conflict areas of Chiapas. These camps have clearly prevented hostilities between government military forces and the Zapatista army. An international presence in the camps is important to their effectiveness.

SIPAZ is currently seeking volunteers, funding sources, and office equipment for the Chiapas office.

For more information contact Servicio Internacional para la Paz, c/o The Fellowship of Reconciliation, 515 Broadway, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. 408/423-1626; FAX: 408/423-8716; e-mail: fornatl@igc.apc.org.

Visit to a School for Children from the Chittagong Hill Tracts

While passing through Calcutta last year, my husband and I had the opportunity to visit a school for Chittigong Hill Tribe refugee children founded by Bimal Bhikku, a monk who is himself from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. We found our way to Bimal Bhikku's office, and although he was not there, we were offered tea and told about the plight of the Chittagong Hill Tribes, who are being continually

forced off their native lands in Bangladesh due to extreme prejudice and shortage of land.

The office director took us to see the school on the outskirts of Calcutta, first by taxi and then, when the roads got too bad for a car, by motor rickshaw. As we bumped along the small dirt road, I got glimpses of Indian rural life. The rainy season had started recently, which meant the streets of Calcutta were squalid mud holes, but out here it was wonderfully green with palm trees and open fields of tall grass, and we saw villagers bathing in fish tanks.

The red school stood out brightly against the green. A blue school bus was parked in front of the bamboo gate. Since the children were in class, we were offered more tea by some of the monks, and we chatted together in a garden courtyard.

At that time, the students were all boys, six years old and up, but soon the first girls will be arriving from villages in Assam and other refugee settlements in India. The students are all from Chittagong Hill Tribes. Some are orphans and others are from families too poor to afford the often inadequate schools in their region. Those with families make the arduous journey back to their villages at least once a year.

The monks are in charge of the daily care of the children. The teachers are lay people committed to educating Chittagong Hill Tribes children. The classes appeared to us to be traditional by American stan-

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dards—the children sat in neat rows, but they weren't overcrowded. (I had heard that Indian classrooms often had as many as 80 children.) The curriculum seemed to be similar to the other high quality private schools in India: a good basic education, including English. Cultural and spiritual guidance was provided by the monks without any religious pressure. (Not all of the Chittagong H.T. people are Buddhist.) The students were well behaved and polite. We looked into some of the dorm rooms, which were simple, tidy, and comfortable.

After class the boys changed out of their blue and white uniforms for recess. Most of the 200 or so students came around to pose for a group photo. Some were brave enough to use their English skills with us while others hung back to listen. Some of the younger kids giggled while I sang a song I had learned at Plum Village. My German husband discussed soccer, a sure-fire conversation starter in India. One boy described his four-day bus trip to visit his family. The students we talked to were grateful and happy to be at the school.

Although there was no formal volunteer program at that time, a young woman from England who had taught English had just left. Our guides told us that it had been a successful experiment. The boys seemed to miss her. The few women involved with the school were much sought after as mother substitutes, especially by the youngest children.

I was touched that the children were so eager to interact with us. They stood around as we left to wave goodbye and they asked us to come and visit again. As we rode the teachers' bus to the nearest village taxi stand, I reflected on the peacefulness of the environment I was leaving. When we reached the streets of Calcutta, teeming with poverty and filth, I felt very glad for the students I had met that day.

A few months later we were able to meet with Bimal Bhikku and discuss the school. Again I was struck by the sensible and caring attention these children are given. He feels that although it would probably be easier to have only boys at the school this would be a mistake. He realizes that the \$50 per month spent on each child for complete board and education is a bit expensive by Indian standards, but feels it is very important to give the children a caring environment. He also spoke of the need to support new graduates to continue their education or find employment training. When students are able to make a living, then they can help the school to give other children a chance.

Those who are interested in sponsoring a child or helping the school can donate anything from the cost of a uniform to the commitment to pay \$50 a month until a child graduates. Send donations to: Shishu Koruna Sangha, Ven. Bimal Bikkhu, 3 Sambhu Das Lane, Calcutta 7000 012, India. —*Liz Stover* ❖

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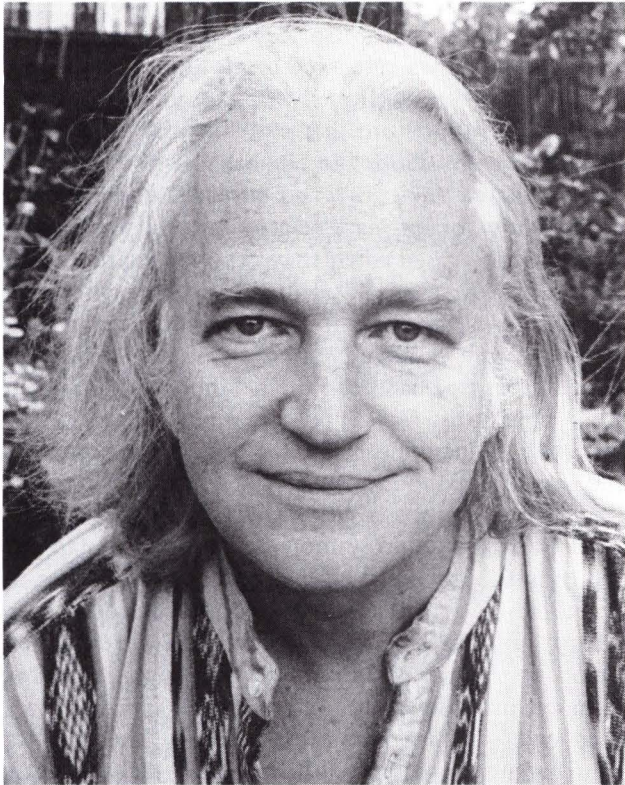
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IN MEMORIAM—LEX HIXON



Lex Hixon—spiritual teacher, spiritual friend, writer—died of cancer at his home in Riverdale, New York on November 1. He was fifty-three years old. Lex had the rare ability in his writing and in his life to combine the art of dharma practice with the scholar's precision. His Buddhist books, *Mother of the Buddhas*, and, most recently, *Living Buddha Zen*, give new voice to old and complex Asian texts in ways that open their truth and poetry to our Western ears.

Lex, together with his wife Sheila, also did bodhisattva work in the world: helping to rebuild Tibetan monasteries in the Himalayas, leading Sufi communities in the U.S. and Mexico, supporting the Zen Community of New York, and working closely with *Tricycle* magazine. We are proud that Lex and Sheila included BPF in their circle of concern.

The sharp memory that comes as I write is of Lex reading from *Mother of the Buddhas* about five years ago at Berkeley Zen Center. It was very early in the morning, and his passion for this ancient cosmic vision of emptiness and deep connection brought me wide awake. Afterwards Lex offered a stack of books as gifts for the sangha, a simple gift of dharma.

We extend our deep sympathy to Sheila, to their four children, and to the entire family. We can only hope that Lex's generous spirit and intelligence will continue to express itself through our own rededication to realization and peace. —Alan Senauke, for BPF

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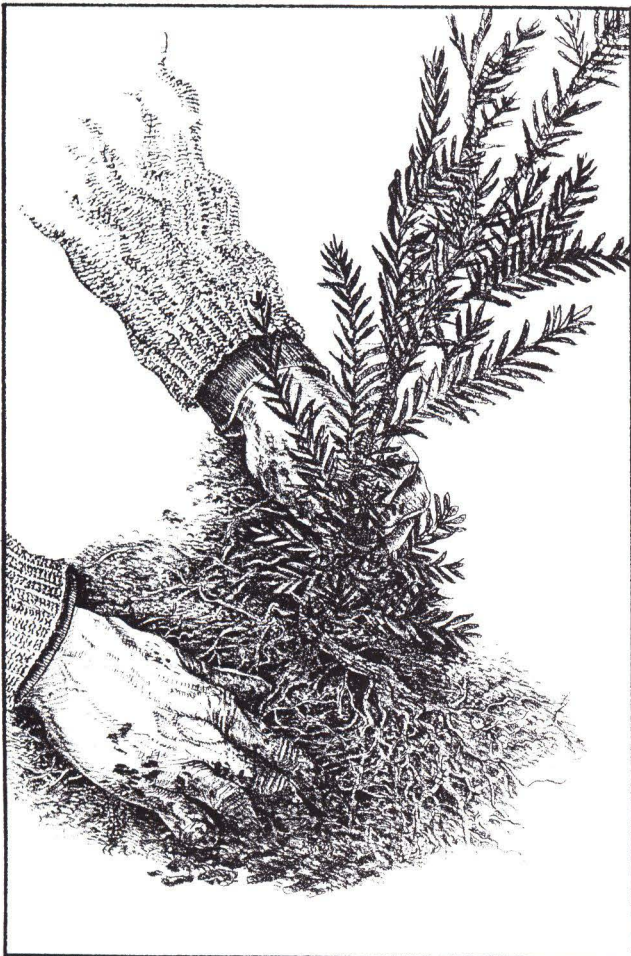
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PRACTICING WITH THE LARGER FAMILY

by Stephanie Kaza

Each semester I assign my students in environmental studies the task of writing an autobiography of place. I ask them to think of the places that have affected them most deeply in their lives. We talk about ordinary everyday places—the local woods, the walk to school, the family summer camp—and also the extraordinary places—a special trip to Yosemite or perhaps impressions from a semester abroad. I ask them to interpret the significance of their relationships to place, to explore the bonds that have molded their identity with the land.

The stories are remarkable. One student spoke passionately of his love for his dog and their long rambles through the hills. In the tumult of high school stress and family struggles, his dog was his closest friend. A number of students celebrated the private spaces of otherwise ignored wood lots which served as refuge, solace, adventure camp, and club headquarters. For some, the



Davis TeSelle, *Planting Trees*

personal bond was most intimate with a particular backyard tree. In the liting branches of sugar maple or the sturdy canopy of red oak, these young people found friendship and stability, discovery and delight.

From the power of their stories, I saw that the students regarded certain trees, pets, and places as part of their family; they were that close. In the company of these vital companions and familiar places, these young people shared their joys and sorrows, exploring the complexities of intimate relations unselfconsciously. The difficulty came when they ran into another world view. One young man described his rude environmental awakening when he found his father had had the backyard tree removed, “because it was killing the grass.” That tree had been the neighborhood hangout, the center of the social universe, a reliable presence of everyday companionship for the boy. Others mourned the loss of childhood play spots to suburban development. In one story, a girl was so upset at seeing her local beloved lake grow more and more polluted that she courageously raised her voice at a town meeting.

For some of these young people, the losses were wrenching and isolating. Often their parents were oblivious to these significant relationships, sometimes even denying the validity of the child’s experience and their own role as agents of destruction. The commercial destruction of woodlots brought each child the suffering of helplessness, as they watched their refuges be gobbled by the agents of profit-making.

These stories have confirmed for me the critical need to support a wider-than-human definition of family. In its most basic sense, environmental practice is family practice. Children may know this more easily than adults. We can let them inspire us to find our own intimate relations with roses, raccoons, and red firs. So much loss is going unattended now; there are no memorial services for these family members. I cannot think of a more urgent matter to attend to than the health of the larger family. ❖

*grapes
waiting to be picked
on an ancient parchment
we meet
and I almost taste
your sweetness*

—Thelma Bryant

NOT BUDDHA, NOT BAGEL

by Patrick McMahon

Despite countless incarnations, bone-crushing austerities, and earthshaking enlightenment, Buddha somehow never learned the most elementary of lessons. One day, long long ago recently, this oversight was brought to his attention. Thus have I heard:

Sitting beneath the Bo Tree, listening to the birds, breathing in and breathing out, Buddha heard a sound. "Do you hear what I hear, Yolanda?" he whispered.

His companion, napping in the shade, opened her blue eyes and blinked her long lashes. "You mean that baby crying?" she yawned.

"That's it. There it is again. Who do you suppose it could be, crying and crying in the deep woods?"

"Oh, Buddha, have you forgotten already? Just yesterday you healed her owie. And the day before you saved her from the witch. And the day before..."

"Right, right—it can only be Baby Hmm. I wonder what she needs this time."

"Well, you'll have to go see, just like every other day."

"Do I have to?" Buddha whined, "It's so nice and peaceful sitting underneath the Bo Tree."

Yolanda's pink plastic foot shot out from her pajamas, kicking Buddha off the altar onto the rug, where he bounced about, still in full lotus, grumbling about his hard life saving sentient beings. Suddenly a huge face loomed into his, cheeks like sails, eyes like bowls of oatmeal.

"Why Baby Hmm," he exclaimed breathlessly. "Wh-Wh-What can I do for you?"

"Me go poo-poo in diap'a." The giant face beamed with the pleasure of saying the "p" word. "You change diap'a."

"B-But Baby Hmm, that's one thing I can't do. I can heal owies, I can make witches fall apart and put them back together, I can make candy rain from the sky. But diapers?—PLEASE don't make me change diapers."

"Baby Hmm wet. Baby Hmm stinky. You change."

"Yolanda," Buddha called back to his distant place of peace, "Yolannda...I need hllllp!"

"...and that's all," I say, bringing to an end today's installment of the ritual that Cora and I have been enacting for months now, ever since the morning she, the three-year-old child of my housemates, burst upon my morning zazen.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Meditating," I said.

"I want to do that," she demanded. And so began my journey into the deep deep woods of her beginner's mind. I learned all over again how to ring the bell, to sit still and breathe (three times, then wiggle), and bow. As the weeks went by, and every morning she returned for more, we expanded our repertoire of practices: We decorate, we costume, and always we make believe. Cora

becomes Baby Hmm, or The Big Girl, or The Princess. I become the Buddha, and, as the plot demands, Yolanda (a Barbie Doll), or The Witch (a stuffed lamb).

Recently, after the morning's story had been told and we were putting away the altar, crowded now with a pantheon of deities, she called it "our little theater." I was startled into realizing that what we'd been calling "meditation" might be no more than thinly disguised dramatic play. Or was dramatic play thinly disguised meditation? Had I hopelessly distorted the Dharma?—Or had the Dharma simply crossed another border, adapting to Nurseryland as surely as it had adapted in the crossing from India to Thailand, China, Korea, Japan...Twentieth Century North America?

I know less about Buddhism than I once knew, and am content more than I can ever remember. The vow to awaken with all beings has brought me to this intimate stage. The aspiration to bring traditional practice into the everyday has come down to this richly cluttered altar. The vision of an extended family sangha has spun this shimmery web of relations, in which Cora can be six months old or a grown princess, as her development requires—and I a Buddha, a witch, a Barbie Doll.

Eons in the meditation hall and kalpas in the classroom are of no account in this territory. All that counts is the story, that it be fresh, quirky, unpremeditated, and unencumbered with doctrine. Yet still I'm caught out trying to make a point. The other day at breakfast Cora asked, "What is Buddha?" *Excellent!* I thought to myself. *Our little theater is working its magic.* I seized the teachable moment.

"Well, to begin with, you are Buddha. I'm also Buddha. Momma and Poppa are Buddha too." She listened as I went down the list of our mutual friends, ending with, "...and in fact we're all Buddha. Every single one of us."

She looked up at me slyly from her plate, pointed to her bagel, and asked, "Is *that* Buddha?"

"Why...yes, that's Buddha too," I said uneasily, feeling danger close by.

"That's not Buddha," she came back firmly. "That's my bagel." ♦



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New Column!
Buddhist Activists in History—

GYOGI

by Diane Patenaude Ames

This is the first column in a new series on Buddhist activists in history. Buddhists pay a lot of attention to lineage, to the "Buddhas and Ancestors" who have transmitted the dharma to us. But we too easily forget the pioneers who have gone before us as activists. Surprise! Turns out we aren't the first Buddhists to work for social justice. Let's be inspired by the example of those who have gone before.

In eighth-century Japan, civilization was still a foreign import. The socio-political elite was just learning how to read and use chopsticks, and the common people sometimes painted themselves red. In the capital at Nara, newly literate aristocrats built Chinese-style temples in which Buddhist priests in gorgeous robes performed ceremonies to make it rain. The preliterate peasants who had to pay for all this were left to the guidance of their traditional shamans, who were known as *ubasoku*. Establishment monks were dubious when those shamans embraced Buddhism and shocked when

they declared themselves Buddhist priests. Priests were supposed to have official ordination, which in turn required government approval of the candidate. But the peasants did not care; the *ubasoku* remained the healers, the diviners—in short, the true leaders—of their village communities.

In what were then remote areas—that is, in most of Japan—it was often the local *ubasoku* and not the government who organized the digging of irrigation ditches and the construction of bridges and roads. Some of these untaught holy men even dared to denounce the greed of the corrupt Buddhist establishment. This came perilously close to denouncing the increasing exploitation and virtual enslavement of the peasants. Many *ubasoku* were arrested.

Thus, when a learned monk named Gyogi (A.D. 670?-749) decided to live among the masses like an *ubasoku* and teach them that even the unlearned could be reborn in Maitreya Buddha's Pure Land through devotion, moral behavior, and socially useful good works, without the Buddhist establishment necessarily having anything to do with it, he was regarded as a class traitor. He even formed an unauthorized organization, a sort of Buddhist Peace Corps, to bring the benefits of civilization to the preliterate peasants.

Gyogi's followers lived in 49 small religious communities, each of which was charged both with teaching back-country people about Buddhism and with managing one or more public service projects, such as charity hospitals, clinics, orphanages, old people's homes, hostels for travelers, irrigation projects, bridge building, or even construction of harbor facilities. When people saw the results in areas where there had never been a doctor or any organized charity and where travel had been nearly impossible, Gyogi was hailed as a bodhisattva. And the emperor was so impressed that he had Gyogi arrested in 717.

In a time of rising unrest in the hinterlands, this was scarcely surprising. If peasants are taught how to organize a road-building project, they might just organize a revolution. Ask any dictator in Central America. However, Gyogi turned out to have so much popular support that the government was forced not only to release him but to give him an ecclesiastical office and recognize him as bodhisattva in his own lifetime. He spent the last years of his life helping the emperor raise money to build the "giant Buddha" image which still stands in Nara. But there are more important reasons why "Gyogi the bodhisattva" is still remembered. ❖

Diane Ames has been a member of the Buddhist Churches of America, a Shin Buddhist organization, for 16 years. She's an active BPF member.

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Embodiment: the Family Business

A WEDDING

by Maylie Scott

How the gaps are filled. How separateness rises, pains, persists, and is comforted back into wholeness. This is the endless family business—the front door-back door opening and shutting. The familiar and unfamiliar feet on the stairs, voices in the kitchen, water running in the bathroom. Wait a minute, I used to think, as Peter's colleagues came to meetings, as my children's friends slammed doors, called out, ate, and there were odd disappearances, traces of forbidden smoke. Who is who? Whose house is it, whose life?

The families of the bride and groom are seated. John, my youngest child, waits at the altar, handsome in his tuxedo, though, even at thirty, still a little gangly in his very tall body. His attendants off to the left, he stands in the gap of his singleness. The smile on his face, at once joyful and vulnerable, carries some alarm. They wanted a formal wedding and planned it carefully. They wanted the full drama of this passage from alone to joined.

Sitting in complete silence, we are all—strangers, families, friends—caught in the tide of expectation, hearts beating to the occasion. The blue-winged angel above the altar is poised to fall upon us down the long white shafts of light from the higher, unstained windows.

Front doors are thrown open and Patty pauses for a moment at the threshold, her figure encased in a tight lace dress, back-lit by a halo of light coming through a diaphanous, trailing veil. She is small, beautiful, and, as I breathe in her presence, alone. Her parents, aunt, and younger brother have recently died. Her remaining brother joins her and she walks down the aisle on his arm, bearing her losses, radiantly composed, step by step moving towards John.

The church is a priory, so pews are lateral to the walls. Strangers watch each other across the aisle. Bride's family faces groom's family. I look at Patty's aunts and uncles and imagine her parents, wondering how her mother and I might take one another in.

A little stiff in our wedding finery, we sit propped on the edge of the moment, willing it to sink into our lives forever, to be solidified, jeweled, as an insect is preserved in amber, so that even as decades pass, the moment remains, no matter where it is kept, no matter what else is taken apart.

I sit, important because I'm the groom's mother, in my family line. We are properly in order. First my 92-year-old mother, who has been living with me for five years. She is wearing all the jewelry she can muster, including wedding and pearl engagement rings on her fourth finger. This ring was not hers, but her mother's. My mother and father were divorced, after thirty-four years, just as Peter and I were after thirty-four years. Because I am a priest, I wear no jewelry. Such abstinence honors the Zen tradition and continues a life-long, quiet rebellion against the surplus in my own background. I sit narrow, between my mother and Peter. It is not a place I would choose, even though, now, it is where I belong. Peter sits next to Ronna, his wife of two years. Cassie, our daughter, and Helene (Cassie's partner of seven years) sit at the end nearest the altar. They are both insiders (Helene introduced herself to Patty's family as Patty's "new sister-in-law")

and, as lesbians, outsiders to this occasion. They, too, would like to have a formal wedding, both because they love one another and so that Helene could become a citizen. They are dressed carefully, in colorful layers from their hoard of thrift-store attire. I note with surprise and glee that Cassie is wear-

ing her favorite white and black spotted cow-skin boots. Another son, Mika, stands at the altar near his brother. His long hair is tied tightly back; he was not happy to have to rent a tuxedo. This morning Peter asked him to go home and change striped socks to black socks and he did. As a child, too, he did what he was told and, out of sight, went his own way. Each son has a close-cut beard and mustache and, dressed alike, their resemblance conceals their very different attitudes toward convention.

The ceremony has many pieces, reflecting the devotion and commitment of both bride and groom to their respective churches. Both a priest (Patty's) and a pastor (John's) preside at some length. Peter keeps leaning forward, blocking my view of the altar, so I have to adjust, while also trying not to obscure my mother's view. He and I have so often been in this situation; he leading his life, and I adjusting my life to his lean as well as trying to accommodate others. I know I could ask him not to lean forward, but I don't. Our family is what it is.

John is a singer, so there is a lot of music—a guitar, an *a capella* group, hymns. The most riveting moment

Tears rise in my eyes. How will they pass through the long, incalculable moment-by-moment distances in the car, at the dinner table?

comes when John sings a refrain about putting trust in God, in his rich, trained, tenor and then, amazingly, Patty responds in a strong, true, unwavering soprano. They sing back and forth, voicing the clarity and joy in their connection.

Peter sits between his wives like a long beat between two short ones. For most of our lives there has been so much between us—children, parents, property, pasts, futures—as well as misunderstandings and angers. (I do wish he would not move forward so much. Why doesn't he think?) Now there is so little between us—neither rancor nor affection, but an evenness bred of long habit. Even the divorce was not technically difficult. We still slip easily into family arrangements. Peter and Ronna are sitting close, holding hands. They are silently celebrating their own marriage. I do not begrudge them that happiness—am glad for them, relieved it worked out.

John and Patty stand straight-backed, face to face, she looking up, he looking down. They are declaring their love and promising to remain together until death parts. Tears rise in my eyes. How will they pass through the long, incalculable moment-by-moment distances in the car, at the dinner table? How will they live with the busy-body shadows—parents, ancestors, interested parties stopping by to eavesdrop, to run their like-it-or-not commentaries, the door knob rattling even at the most intimate moment. Even at this tender moment of commitment, they are representatives of the unknown. Who says, now, at the altar, "I will"?

After the ceremony a photographer takes pictures for nearly an hour. We stand in tiers to the left of the altar according to height and family position. Our WASP family is small—no aunts, uncles, cousins, or grandchildren. Patty's Irish family is extensive, but still the dead are conspicuous, like teeth missing in a public smile.

As the photographer takes pictures of John and his tuxedoed troops, Patty takes a break and sits next to me. Her veil is sweetly askew. She is starving—had no appetite for lunch. A couple of friends dash out for snacks. Looking into her face as it is now, unposed between the pictures, I am looking at our connection—hers and mine—over the lifetime to come. We are a little awkward together (as I was at first with my own beloved mother-in-law), not because of any reservation, but because the weight of what will come is so much heavier than what is now.

I stand in a reception line on the lawn outside the Faculty Club, champagne glass in hand. It is the second day of celebration—yesterday we made dinner for 35 at my house (the house the children grew up in)—and today I am enjoying this enormous mingling of

150 souls. Once again, Peter stands next to me. I feel his shyness, his stiffness. Our social skills are different; he can rise to his feet (as he will do) and make a graceful toast on short notice while my tongue would be tied. I have an insatiable social curiosity that makes me want to know everyone's connection, even though I will forget most of it by next week.

Between handshakes, I note the perfection of the setting: green lawn, spreading trees, graceful redwood building. How much, for better and worse, this university has contained and claimed our lives. Peter began to teach here in 1961, for what we thought would be eighteen months, and never left. This campus gave him a position that sometimes promoted him, sometimes swallowed him, leaving the shell of husband and father, draining the person. I watched, proud and also alarmed; what would I do in the world? The mothering of three born so close together, when I was so young, was often lonely and interminable. I entered the School of Social Welfare, the building just beyond the little stream to the north. How I raced back and forth from home to campus (and John only two, crying, holding out his arms as I left) to get an MSW.

Inside the faculty club, we eat, drink, toast, and dance. First there is just the bridal couple on the floor. Then there is a call, "Now the bridal party." We step out, and as others

begin to dance, I realize I have no partner, no place on the floor. An unexpected shame arises. I am alone; I have done something wrong, have not lived as I should have lived. Although I love to dance, I will have to sit down. As I turn back, I see Ken, my housemate, who understands my predicament and rises from the table, arms extended. Soon the floor is crowded. The band is lively. Extra clothes come off, sweat runs, bodies bump and mingle. I dance with my housemates, children, strangers. John says several times how much he loves me. Peter and Ronna dance close and leave after a while, taking my mother with them. After so many years there is no longer a man in my life, no one body to return to, to fall back on. I am not used to it, nor would I want it different. Is it loss or gain? Room and people spin around.

Finally we are worn out. We gather on two sides of a small, stone bridge, waiting, bird seed in fists, for the couple to pass. John runs through first, head down, squinting. Patty, still in her wedding dress, veil wrapped around her, is just behind, smiling, sheltering her eyes with her arm. It seems oddly aggressive for us to be pelting them so. Perhaps we are secretly angered by their joyful immunity. "Watch out. Watch out. You have not left trouble, you are only changing its shape."

Above the bridge, the car, adorned with a profusion of large, multicolored tissue paper flowers we made the

*As others begin to dance, I realize
I have no partner, no place on
the floor. An unexpected shame
arises. I am alone.*

night before, waits like a fairy-tale beast. Shaking off seeds, the couple gets in, John at the wheel, looking out the window through a soap-drawn heart, Patty arranging the seat belt over her veil. They drive off towards a lingering, lavender-brown patch of sunset, going together into the unknown, trailing—*bump, bump, bump*—strings of shiny tin cans.

The next morning at 5:30, at the Berkeley Zen Center, a Shosan ceremony has been scheduled. This is a formal, public dialogue between Abbot and students. Each of us in turn stands and asks the Abbot a question.

I didn't get to bed until late and so decided not to set the alarm, but to sleep in. My mind was too full to fall asleep quickly; scenes, conversations replaying. Sitting in the pew next to Peter next to Ronna, watching John and Patty take their vows. What is the distance between the vow and what actually happens? How does one live in that distance? What is it like to dance alone?

But I awoke, without the alarm, exactly on time. More than twenty years of daily zendo life, like it or not, has beat the schedule into my bones. The Abbot, Mel Weitsman, has been my teacher for all that time. Now he sits in front of the altar, wearing a blue ceremonial robe and holding a *hossu* (stick with white horse-hair whisk) on his lap. When it is my turn, I walk to the back of the zendo to face him. The hunched shoulders, solid jowls, brown eyes peering up, ready, but not expectant, are familiar as the weight of my torso on my legs. Old mirror, returning nothing more or less than what is there. I used to be impatient; to wonder if that was all there was.

"Sojun Sensei. My son John was married and I watched him promise to be with his bride until death. I sat next to his father, my ex-husband, and he sat next to his new wife. What do you do with the gap between what you promise and what happens?"

"Just because you divorced Peter doesn't mean you stop loving him."

"What is love?"

"Discovering what you really mean to one another."

The week after the wedding, Peter and I seek one another out. We are rarely alone together by ourselves, but the wedding has left us with a joint sense of gratitude. We sit in the back yard of the house we bought together so many years ago, where I still live. I made the simple lunch we so often shared. The black tray with painted roses beneath our melted cheese sandwiches was a wedding present from my sixth-grade teacher. We eat plums from the tree Peter planted. His face, mottled by linden shadow, is a palimpsest; the 26-year-old unerased in the face of 66 years. He apologizes for having forgotten my 60th birthday. "I can't believe *you* are 60. I thought you were 50." There is nothing we need to do. We are free from having to be

what the other wants. In these old garden chairs, past and future are fresh. Memories, like the squirrels romping in the trees above us, arrive at their own convenience. What needs to be done has been done and is good enough. After an hour or so, we embrace, briefly, familiarly, and go our ways. ❖

Maylie Scott is a priest at the Berkeley Zen Center and the teacher for a sangha in Arcata, California. She is a mentor to BPP's BASE program, and she is investigating the question of how practice takes form in the world, through social change and social service. Presently, for Maylie, social change means anti-weapons work, and her social service work is with the homeless community.

Rousing Bodhicitta

*in my mind's eye the blue crane rises endlessly off
the pond*

*just that lift, that huge movement toward
autumn haze in the morning
in the evening, sunset*

*in my mind's eye my children are always young
his hair spun honey as he hands her a toy in the
house on clipper street, her hair backlit, her
small hand
elegant as she reaches for the breast she knows
isn't there for her anymore*

*in my mind's eye I sit in endless cheap restaurants,
sobering up, drinking coffee with people who
hardly know me, just to
pass the time until I stop shaking they sit with me*

*Fannie Lou always sings "This Little Light" and we
all hug each other in a circle all the time,
sweating, slender
and pale and chocolate*

*my mother buys me braces for my teeth on her
secretary's salary
and my dad tells me a small story of his youth as
a way of letting me know he knows he let me down
and my aunt pays for the blue
tulle of my prom dress
in Texas 1956*

that huge lifting off the pond

—Casey Hayden

MOTHER DHARMA

Parents and Kids: Dharma Students, Dharma Teachers

by Alanda Wraye

One day, my daughter, then eleven years old, called out from her bedroom: "Mom, do you understand no-self?"

"Understand what?" I went into her room.

"Do you understand no-self?" She waited for an answer.

My mind ran through a couple of experiences. What should I tell her?

"I do," she said. "There's a self inside a self, inside a self, inside a self, and it goes on forever."

I think she was seeing it when she called out to me. Where did she get the idea of no-self? I don't tell the kids these things. Then I remembered she had joined me in my bed many nights as I recited the Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra and had learned it with me.

Another time, my middle child, who was about eight, sat down at the kitchen table while I was cooking.

"Mom, what's the biggest thing?"

"What do you mean? The blue whale is the biggest animal right now."

"What's the biggest thing?"

"Buddha nature is the biggest thing!"

"I don't think that. Right here, right now is the biggest thing. Everything is connected. We can't see it, but it is."

I told my teacher, Kwong Roshi, these two stories. He indicated that I had failed to respond to the dharma combat. He told me the story of a girl coming into Zen Center one time and asking Suzuki Roshi, "Where is the Buddha?" Suzuki Roshi took her by the hand over to the statue of Buddha and said, "Right there."

* * *

The qualities of bare attention—to be open, nonjudgmental, interested, patient, fearless and impersonal—are exactly the qualities of good parenting. The wonderful surprise is that these qualities also describe a child's mind, and "beginner's mind." A Buddhist practitioner who is also a parent is very fortunate to be able to experience the interplay of these different minds.

If I tell my almost-twelve-year-old daughter her hair needs brushing, with the desire that she brush it *now*, she will not brush it, on principle. If I tell my almost-twelve-year-old daughter her hair needs brushing, and that's all, she will brush it (or she won't).

If my five-year-old son is whiny as he gets into bed while I read the last chapters of the story of King Arthur to his brother, and I think, "Oh, he's tired," he will continue to be whiny. If I look at him and say, "Oh, Alan, you look sad," he will suddenly sob and say, "That was a sad story," and go to bed peacefully.

Suzuki Roshi taught: *Without thinking, without feeling anything, without discriminating good and bad, without saying right or wrong, we should trust our life activity.* I try to return to this teaching in every moment of insecurity or fear, because I must offer this to my children. There is no other way I can protect them from suffering.

Where there is no grasping and only trust, there is receiving. Our children will reward us with their purity every time we are open to receiving it. This means experiencing our own feelings with bare attention. When we can do that, we are clear enough to experience *their* feelings with bare attention, and a peaceful dwelling arises.

As this receiving becomes more and more immediate—as I hear the tone of voice that is so completely unadorned and unaffected saying "Mommy," I'm inspired to match it, soft and open. The sweetness is so poignant, at first, I want to cry...Why? I cling to it. Afraid it will be lost, be broken. No faith in it—hard to see vulnerable as good and strong. Yet that is what I practice, and slowly, remembering, this cherishing pleasure extends to my husband and other people.

Gary Snyder captured the feeling when he said, "this present moment/that lives/to become/long ago." Dogen might say this moment *is* long ago. This *is* the future.

The first time I walked with the kids on the stupa paths at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, my daughter, nine years old then, paused and told me she had a song:

*nothing else,
nowhere else,
nothing else but here,
right here.*

She sang it for me and we sang it together as we climbed the hill. I've returned to her song again and again. A couple of years later, I mentioned it in some context and she said she would never forget the experience. She said, "I saw a deer and thought how beautiful it was and the song came."

* * *

The first time I participated in a *mondo* (a ceremony in which each participant asks a question of the teacher or practice leader), some visiting children were invited to attend, and so our children came too. My older son (seven then) asked a question: "How do life and death go together?"

This is the quintessential Zen question—but it was just *his* question. He had been thinking about death a lot during that year and had often talked about it. "Eat an apple," was the teacher's answer.

We have not fostered a special children's program at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Roshi told my husband one time, "The parents' practice is the children's program." We bring the children and they participate as much as they like on the same basis as everyone else. Everyone is on their own in the zendo. Roshi says that children should have their own seat (not sitting on Mom's lap or somewhere different from the adults). Our kids spontaneously created their own altars at home after our first few visits.

My daughter requested a meeting with the teacher when we were still new to the Zen center, and I was privileged to be present. Roshi gave her a biscuit-type cookie from Eihei Temple, telling her it was not very sweet. She ate it, offering some to him and me. She told me afterwards with dismay, "I don't know why he said it wasn't sweet. It was the sweetest cookie I ever ate."

I was not very present in that dokusan room. I began talking, explaining something, and Roshi gave me a nod which brought me back, to see them laughing together at something I had missed.

I felt afterwards that, seeing her, I had seen myself, the girl I was, in that room. The memory still brings strong emotion, a feeling of recognition and loss at the same time.

* * *

What stands out most for me, as I prepare this article, is how my children express an awareness of their feelings and thoughts. Our older son announced yesterday, "Mom, Alan just went through three moods. Giggling, mad, and sad." He knew I would find this interesting because I've drawn his attention to noticing that we have feelings and that they change. It's not the moods that interest me though; it's his observation of them.

My youngest son, in the car, driving home from kindergarten, asked, "Mom, can you stop thinking and give your brain a rest?" I was unable to respond without confusion. I was trying to decide between saying yes or no.

"That's what we do in meditation," I said.

A few weeks later I brought it up again, hoping to clarify my answer. He said, "I didn't know you were still thinking about it." I had decided to go with "You can," and told him so. He interrupted with, "I can't."

About seven months later, we bought sitting cushions for the kids and invited them to sit with us for a few minutes. They had done this at various times before. This same child refused, saying, "My mind is full of stories. I can't stop the stories," and he was not open at that time to hearing anything I might say.

Just recently he said, "My mind is always making stories. Do you do that? My head never gets to rest. Did you ever think about your brain, and then notice

you were thinking about your brain?" I just answered yes to each question and didn't say more.

* * *

We learn to look at our feelings, to give them our attention until our identification with them dissipates. With the children, I don't explore the context of a feeling—who, what, why or how—that feeds the force of reaction. Instead, we look at the feeling itself. When one of us is being very reactionary with anger, revenge, hatred, discouragement, or manipulation, we try to focus just on acknowledging the feeling. What is happening in your body? This is very easy for children. In fact, when they are young, this is what they know best.

Recently, the kids, my husband, and I were about to go somewhere. I came out of the house to find that my daughter had taken the front passenger seat without asking me. I climbed into the back seat, deciding to accept it, and was aware of deep feelings. I remembered all my pain as a child, feeling humiliated and excluded, someone who didn't fit in and was not respected. I petulantly announced to my family that I didn't like being stuck in the back seat, but then, mustering some modicum of bare attention, I told them of the other times it reminded me of. As I talked, my identification with the feelings drained away and I began to see my present feelings as ridiculous. My daughter said, "Oh," with compassion for my feelings, but no suggestion that I should move to the front seat. Of course not. That would be ridiculous!

The greatest lesson to offer is to take whatever is given; don't screen out the unpleasant. In the largest sense, Suzuki Roshi beseeched us to accept our lives. My daughter told her father she admired me for being willing to "work on myself." Not in the contemporary self-help vein, I hope, but to see whatever is presenting itself and be able to acknowledge it, to hold it in the awareness of zazen. This is what has brought me to this point. My only aspiration is not to give up.

As my husband and I continue to practice, we discover the presence of aversion and lack of acceptance of each other. Looking closely, staying with the awareness, we discover there is no substance to these emotions. At first, repressed feelings arose and there were a couple of heated confrontations. But we came through it reconciled and calm. The breakdown of a personality or the breakup of a relationship is not to be feared. Our tolerance for differences of opinion has steadily increased. Real communication is occurring between us.

* * *

Our youngest child has said, with no apparent reference, while standing in his own kitchen, "I want to go home!" There was an uncanny quality to his voice.

Recently my son said, "Did you ever think about your brain, and then notice you were thinking about your brain?"

"You feel like you're not home?" I asked. "How does it feel?"

"I can't say."

My responses are still confused, awestruck. I'm still concerned with an intellectual answer, but I'm watching it. And when they say things like "I want a guillotine" after reading *Madeline and the Bad Hat*, or they make a cardboard monster and call it "Fang Killer Wraye," I'm more reserved about making a knee-jerk dharmic correction, more prone to just looking and listening.

Contemplating these questions and others that keep coming, I feel my faith and practice rigorously challenged and emotionally threatened. I see that I'm not there with them. That I'm not *here*. And why not? What stops me? I've pushed things this far and I see it still falls short. I'm being called to express what Zen calls our actual nature, our true mind. There's no word for it. "It's not an attribute of being," Suzuki Roshi explained. "The vast sky is home. Moment after moment, to watch your breathing, to watch your posture, is true nature."

Alan, in first grade now, came home and told me the classic Western Buddhist child story. He said, "Mom, Gary believes in God."

"Oh," I offered, hoping he would say more.

"I told him there isn't one."

"Hmmm..." When he said nothing, I plunged on—"We don't say there is no god. It's a different name. We say we are god. Jesus said that, too."

"Well, actually, then I asked him if it was really true there's a god. He said it is."

Where is my conviction? The belief I have to offer is not an experience. "You already have it," we are told. It's not an idea or experience of Buddha nature. Suzuki Roshi said, "Reality cannot be caught by feeling or thinking mind."

When I prepared for the birth of my first child, I read the expression, "As you live, so you birth." I saw the truth of that, and I looked to see what was there in my life. I also practiced the instruction to be open, to be precise in attending to my breath, and to be curious—let it happen. Pema Chodron teaches the same thing to her meditation students. Be open, be precise, and be curious. She also says, "How you practice is what you get."

When we practice truly and wholeheartedly, no matter how neurotic and "dysfunctional" we may be, children receive what is true and give it back to us. When we give ourselves to our practice we can receive our children.

"Mom, is wood alive?" ❖

Alanda Wraye lives in Santa Rosa with her husband and three children, and practices at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.

Painting a Still Life With My Mother

*We painted at the dining room table,
each with our own paper,
mother, daughter,
a parallel concentration.*

*And as the vase
was doubly recreated,
darts smaller than tears shot
both ways across the current*

*between us, pricking us with presence
and ease and pleasure. On paper
the deep mauve bulb of the vase
in a wash of color stretched*

*its long neck, the line
between air and glass
not entirely lost
at the hint of lip, something like*

*the great blue wading bird
we saw yesterday at Tomales Bay
leaning toward flight.
What I want to say, Mother,*

*is that certain moments take,
the way a vaccination or a permanent wave
or a dye or a campaign
or a seed or a root or a flame*

*or an idea takes
in a child's heart.
They remind the child that she is safe.
They remind the child that she is good.*

—Jeanne Foster

THE DISTENDED FAMILY

by Cassandra Sagan Bell

It began when my son's father's fiancée's ex-husband won an Oscar for the computer graphics on the film *Terminator Two*. Though distant, there existed a relationship between us that I found myself wanting to name, and I decided on "distended family." The term is useful in referring to former in-laws, your daughter's other siblings, or the relationship between one of your children and the grandparents of your other child. I was surrounded by distended family last Thanksgiving at my friend Mary's house—both her teenage sons were present, as were both of their fathers, the partner of one of the fathers, and her two sons.

When the substance of the family breaks down, it breaks down into *something*. Ex-husbands don't usually disappear, and the child's longing for the father never does. In the same way that marriage and partnering define a whole constellation of relationships, divorce and separation do too, especially when there are children involved. Relationships don't end, they change, and it's crucial that we acknowledge this web of connectedness, the family tree grown wild. We can rewrite our personal histories to look as tidy as an episode of "The Donna Reed Show," but the stubborn facts remain, squirming in the soup and bleeding through our zafus. In our struggle to be whole persons we must accept life-as-it-is and claim what is truthfully ours, claim—however sad and broken—our *whole* distended family.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *distended* as "spread out or extended in space; spread abroad; stretched, as by pressure from within. *To stretch out to full length.*" (Interestingly, the first example in my dictionary comes from 1597, Daniel's *Civil Wars*: "That mighty Familie, the faire distended stock of Neviles kind.")

The family becomes distended when it is stretched out of its recognizable shape by pressure from *within*. No amount of magical thinking can wish this pressure away. Yet our families, however shattered or dismembered, can achieve a genuine wholeness based not on illusions of flawless perfection, but on the mature acceptance of our true circumstance. As Buddhists, we know that impermanence is the nature of life, and our failure to accept it can only result in suffering. Yet it can be excruciatingly painful to bring this knowledge into the practice of actual family life.

I'm no champion of divorce; I strongly encourage

couples to stay together, to seek help and work through difficult issues. My husband and I have been married for just over three years and we intend to stay together until we turn to snow. Yet divorce has become so expected in our culture that a lawyer friend refers, tongue in cheek, to his beloved spouse of 20 years as "my first wife."

I have to stretch beyond my preconceptions and desires of what a family should be to encompass the full breadth of my own. Divorce has been a constant theme. Both sets of grandparents divorced while my parents were young children. By the time I was born, my paternal grandfather was married to his third wife, whom we called Aunt Judy, and together they had children my age. Thus, my father had a sister younger than me! I married at 17, had a baby at 19, divorced at 20, remarried at 21, had another baby at 22, divorced at 23. That same year my parents divorced. I then took a fourteen-year break from marriage, determined not to do it again until I could do it right.

Once a family has become distended, it already encompasses a great deal of pain, and a failure to accommodate the distention causes even more pain. To cling to the image of the intact nuclear family is to interfere with the distended family's ability to adjust to its own reality and needs. My family of origin

has not distended gracefully; we come together only in dreams and memories. My father, now married to his third wife, has substituted his new family for the old. Since I do not fit into his current nuclear family, there is hardly a place for me in his life at all.

But to ignore the full extent of our relationships requires an act of will. When my first husband and his new wife acquired custody of my daughter, I wanted to co-parent; they wanted me out of the picture—as if I had never existed. Joint custody and other alternative arrangements were not yet common. His new wife wanted to be my daughter's *real* mother, to have her family be "whole" in the only way that wholeness was acceptable to her; I insisted that my daughter was now part of a distended family (although I had not yet coined the term). We all suffered, but no one more than my daughter, who needed to be accepted as part of her father's family, yet was unwilling to deny her love or attachment for me, as her stepmother wanted her to do.

Things have been simpler for my son. No one tried to become his second mother or father; no one ever

*Relationships don't end, they change,
and it's crucial that we acknowledge
this web of connectedness, the family
tree grown wild.*

tried to pretend or force things to be different than they were. So far, at 18, he's had no obvious problems with the form and shape of his family.

We seem to be entering an era when people are again taking the enduring nature of relationship seriously. Traditional family *values* of love, nurturance, loyalty, safety, and caring are being applied to non-traditional family *structures*. More fathers are staying involved and more couples are seeking counseling and guidance long after their break-ups, in order to continue parenting their children together. More custody arrangements are being mediated rather than battled out in court. Alternative arrangements that address the complex needs of distended families are being sought and practiced.

One example is a couple who gave the house to their three children and now take turns spending half the week there. Another family I know named their two houses the Rose house and the Tulip house, because it was difficult for the children to be shuffled between "Mommy's" and "Daddy's" houses, never quite knowing which one was *theirs*. More often these days, the well-being of the children is regarded as primary.

I would love to see more couples apply this same degree of integrity at the inception of new relation-

ships. When my (third) husband and I first began to consider making a life together, we decided to employ the observations and insights of a trusted third party. We explicitly asked her to point out any blind spots she might perceive between us. She asked us many probing and difficult questions about our values, pasts, finances, and children. Rather than trying to protect our egos or our illusions about what a "perfect" relationship might be, we made every effort to unearth and reveal potential problems. We examined our patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in other intimate relationships, and considered our needs for solitude and play. We walked into our marriage with as many cards as possible face up on the table, and our eyes wide open.

Marriage is always hard work, requiring more than love and good intentions; and a marriage that involves distended family demands extra care and effort. By recognizing and honoring the inclusive nature and lifelong consequences of partnering and parenting, we can make intelligent choices and solid commitments. ❖

Cassandra Sagan Bell is a poet and songwriter. She has taught privately and as a Poet in the Schools in California and Washington since 1984, and has a cassette, Jumping Over The Fence: Imagination Songs For Children. She practices Vipassana and lives in Vancouver, Washington.

TWO SISTERS ACTING FOR THE EARTH

An Interview with Nora and Viva Barrows-Friedman

by Tova Green

Nora Barrows-Friedman is a reporter for Youth Radio and KMEL, a cellist, and in her spare time is a high school senior. Viva Barrows-Friedman loves to act and to play games; she is in sixth grade. I talked with them in their home in Berkeley where they live with their mother, Anita Barrows.

TOVA: How does it feel to go to Buddhist Peace Fellowship events as a family? I know you went to the Nevada test site, for example.

NORA: Yes, we went twice. At first I thought, oh, there goes the liberal mom again. She's going to take us on one of her adventures. But when we got there in April of '94, and we were part of the BPF community, it was really cool. I left wanting to know a lot more about Buddhism. Since then I've gone on a lot of retreats with my mom at Spirit Rock.

I think it's important for kids of our generation to start doing some activism for the earth and nature and for our society. My friends and I have always been concerned about nuclear waste, and when I got back from the first

trip I told my friends about it and that sparked their curiosity. They wanted to come on demonstrations with me, and they wanted to know more about Buddhist culture. A lot of people label us teens as the MTV generation, slackers and stuff like that, but actually we're not.

VIVA: It was the same with my friends. They didn't know about the Nevada Test Site, so I had to explain it. I think it's sad that kids don't know about what the Nevada Test Site is. It's important for kids from the age of maybe 10 years old to 20 and older to be interested in trying to either start demonstrations or be part of demonstrations.

TOVA: You both said that you became part of the community. How did that happen?

NORA: The adults at the BPF were really welcoming of me and my sister. I was only 15 at the time, and so I thought they would view me as some little teeny bopper, not really knowing what's going on.

VIVA: They wanted more people of all ages, either elderly or really young, to be a part of their community, because we are a part of the world and of nature. It felt

really good to know that people are doing this, because when I go down on that freeway past the slaughterhouse of the cows, I-5, I feel sad about what we're doing to our animals. At the test site people were coming together in support of the animals and of nature.

I think the Nevada Test Site isn't really a test site, because people blow up one bomb to see if it works, and they say, "Oh great, that bomb worked. But what about all these other ones? We have to test them to see if *they* work." And you just test and test and test, but it's not really testing, it's destroying everything. So I call it the Nevada Destroy Site.

TOVA: That's a good phrase for it. How did it feel to be among the few young people at the test site both times?

NORA: At first it was a little intimidating, and some of the lectures were boring. The lectures at the second conference—Terry Tempest Williams and the Hiroshima survivor—were really interesting for me. I don't know whether it was because I matured a year or whether it was because the content was different.

VIVA: In April '94 I was nine, about to turn ten, and last August I was eleven. Both times at the site, everybody was treated the same, not younger or older, just equally, even though the age range went from my age to people in their early eighties.

TOVA: What are some of the things you learned in Nevada?

NORA: Whatever we set our minds to, it *is* possible. It may take a long time, and may even be a laborious and vicious struggle, but people have the ability to come together and fight for change. I could feel the passion that everybody felt at the test site, and it was reassuring to me to know that there are people out there working hard to make a difference, no matter what age they are.

TOVA: Do you have any ideas about how BPF could interest other young people in coming to some of these things? Are there ways we could reach out?

VIVA: I think the best way to get people our age interested in this is just going and making more demonstrations, and then taking the information *back* to your community, to the people who didn't come but wanted to, and tell them about it. Then they could

go with you to another demonstration, and then they could tell *their* community. So it gets around, just one person by one person.

TOVA: That's a great organizing principle. You both seem to be really committed activists, and you've said you're interested in meditation also. Could you say a little bit about what interests you about Buddhism and meditation?

NORA: I like certain points that Buddhism brings up. Karma is a big one. I'm a true believer in karma. I

believe in fairness, and listening, and acting on peaceful thoughts. I think I've taken Buddhism and mingled it in with my own life, so that I don't have a religion that you can put a name on. It's sort of like Nora-ism. I wish I had more time for meditation. I know that people say, "You can just take ten minutes out of your day to do this," but sometimes I

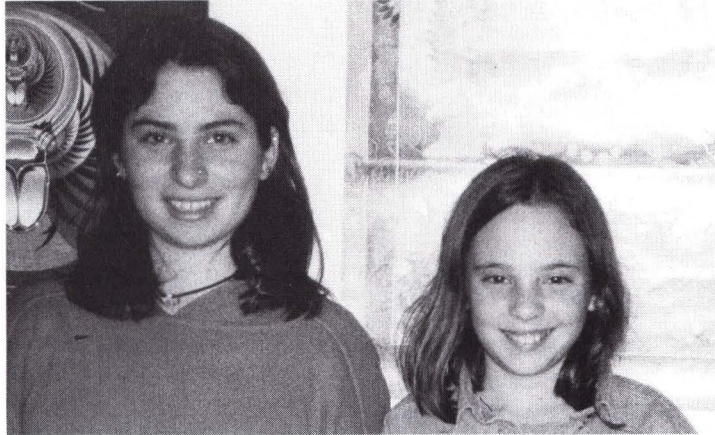
just forget. But actually I think I meditate every day unconsciously. I always make time for myself just to sit and think. That probably counts as meditation, because I can get relaxed that way, and reflect on what's happening in that day. My friends do that, too, and we share our thoughts.

TOVA: What are some of the other ways you've turned Buddhism into Nora-ism?

NORA: I'm more relaxed about everyday life. I can look at a stressful situation, like I'm in every single day, and turn it around to say, "It's not that bad. It won't kill you. It will be over," and just stay calm. Another thing is listening. I used to be unwilling to listen very well to people and because of Buddhism I've been able to pay attention to people and hear where they're coming from a lot more. My mom has always said throughout my childhood, "You're not being mindful! Please be more mindful!" And I'm not hard on myself for making mistakes because I know that's part of the learning process. I guess that's all mixed together to form Nora-ism.

TOVA: Have you read anything about Buddhism?

NORA: I read *Siddhartha*, and I loved it. It all made sense to me. I grew up Jewish-Catholic-Buddhist, because my Mom fluctuated her religions a lot when I was a kid, and I never really caught on to those other



Nora and Viva Barrows-Friedman

ones. But Buddhist practice is a concrete way of thinking, and I can see how it makes sense.

TOVA: Do you talk about Buddhism with your mom?

NORA: Yeah, I do. She's tried to get me to meditate with her. I don't really like meditating with anybody. I like just doing it by myself, if I do it at all. But we do have really similar ideas about how we take on problems in life, and how we try to fix them with Buddhism, so we talk about those things a lot.

TOVA: Viva, does Buddhism interest you?

VIVA: Yes, I think it's good that we have that kind of religion, or spiritualness, because people are too wrapped up in their lives to really notice that they don't have any space to think or be by themselves. Buddhism is something you can always go to so that you can understand about yourself, and you can actually listen to your feelings, and you can be silent. I'm really happy that I'm involved with Buddhism.

TOVA: You said that sometimes you talk about things as a family, and from a Buddhist point of view. Can you think of an example?

NORA: We split the household chores pretty evenly. I think it all has to do with taking responsibility for the people you are living with, and the environment you're living in. Sometimes I complain about doing my chores because *I want to sit and watch TV, goddammit!* But I know if it doesn't get done then the whole family structure in the household falls apart, and my Mom starts yelling at me, and then my sister starts yelling at me; so I've learned to just grin and bear it, and do my chores and realize that things will run smoothly if I do my job, and if I do it with a good attitude. I think that's Buddhist. It's taken me sixteen years to realize that chores are things that just have to be done whether I like them or not.

VIVA: We talk about each other's days, mainly while we're making dinner. I think that could be a way of Buddhism or being spiritual, because it makes you think "Oh, why did I do that?" or "Why did this have to happen?" or "What could I have done to change it?" You can plan what you might do in the future.

NORA: When we get into fights, which doesn't happen that often, luckily, but when it does, one of us pulls apart the situation, and says, "Look, we need to talk about this, and let me see how you are feeling about this, and then maybe we can make a compromise." I think that's Buddhist, because it means giving

respect to one another's feelings. It's really important that we have that dialogue, because then after fights everything goes smoothly again.

VIVA: Speaking of respect, just today in art class the people at my table got into a conversation about gays and lesbians. A boy named Everett is totally against gays and lesbians. I said, "Why are you so against these people?" He answered, "It's okay for women to be lesbians, but men—it just doesn't work." I was confused and said, "No, wait! You still haven't answered my question." I kept asking him, but he never answered my question. I got so frustrated, I was about ready to cry. Two of my friends were on my side, and I was able to tell Everett, "Your point of view is what destroys our society." I was so mad at him. He said, "If a boy came up to me and started flirting with me, I would beat him to the ground." I said, "No, that's not right." I think everybody should have respect whether or not you like them, whether or not they fit your beliefs. This world would be a whole lot better if that happened.

TOVA: It sounds like in that particular moment it was hard for you to respect Everett.

VIVA: Yes, it was very hard. I'm still trying to earn his respect, and trying to respect his point of view, but it's hard when you come from a family that has different beliefs from the other person.

TOVA: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

NORA: I think we've been blessed with a lot of good people in our lives, like the people we met in Las Vegas. The experiences with the whole community really made me into a better person, because they took their time and their energy to make the whole protest go through. That was really cool because I've always had a pessimistic outlook: *How can one person make a difference? Come on!* The government is so big and we're so small, how can we ever do anything? But since April of '94 that outlook has changed. I'll carry my new outlook all throughout my life now. I won't have any doubts about what I can and can't do.

VIVA: Some people say, "I really hope in the future our world is much better than it is right now." They say these things but they never *do* anything about them. If people would say these things and act on them, then their wishes and hopes and dreams could come alive. ❖

Tova Green is President of the BPF Board, and has enjoyed participating in BPF activities with Nora and Viva.

My mom has always said throughout my childhood, "You're not being mindful! Please be more mindful!" And I think that rubbed off on me.

WHAT FAMILIES DO

by Rick Peard

Family values, family values, family values. We hear the words so often, but what exactly do they mean? Well, I've recently come to know what they mean—what *real* family values are all about. My lover recently died of AIDS. He was diagnosed three and a half years ago and had multiple opportunistic infections during that time. Any one of those infections could have killed him, and several nearly did on numerous occasions.

Back in June we had a scare. I had to rush him to the emergency room at 5 AM because he was passing blood and was so lightheaded he could barely stand. I did what many of us do in a time of crisis: I called a close friend and said, "Help." He was dressed and at our door within ten minutes. No apologies were needed for the inconvenient time. He offered no excuses. No formalities. No questions asked. Just, "I'll be right over." He was "family," someone I could count on, no matter what. To me, that's real family values.

From the emergency room, my lover called his family in Ohio and said he wanted to see them before it was too late. His parents flew out the next day, even though they hate to fly. Never mind that he's gay and has AIDS, he was their son, and he wanted them. So they came. And his four out-of-state brothers came also. That's real family values.

As Phil got sicker, I took three months off from work. A number of co-worker friends took up a collection and gave us a gift certificate for Waiters on Wheels. They were trying to help in any way they could. They let me know that I was not alone in this. That's what families do.

When caring for Phil became overwhelming for me, I asked some close friends to help me out. At first it was eight people, then other friends heard of our group and asked to join. It soon grew to twenty. We met once a month and passed a calendar around. People would sign up to come and spend time with Phil, and let me get out of the house. As he got sicker, we had to account for every minute; he didn't want to be alone. We did this for nearly four months, people putting their lives on hold so they could spend time with a dying friend. Someone they loved and cared for. That's what families do.

After he died, I took a photo to the infusion center to show a favorite nurse of his. I thanked her for being there for Phil, even though she must see so many patients come and go. I knew it must be difficult to open herself to so many people with a terminal disease. And she said, "I'm honored to have known him. I'm the one who is grateful." It made me cry. Such beautiful humanity: caring and giving from the heart. That's family values.

These values are not owned by a legally married husband and wife, with all the accompanying children and in-laws. The real bonds of families are not legal ones, they're the bonds of friendship and love. The gay community has expanded our own extended families as we've dealt with AIDS. Yet these families of ours, these families made of our friends, are rarely acknowledged by the larger world. Our biological family may come rushing across the country in times of crisis, but it is our family of friends who are here for us, day in and day out, year in and year out. I stand proud of my family, as they have stood by my lover and me. I know what real family values are. I know we have them. Love makes a family; nothing more, nothing less. ❖

[Reprinted from *The San Francisco Bay Times*.]

Rick Peard lives in San Francisco, where he works for Wells Fargo Bank and volunteers for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation hotline.



Laotian couple, their biological son, two adopted children, and a grandmother.
Photo by Helen Nestor, from *Family Portraits in Changing Times*.

ON RETREAT FOR TWENTY YEARS

Parenting as Path and Practice—Five Interviews

by Pamela G. Sherman

Some children were playing outside a zendo while their parents sat in meditation inside. The children dared each other to peek in. Finally, one little boy, taking a deep breath, opened the door. A few of the kids got a good look. "Zombies!" they screamed, slammed the door, and fled.

—A modern Zen tale

When my son was born I was grateful for all the formal practice I'd done—what good training for childbirth and the intensity of parenting! In talking informally with other parents, I heard reflections in much the same spirit. Interested in contributing to the sangha-wide discussion about the relationship between parenthood and practice, I began doing more formal interviews. Here are some excerpts.

* * *

Wendy Zerín lives with her husband Peter and their three-year-old son Max in Boulder, Colorado. She is a physician and a Vipassana teacher-in-training.

Formal practice has taken a nose-dive since I've become a parent. Daily sitting is out the window. I had to wait for my son to be a couple of years old to even sit a weekend. Doing teacher training, though, I feel more connected than before. I lead a sitting one night a week. It's a funny feeling—people who might consider themselves my students sit more than I do. Sometimes I think, "If only they knew how I've had to move heaven and earth just to show up tonight!" Most do know that the quality of the dharma talk is directly related to how many hours my son has napped that afternoon.

I feel I'm moving too fast. When I have free time, I do yoga; that's as slowed down as I can get. Sitting feels like going from 60 mph into reverse. Faced with the choice of sleeping or sitting, I choose sleep. When I've gone against that, I've regretted it. But maybe it's not appropriate to slow down too much; maybe I have to be in high gear now. It took me awhile to appreciate that in the face of sheer exhaustion, there are diminishing returns to be gained from slogging it out on the zafu; often the most skillful action I can take toward "waking up" is to go to sleep!

Knowing that clinging and aversion are the root of

suffering is very helpful. If I hold on to the way I think my life, my parenting, is "supposed" to go, there's suffering. I can see the vastness of the path; I know the dharma will always be there. I look forward to going back to practicing it. If I had never done retreats, I would be much more restless. I might feel envy rather than sympathetic joy when I hear about someone doing a three-month retreat. Yet there's a bittersweet quality—I miss practice. But my son is little for such a short time and it goes so fast. Surrender and impermanence are such good teachings.

Before we eat a meal, for a few seconds, we hold hands, close our eyes. That's how we practice with our son. We try not to fill up our lives with extraneous activity, try not to have Max revved up all the time the way many kids are. I'm careful in my speech with him. And no display of physical violence ever.

If you ask how practice has supported my needs as a parent, I have to say this is the one area where I've felt a lack. Dharma parenting has no forms with it. I don't feel at home with Asian forms, and Western Vipassana community life is in the very early stages of development. Ideally, we'd have a family-centered, or at least family-friendly community, where we could share rites

and rituals connected to both the cycles of nature and human life—a cradle-to-grave sangha for all seasons. I was raised Jewish, so I know how rich it can be to grow up in community. I want my son to know that. But it will take time to develop. I'm committed to working toward that, but in the meantime Max continues to get

older, so we have actually looked outside the Buddhist community to meet this need.

* * *

Richard Borofsky is the father of two daughters, Lara, 9, and Nadine, 29. A Zen practitioner, he is a psychologist and the founder of the Boston Gestalt Institute. He and his wife Antra are writing a book about relationship as dharma practice. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Being a father and husband has become my primary practice—to be wholeheartedly with my family, moment by moment. I'm very grateful to have a teacher who deeply encourages my practice of parenting. All the koans Sasaki Rōshi has given me have been about family. For instance, when my daughter was little, he

Often the most skillful action I can take toward "waking up" is to go to sleep!

gave me this one: "How do you realize your true nature when you are with your daughter (or your wife)?" Meaning, of course, how do you be Buddha with your child and your spouse? Now I'm doing more traditional koans. Sasaki Roshi will say about a new one, "It's like the one with your daughter; remember that one?" It's been extraordinarily easy practice to integrate the two.

I value my daughters highly as Dharma teachers. For instance, one day when Lara was three, I was walking fast and pulling her along by her hand. She pulled my arm hard and stopped me, asking, "Why are we rushing?" I said, "Because we're late." She said, "So why don't we slow down? That way we can be early."

With Lara, I do a lot of informal "sitting"—watching TV, driving in the car, watching sunrises and sunsets. One winter evening, she was just sitting in my lap watching the sun set. She spontaneously put her hands in the (Zen) *mudra*. She wasn't conscious of what she was doing. What's important for me is the *spirit* of practice: gradually opening more and more to life as it is, like a child growing and gradually maturing.

In terms of formal practice? I introduced my daughter to Roshi. She knows him. She likes him. Still, when I'm leaving to go on a week-long retreat, she says to me, "Daddy, don't go!" I say, "I want to go be with Roshi." I tell her I miss him and I want to be with him just as she misses me and wants to be with me. I say, "He's teaching me to love you. I'll be back full of love." Then she can let go a little easier.

In the morning when I sit, I leave the door open for her to come in if she wants to. Sometimes she tiptoes into the room and sits in my lap, imitating my posture and *mudra*. Sometimes she'll make a game of trying to push me over. I let her, and we roll on the floor and laugh. Then she usually leaves to do something more fun.

At this point the formal process of meditation is not what I'm interested in. The most important thing is the quality of our presence, how we are being with children each moment. The spirit of practice is "silent transmission without words or letters" between parent and child. It's better to let my daughters absorb this spirit rather than teach them the form.

When I want to share practice with kids, I do anything that stimulates a sense of wonder and attentiveness. Kids are good at that. Listen to the gong until the sound disappears. Light a candle and watch it go out. And I tell the story of Buddha's life, but I don't include a lot of Buddhist cosmology.

My elder daughter wants to learn to sit for her own reasons: she's a professional pool player (number one in New England) and she's trying to improve her concen-

tration for her game. "Dharma gates are numberless!"

* * *

Mindy Upton has a son, 17, and a daughter, 12. She lives with her husband and children in Boulder, Colorado, where she has run a Waldorf-based preschool for the last 15 years. She is a Vajrayana practitioner.

Since becoming a parent, I've realized how good I am at procrastinating, how everything in my life can become "more important than practice"—like laundry and doing the dishes.

Parenting makes your practice very vivid. We think practice has to be a certain way—sitting like rocks, like Zen monks. Well, I'd be doing Ngondro practice and the kids would come in and interrupt. I'd be saying a mantra and changing a diaper at the same time. A parent can't afford any separation between practice and living.

We parents are really pioneers in Buddhist history. I went to seminary when our son was two. I was still nursing him and felt like a second-class citizen, an outsider. A lot of the other people didn't have children then. So in the beginning, there wasn't much support. As people in my sangha began to have babies, though, things began

to change. And I became stronger at voicing my needs rather than thinking, "I'm a parent (not a monk); I don't deserve anything."

At Rocky Mountain Shambhala Center, we have a building just for children. To us, this means children and families are as important in the Buddhist mandala as non-family people. And at our Karma Dzong practice center in Boulder, we're creating seasonal events with the children. We celebrate all the solstices. We have a program called Children's Day, which takes place around Christmas time. It celebrates the coming of winter, with its sense of contraction, inner focus, doing things indoors. It's also a time of compassion and doing things for others.

I teach a Rites of Passage class for eight-year-olds. In Tibet, a rite of passage is traditional for this age. In traditional Tibet, eight-year-olds get a herd of yaks to take care of. Here they might begin to take care of their room. It's an important time; most kids go through a major shift in consciousness from sensual to conceptual around this time.

In the class we do a lot of Shambhala arts—*kyudo*, *ikebana*, the *maitri* rooms. (A practice developed by Trungpa Rinpoche, the five *maitri* rooms are each a different color and shape and one takes a different meditation posture in each. Each room evokes in the practitioner the energy of one of the traditional five Buddha families.) The class is a beginning glimpse of

My daughter asked, "Why are we rushing?"

"Because we're late," I said.

"So why don't we slow down?" she said.

"That way we can be early."

the Shambhala world, of gentle warriorship.

How people treat each other in the family is a reflection of their practice. The most important thing is the kindness and acceptance we have toward ourselves and our family members.

* * *

Nancy Hathaway Highsmith lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the mother of two sons: Bubs, 14, and Jamie, 11. She is currently a Senior Dharma Teacher with the Kwan Um Zen School and teaches at its affiliate, the Cambridge Zen Center. She also teaches with the independently-affiliated Cambridge Buddhist Association.

We had just moved to the Providence Zen Center (PZC) when I found out I was pregnant. Both boys were home-birthed at PZC. It was an important point in history, giving birth in a Zen temple—the Kwan Um Zen School was so monastic; there was very little support for mothering at that time.

One PZC resident who was a birth educator gave classes to people who wanted to attend the birth; about 20 people came to help me. My idea was that I'd have people downstairs chanting *Kwanseum Bosal*, but it turned out to be their loving attention that was most helpful. Also, breathing together with my husband helped a lot. I used the Lamaze method with the first birth. But Lamaze uses the breath in a way that separated me from the experience. So we used the Bradley method at Jamie's birth, and I was much more in my body.

Soen Sa Nim told me after Bubs was born that Bubs was my Zen master. My other teacher, George Bowman, told me I was now on retreat for the next 20 years!

Much of parenting for me has been letting go of formal process, opening up to the present moment in daily life, whatever that might be—spilled milk, an angry teenager, messy house. Meeting over and over again the challenge to be with life as it is, and seeing my resistance to life. These everyday events are *kong-ans* [koans], and they have so much to teach us.

My priorities are clear: practice Zen, be present for my children. Material things come last. This has created an extremely strong foundation for our family relationship today. We are really close, and there's a lot of trust. I'm choosing to work part time and be there for them, live more in awareness rather than work more and be crazy.

Practice is changing as the years go by. My children are a wonderful mirror, a reflection of my practice. I can see when I'm closed to the present moment. It gives me such pleasure to be open with my children, to feel their energy, to "meet" them. In sitting practice, we learn to meet ourselves; in parenting we extend to meet the world of our children.

You don't need a Zen master to know if you've passed a *kong-an* with your children—it will be clear! Just this morning we were having breakfast. Jamie is going away with his school for five days. He kept hugging me and I

had things to do. I finally gave in and started hugging and playing back. It was like answering a *kong-an*.

I share my practice with my children in two ways. First, I sit myself, so I'm more open to our experience together. And I've taken them to community gatherings, like Buddha's Enlightenment Day and Sangha Weekend. By seeing me sit and teach, and by being included in community gatherings with people who practice, who are attending to the Big Questions, they get the foundation for their own formal practice, if they become interested in the future. But the biggest way I can share practice is to be mindful when I'm with them.

Bubs has been asking if he can meditate with me. So we started sitting as a family together before Jamie's bedtime. We take three breaths together. We chant together sometimes. Jamie found a rock that looks like a Buddha—now he has it on a little altar by his bed.

Together with my children, I've been leading meditation workshops for parents and children. Parents come Friday evening, then children and parents come together Sunday afternoon. At that time, parents support each other in awareness, being awake to what presents itself to us in the moment, so we will be able to be with our children no matter what appears—giggling, temper tantrums, pillow fights.

The more I practice, the more I realize we're not separate from each other.

* * *

Barry Briggs practices with the Dharma Sound Zen Center in Seattle. He is married to Ellen Ziegler. Their daughter, Suzannah, is 8.

I didn't see my daughter very much during the first four years of her life. I had a job which usually took 70-80 hours a week, minimum 60; I was an executive at Microsoft. I saw the family on the weekends, sometimes, and was usually too tired or distracted to be there fully. At the time, I thought that was fine. I liked my work. My wife's concern that I wasn't spending enough time with the family seemed irrelevant to me.

Then in 1990, my best friend said, "What would it take to get you to go to a Zen retreat?" I basically went out of friendship for him—I didn't have any big question that I needed to address. Up to that time, it was as if my life were a nice, fancy car—comfortable, fast, stylish, smooth-driving. But during the retreat, I had the chance to pop open the hood of the car. I saw that things were not so nice inside. The fan belt was coming apart, the wiring was frayed—some work had to be done. I realized that although my life looked fine from the outside, on the inside it was terribly unbalanced. One of the imbalances was that I was not involved in raising my daughter.

A year later, I quit Microsoft. I'm now a marketing consultant and I work as much or as little as I want. I can go to retreats. Most importantly, I'm involved in

my daughter's life. My family situation is much better, though I didn't think anything was particularly wrong before I started practicing.

For me, practicing has made it possible to begin functioning more correctly in my life. It hasn't been easy—as my center began to get strong, everything in my life was called into question. After I left Microsoft, my wife and I separated for a year to make adjustments in our relationship. There was no way we could do that while we were still living together. It was like taking the car into the garage for major servicing. Now we're back together and even though that year was hard on our daughter, she's benefited from it; I can see it in her behavior. If we hadn't separated, we probably would have ended up divorced by now—and that would have been even harder on her.

My daughter is not exposed to my concrete practice because I do it before she wakes up. Our family says a blessing before meals that I found in one of Robert Aitken Roshi's books. Suzannah has images of Kwansum Bosal [Kuan Yin] in her room. She also knows that chanting *Kwansum Bosal* will make the world a better place and she likes doing it with me at ceremonies at the Zen center, but I don't think she actually does it on her own. My wife is a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and her group meets at our house once a week. My daughter likes to practice with them and she knows all the chants. Even if she doesn't practice, she likes to be in the same room with them, playing with toys.

We have a really child-oriented sangha. Most of the long-time students have children and virtually all the kids come to the ceremonies; we'll usually have half a dozen from ages four to ten. Our ceremonies are always followed by potluck dinners so the kids get to spend time in the community.

Not everyone in the sangha is a parent, and non-parents sometimes struggle to keep their focus with kids around. Kids are always tugging at us—sometimes they can pull us off our center, and sometimes this makes our center get stronger.

I asked Jane McLaughlin, one of my teachers, about the traditional Buddha story. Did Buddha really have to leave his home, his family? She said, "Yes! You must be homeless—have a homeless mind. But that doesn't mean you have to leave home."

* * *

Some notes on the interviews: We Buddhist parents often believe we're making history, forging a family-based Buddhism. In one sense, we are; most of our Asian teachers are from monastic traditions. But in the widest sense we are not. The Japanese branch of the Pure Land tradition, for instance, is a lay-oriented practice which has been in the U.S. since

1899. It has family-based communities all over the country, complete with English-language services, dharma schools for children, festivals, rites and rituals, and individual practice. Lay people of East and Southeast Asian descent make up the bulk of this lay-oriented sangha. In many parts of Asia, lay people of strong spiritual inclination have recourse to formal daily practice, such as mantra practice, and to a teacher. And they raise families. Although we live in different cultural circumstances, I believe we still have much to learn from lay Buddhist parents and lay Buddhist traditions from other cultures.

There is one disturbing trend I would like to mention. In a number of the interviews I did with parents, people spoke frankly to me about the opposition to children and parenting they experienced from people who had power in the sangha. This opposition has taken the form of killing projects to teach dharma to children and breaking up parenting groups. Those in power had the best of traditional intentions, believing that children and parenting weaken dharma practice. Interviewees spoke about this with pain and sadness, but always with an open, generous attitude to the situation. After this, they would say, "This is off the record. Please don't write anything about it!"

I find it disturbing that even those who are therapists and know all about family dysfunction will collude in sweeping this truth under the rug, even when they tell it with kindness. Only by speaking with each other in safety and honesty, as well as kindness, will we practice the kind of parenting we want our children to have. ❖

Pamela Gang Sherman, a Zen practitioner, lives in Gold Hill, Colorado with her husband and two-year-old son.



Lorraine Capparell, *The Past Can Still Be Seen*

THE BOX AND ITS LID

by Sandy Eastoak

With the ideal comes the actual, like a box all with its lid.
—The Sandokai

As a Zen parent, I experience family life as a core challenge to Buddhism coming into its American own. How we include—or don't include—family in our concept and practice of buddha-dharma-sangha will make or break Buddhism as a force on our continent.

Zen without family practice is a dead end. John Tarrant Roshi told me, "We'd end up like the Shakers—nothing left but some nice furniture." Without including our kids in our practice, our only hope for Zen to continue in our non-Buddhist society would be that, generation after generation, kids from non-Buddhist families would reject the family religion and convert to ours. We would be beneficiaries of spiritual unhappiness and broken ties.

Or maybe, more benignly, we might hope that our kids will just follow in our footsteps, attracted to the dojo at a critical point, either by the same mysterious forces that took us there, or by the example of our own practice. Can we trust our luck?

I belong to a sangha that offers considerable support for families and fondness for kids. Childcare is provided for one evening sitting per month and at sesshins on request. There are special family events—Buddha's birthday, a summer beach outing, Halloween. But there is no children's program, nor consensus that we need one. For eight months there was a small and successful program. Then a year ago we moved to new rented quarters without appropriate space.

This was my children's second experience with a Buddhist kids' program coming to an end after a short, happy run. During each program's life, they were enthusiastic and reverent. Their reaction to the second shutdown was a more intense version of their first: hostility to Buddhism. Where they stand among sangha priorities is painfully clear, and as long as Zen doesn't care for them, they don't care for it.

Childcare doesn't impress them. Although they enjoy playing with other sangha children, they want substance—something that says they *belong* to the sangha, that the sangha would be as diminished by their absence as it would by the absence of any adult member. The message of childcare is to protect adults—the "real" members—from distractions.

Without full inclusion of children, practice becomes divisive in the family and cannot function fully for the

practicing parent(s). However full our practice may appear, if we cannot meet the events of life sharing *bodhicitta* with our children, our experience and expression of dharma are impeded. Our process of becoming compassionate and wise is inseparable from theirs. The idea of independent practice—not just for parents, but for all sangha adults—is an illusion.

Children need programs that make them *full* sangha members, with privileges and responsibilities appropriate to their age. From infant-naming ceremonies to puberty rites, we need to create ways for children to know they have a place that grows as they grow. We need forms and a process that encourage them to move toward spiritual adulthood as they grow physically and intellectually. And we will be a real community only when we offer landmarks of maturity that let breaking-away teens enact their independence *within* the sangha.

Some people say they resist children's instruction because good Buddhists are averse to indoctrination. But sharing our skills is our responsibility as parents and elders—how to ride a zafu as well as tie our shoes, how to replace anger with kindness as well as add and subtract. Our purpose should not be that our children grow up lighting incense and sitting zazen, but that they touch the most urgent questions of our collective being and find wise and compassionate answers. If we do not share the practice by which we touch and find, the message is that either the practice is not important, or the child is not important.

Perhaps a more honest source of resistance is the real threat that children will bring fundamental and unpredictable changes to our thinking and practice. In a generation, Buddhism could be significantly transformed, and we don't know how. This threat exists because the issues children touch are very deep. And because they *are* very deep, I hope we will embrace this threat and welcome the unexpected.

It could be argued that I chose the wrong sort of Buddhism. I should stop rocking the boat and sail off in a different one. One sangha member actually suggested—smiling sweetly—that I "try the Unitarians—they have children's programs." Well, I *have* tried the Unitarians, but Zen continues to claim my devotion.

The crux of the matter is that none of us should have to stray from the path that claims our devotion. None of us need betray our spiritual heart in order to practice with our peers *and* parent our children. But when we experience conflict between our practice and

The great koan of practicing with children is: Can they show us what they know before we teach them to forget it?

our parenting, we feel a sense of betrayal no matter what we do. I believe these conflicts and betrayals are not intrinsic to Buddhism, but to the twisted patterns of culture Buddhism has crossed the ocean to heal.

These twisted patterns distort the truth of who benefits from family practice. We American Buddhists think family practice is a *favor* to parents, those inconvenient sangha members whose practice will disintegrate if we don't come up with at least childcare. But it is a favor to *all* beings.

When I became a parent, I was unwilling to ditch the children for the dojo. However deeply I longed to sit on my zafu with a bunch of other wall-gazers, I felt an inner warning against separating my children from my practice. I accused myself of neurotic overprotection, but when I looked closely at my "overprotection," I found it was based on a correct perception of my culture's intense hostility toward families and children. The discomfort with families and children I have found in Zen circles I now believe is an extension of *my* culture, not a consequence of Asian monasticism, as is often claimed.

This cultural attitude, ranging from discomfort to hostility, is a serious challenge to Buddhist practice. It implies a hatred of the future that is karmically demented. And it's not a very friendly way to be here now.

Hostility toward children—and I include passive acceptance of society's anti-child norms by persons otherwise inclined to like kids—is accompanied by hatred of ourselves. Hatred of our dependency, our innocence, our impulses that belie our concepts, our erratic failure to conform to our ideals, our inability to be equal to every situation, our simple fears.

When we accept a context that rejects children, we impair our ability to love ourselves and others, whether this context is our violence-prone materialistic society—or Zen. It makes it nigh impossible for sangha relations to become complete.

Just as parents have ideals, so do sanghas. It's lovely to imagine sweet faces listening to Jataka tales, drawing colorful fat Buddhas, sitting quietly in parents' laps during teisho. This lovely feeling is quickly shattered when the faces are sticking out their tongues, pinching, pulling hair. When the colorful fat Buddhas are drawn shitting. When the child rolls off the lap onto the floor, kicking noisy feet closer and closer to Roshi's teacup. Worst is



Sandy Eastoak

when children are angry, when they glare, speak harshly, refuse to speak at all. Were the sangha a true community, the dirty laundry kids revel in waving about would surprise no one. But without these deeper ties, their negative behavior endangers how we wish to be seen.

Coming from dojo to family house during sesshin can be a shock: from order and silence to chatter and clutter. Maybe the kids are noisy, maybe their toys and games are scattered, maybe there's food on the floor. Some people would rather not meet this challenge to our practice. Sesshin should be a respite from the incessant voice of the child, from the spill, the block waiting to be tripped on, the sock that must be found, the clash over turn-taking.

Yet the sesshin that is totally a refuge from all this misses the depth and expanse of complete practice. The meeting of meditation and life is exactly where the action is, however distressing—or delightful. The presence of children—just like pain in the knees or the peculiar habits of the guy on the next zafu—can be experienced as either an obstruction or as opportunity. But the stakes are even higher. Childhood and our

relationship to it are so powerfully basic to our lives that our choices as we encounter it decisively limit or deepen our understanding.

My own family relationships are quite difficult and often admit neither resolution nor escape. My practice has helped me with the karma of my first family, and the unfolding of difficulties since having children has delineated and illumined Buddhist practice.

I like to think of myself as compassionate. I'm often complimented for my patience, helping me shore up the hope that I am, in fact, compassionate. But when I heard my daughter criticizing her sister in a certain hateful, infuriating way, I was astonished. How can she talk that way? How dare she? How can I get her to stop? Over time my ears finally broke my illusions. This is *my* voice, *my* words, *my* tone. She can talk that way having heard *me*. She dares to talk that way, still hearing me. How can *I* stop? Asking this, I encounter—fresh as a first glimpse—compassion.

Neither my husband's parents nor mine showed us, as we were growing up, how to lovingly support a spouse. We make a lot of mistakes, and sometimes our relationship breaks down. These periods, of unpredictable duration, are quite painful for us and the children. I wonder about the support we all need from our sangha to carry us through the dark times. How do we help each other embody bodhicitta in the midst of our greatest flaws and weaknesses? When our flaws and weaknesses affect the well-being of the children entrusted to our care?

The journey to enlightenment looks very different with my karmic failings right in my face each day. There is a mercilessness about children's mirroring that rivals the toughest old master. My desire for the ideal is brought face to face with wrenching remorse for my actual evil—which I could have gone a lifetime without seeing. A lifetime of monastic practice without seeing? Wouldn't the process of working intimately with my teacher have shown me? Wouldn't a really whopping *kensho* have done it?

Maybe not. I offer my hunch that Buddhism and its role in our world is flawed by not including in the purification of enlightenment work the nearly impossible-to-resolve problems that blossom in the company of children. Without their maddening input, Buddhism does not give the blessing that the world cries out for each day in anguish.

The skeins of twisted karma we bring from our own parents and childhoods manifest most intensely in people who are parents, but are enmeshed in the sangha relations of non-parents as well. In this culture, we are all troubled. We are all bereft of certain basic human

attributes: intimacy with our own food supply, security of ecological continuity, the love of folks who will live in proximity with us throughout our lives, belonging to land that will not change overmuch in our lifetime.

We need children in the sangha so that they will take us to unexpected places and teach us what we would not discover without them. It is not a coincidence that families are disintegrating simultaneously with ecosystems. At this time the need for healing is massive, and many changes in our thinking are required to bring it about.

My daughters complain that Buddhism overvalues human beings. They hate the implication that rebirth progresses from lower beings, that enlightenment happens only to humans. Phrases like "the wisdom of the stones and clouds" and "extend...the heart of worshiping to animals and birds" calm them a little. They applaud the

Dalai Lama's warning that a person who cuts down even one tree commits a thousand murders. But they remain unsatisfied that Buddhists really *get* the vastness of wisdom all around us. "Why should people spend hours meditating on black cushions? Why don't they sit outside with the birds? They'd be enlightened a lot faster."

The great koan of practicing with children is: Can they show us what they know before we teach them to forget it? The messy distractions of children enlarge the scope of the enlightened self, fulfill our intimacy with animalness and plantness. What looks like chaos—and makes us modern adults so uncomfortable—is natural order clashing with the overlay of a civilization gone too far. Children's perceptions, needs and understandings—however uncomfortable—are absolutely precious clues to the secrets of Mind we so desperately want to discover. ❖

Sandy Eastoak is a writer, artist, homeschooling mother, and editor of the recently published Dharma Family Treasures. She is a student of John Tarrant Roshi, as well as a fanatical environmentalist.

"Why should people spend hours meditating on black cushions? Why don't they sit outside with the birds? They'd be enlightened a lot faster."

*Prayer wheels
hum.
Like laundromat sound
of diaper washing years.
Those fat babies!
Buddhas
in strollers.*

— Melody Ermachild Chavis

BACK HOME WITH MOM

by Scoby Beer

In 1994 I moved from California to upstate New York, to my parents' home, to help my dad take care of my mom, whose body was failing her. What follows are some memories from our year together.

Toothettes and the mucus wars—Spring 1995

“Hold out your hand. Like this,” I’d tell the new aides, as I showed them how to clean the mucus from my mother’s throat. Then, twirling the lollipop stick between my fingers, I’d scour their cupped hand with its spinning little pink sponge, moving wristward. Like a mini version of a street sweeping machine. My latest victim was looking somewhat agog. Apparently she had not received this particular training before.

“If you start on the roof of her mouth,” I explained, “she can anticipate your approach. Then she’s less apt to gag.”

My role as my mother’s caretaker had become ever more focused, as I homed in on the last bare essential: the all-consuming task of keeping my mom’s airway open. A few more minutes, another hour, one more day.

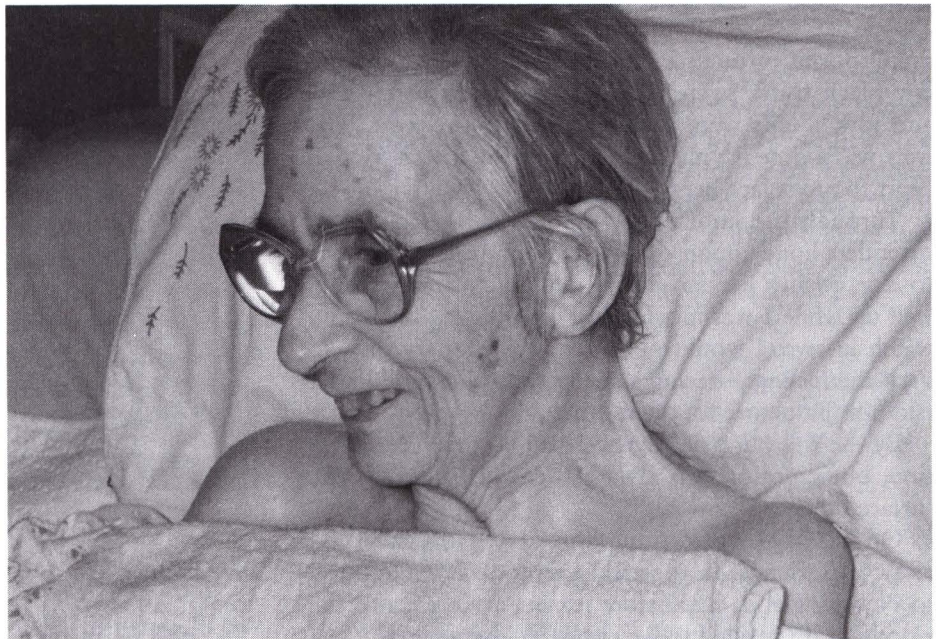
When, many months before, my mother’s case nurse, Cathy, delivered to us our first box of “toothettes,” I was overwhelmed. When I opened the lid, I was flooded, like Pandora, with a swarm of these little pink-headed, white-tailed “entities,” as they sprang of their own accord into my lap. Amazed by the onslaught, I felt sure we would never get through the box.

But in the last days of my mother’s illness the toothette took on an importance not implied by its innocent name. And I was now making weekly calls to the purveyor’s 800 number in New Jersey to order yet another carton.

“When you reach the back of her palate, descend down one side of her throat like this, with a scooping motion,” I explained to the new aide. “That’s where the mucus hangs out, below the base of her tongue. And if you’re lucky,” I would add cheerily, “you’ll get a good wad with each scoop.” Then I would demonstrate on Mom with the aide watching attentively.

My mother, Lois, was by now eagerly receptive to this intrusive procedure. Indeed, it had become the chief subject of our communication. “Mom, do you need a swab?” I would say, usually anticipating her need. But if not, she would wink and nod towards her letter board and tediously spell out “S-W-A-B.”

Lois was struggling for every breath. Such is the fate of those afflicted with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Also called Lou Gehrig’s Disease for the iron man of the Yankees who suffered from this scourge, ALS is a disease of the nerve cells that activate the voluntary muscles. As these nerves die one by one, the body goes



Lois Beer, a week before her death

progressively limp. Often, as in my mother’s case, from toe to head, completely.

So it was that in the spring of last year the disease had reached her head, and the last functioning neurons in her throat that allowed her to move secretions were finally giving up and calling it quits. No longer able to talk, swallow, cough, sneeze, or spit, my mother was now breathing through the froth of her own mucus. Thus the toothette. Each swab removed some of the gathering tide.

First snow—the day before Thanksgiving

Except for the rustle of newsprint, all was quiet as I left the house.

I’d given Mom her morning meds, which I had ground to powder in the mortar and injected through her feeding tube. She was up in bed reading the local

section of the paper. Kristie, her morning aide, turned the pages. If it was in the paper, Mom would read it. She didn't miss much. In the living room my father examined the front page.

Ten minutes walk brought me to a footpath that looped through old woods, now surrounded by suburban development. Since coming home, I had done this circuit at least once a week, and had come to know the place well. Trillium in early June. The whisper of big trees in July. In September the red-berried Jack-in-the

*Working with her day to day, seeing her
so utterly vulnerable, tears would well up
while I was moving her limp limbs.*

pulpit poked through a carpet of gold. This November day black trunks were silhouetted against a gray sky, and low clouds were pushing in from the west. The walk was a time for me to be held by the forest. My full heart found solace here.

Through the summer my mother and I had had an extended honeymoon of sorts. Working with her day to day, seeing her so utterly vulnerable, tears would well up while I was moving her limp limbs. She would watch in awe. I would not look away, nor try to hold back the feelings—feelings of unspeakable tenderness I had not felt before for my mother.

By the fall, our days together had become more routine, but emotion was always there just beneath the surface.

On this day I was looking forward to a long weekend away with friends. In the early afternoon I would travel to New England. But before leaving I sought out the woods, as if I needed to say good-bye there as well.

In the last quarter mile I was lost in daydream. Here the trail crosses a creek, takes a gentle sweep, and rises between two tree-covered knolls. I have a special affection for this passage. As I looked up from the path to see the view through the notch, I felt a presence. What was it? A translucent light beyond the trees, then the trunks becoming indistinct. Was it—? Yes! The first flakes came dancing through the wood. Now they were caressing my face, mixing with tears of joy.

Setting limits, letting go—June 1995

"Your mom wants you," Kristie called, poking her head into the kitchen. Dad and I had just settled into our cornflakes and toast.

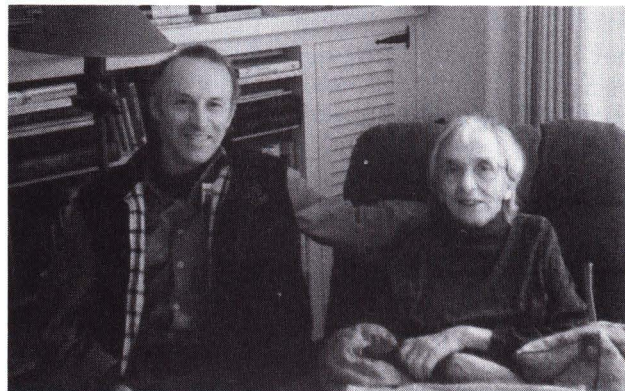
"What does she want?" I asked, not without frustration. I was running on empty. Although not a parent myself, I now knew something of what it's like to care for an infant. In these last months my mother's needs had become constant. And for some weeks she had

been "circling the wagons," corralling those whom she needed most. It was a little crazy-making. I could barely leave the house.

"She wants *you* to pick her nose," Kristie told me. Something snapped. Pushing back my chair, I got up abruptly from the table and marched into Mom's room. She must have heard me coming. Sitting up in bed she was tight-lipped and looking straight ahead, avoiding eye contact. Standing beside her I said, "Mom, Kristie can pick your nose just as good as I can." For the first time in our long year together I was denying her.

Something let go inside me and the flood gates opened. "And I can't always be here to do everything for you." I hadn't known I was going to say that. How long had I needed to say it? Later it came to me what I was really telling her—*Mom, I can't keep you from dying*—words perhaps more for me than for her.

It was a time of letting go. For me, letting go of the absurd notion that somehow I could keep my mom



Scoby and his mother, 1994

alive forever. And for my mother, the big one, letting go of it all.

I returned to my bowl of cornflakes and left Kristie to the task of picking Mom's nose. After that it was just another day together, another day of "swab" and "bedpan," frustration and sweetness.

However, something had shifted. I felt a new separateness. But a separateness that in no way diminished the intimacy. In fact, it contained and nurtured a new closeness.

In the weeks that followed I had passing feelings of remorse. Did I really need to deny her a nosepick, especially had I known what was to come? That the following morning, when the doves were cooing on the wire, our time together would be over and my mom would take her leave.

Now, months later, I laugh and cry at the memory of our little drama. But it was one of our most real moments together, both of us just completely being ourselves. ♦

Scoby Beer is a carpenter, peer counselor, and Vipassana practitioner.

COMING FULL CIRCLE: Musings on Mom and Dad

by Nina Rosen

My mother and father celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary last Saturday. There was a gathering of about 25 relatives and friends at the Pritikin Longevity Center in Santa Monica, where they like to eat on special occasions so they can be assured of not getting any fat, salt, or cholesterol in their food.

My parents eat carefully and live well. My mother is 79 and my father 81. She teaches an acting improvisation class, does Peer Counseling, and reads voraciously. He plays golf every day, leads a counseling group for people recovering from emotional breakdowns, and plays poker. They go to the library together every two weeks and see lots of movies together; other than that they live rather independently of one another.

Although they have four loving children, they are loathe to call on them for anything. Their eyes are getting weaker and it's difficult for them to see street signs, yet they drive themselves everywhere. They're tired of cooking, hate to pay for restaurants, and so content themselves with very simple foods rather than ask us for anything. When I telephone my mother for our daily 6:30 AM call, she tells me she's already done a load of laundry, finished the crossword puzzle and is now preparing to go swimming with her friend at the Y. I am still in bed with a child or two, a husband, and sometimes a dog. I have yet to sit zazen, prepare breakfast, take children somewhere and get to work.

My mother and I speak from 10 to 30 minutes, discussing everything. She often complains about my father, while I try to be a good listener; usually I fail, and I get thoroughly entwined in the mess that a 60-year relationship can sometimes be, especially when it's your own parents. I try to remember that it isn't always a mess...it's everything. They hold hands, write each other love notes, make each other jealous, play me against my siblings and generally keep life at the bubbling level.

The other day I chastised my mother for criticizing her daughter-in-law. She was quiet at the other end of the phone. I knew I had hurt her.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I'm always picking on you, aren't I?"

"It's fine, it's fine. You keep me in line and I count on you for that," was her valiant reply.

I was shocked. She's still trying, much of the time, to find her way, to be better, to be more. In that moment I realized I might not have the luxury of bantering with her every day for much longer. She's had cancer, lost her bladder, and still tries not to ask for help from me or my sisters and brothers. She forges on, moment to moment.

In this culture we spend a lot of time blaming our parents for all their mistakes; I still carry the scars and trace all my weaknesses and personality defects right back to my parents. But what did they know? And when do I look at them and realize what a powerful life force they gave me? That, too, can be directly traced to my mother and father.

Buddhism continually reminds me that we are all one, yet I still try to separate myself from my parents. They evoke the dark side, the past which cannot be changed. In 1978 when I met my first spiritual teacher, I was a single parent with a six-year-old daughter. I told the teacher how difficult my relationship with my mother was. She suggested that I spend ten minutes every day simply listening to my daughter without any interruptions. That, the teacher said, would help me appreciate my mother. Both teachings helped me be more active in the moment. She also suggested that when I was with my mother, I try to see what I was learning from her. At times, I was able to suspend judgment and simply attend to what was being said by my daughter, what was being said by my mother. And wanting my daughter to be happy informed my understanding of how much my mother, too, wished I might avoid suffering. Nothing brings me more hope, more joy, than my own three children. To be able to see my parents as part of the same circle in which I see my children, that is my practice. ❖

Nina Rosen lives in Los Angeles, where she teaches English as a Second Language and writes fiction for immigrants. She sits zazen in a Soto Zen Temple in Japantown and visits Tassajara Zen Mountain Center every summer.

Domestic Poem

*The old cat & new cat are warring
throughout the house.
The night is rent with yowls,
the yellow moon hides behind the clouds,
there seems no peaceful quarter.
Yet hear it backwards
& the hissings are sighs of joy!*

—Frederick Smock

BAD DOG

The Journey through Shame to Compassion

by Lin Jensen

*Within all light is darkness:
But explained it cannot be by darkness
that one-sided is alone.
In darkness there is light:
But, here again, by light one-sided
It is not explained.
Light goes with darkness:
As the sequence does of steps in walking.*
—Sekito Kisen, *Sandokai*

I'm eight years old; my brother, Rowland, ten. We follow our father up the steep, wooden stairs to the second-story bedroom. He doesn't talk. Our steps echo in the hollow of the stairway enclosure. Father holds the lath stick by its end. It's stiff and splintery and it hangs from Father's hand almost to the floor. I'm sick with dread. I'm swallowing the words that would beg Father, once more, not to do this.

In the upstairs bedroom, Father shuts the door behind us. A ceiling light hangs from a cord. It lights the surface of the bed, leaving the corners of the room in shadows. Father stands by the bed. He turns to face us. Rowland and I stand together, backed up against the shut door. We don't move. Outside in the hall, Laddie, our farm dog, scratches at the bedroom door. Father looks sad and serious like he wishes we didn't have to do this. He points toward us with the lath stick, and I hear him ask, "Which of you goes first?"

Rowland goes to the bed. He wants to get it over with. It's worse to go last, but I can never bring myself to go first. Rowland unbuttons his jeans and pulls them down to his knees. He does this without being told. He knows he has to pull his jeans and underwear down, and then lay himself naked, face down on the bed. He pulls his underwear down at the very last because he doesn't like to show himself, and waits for the first blow. I look away. My body shivers as though it were cold. I hear Laddie snuffling and scratching at the door and then I hear the crack of the lath stick. Rowland doesn't cry out. He holds his breath. He's told me that this is the way to do it.

I hear the lath again, and then again. Still Rowland doesn't cry out. Laddie scratches at the door. I don't know why we are being whipped. Rowland teased me and punched me behind the barn, and I called him bad names. Did Mother hear us? I had some bad thoughts. Did Mother know this? Mother was angry, and then she was sick and lay on her bed and put a wet cloth

over her eyes and told us that we would be whipped when Father got home. I got scared and tried to talk to her and make it OK again, but the cloth was over her eyes and she wouldn't talk to me.

Rowland's whipping is done. I pull my shirt up and tuck the end of it under my chin to keep it from falling. I pull my pants and underwear down. My penis feels rubbery where I try to hide it under my hands, and Rowland is watching me. I'm holding my breath. The first blow comes. It hurts more than I can stand. My hands are stretching back to cover my buttocks, and I hear myself whimpering, "Please, Father. Please."

"If you do that, you'll only make it worse," my father warns.

When it's over, Father goes out. Rowland is in the dark near the wall. I'm under the ceiling light. Rowland can see me wiping at my runny nose with my shirt, but he looks away. We have something wrong with us. We both have it. We don't like to look at one another. It makes us too sorry.

In a moment or two, Rowland goes out. The door shuts behind him and I hear him going down the stairs.

Later, when I go out, Laddie is waiting. He's glad to see me and wags his tail and pushes himself against me. "Go away, Laddie," I say. Later, in the dark of a sleepless night, I slip from my bed and open the door onto the hall where Laddie waits and, clutching him to me, I tell him how sorry I am.

* * *

I'm eleven years old. Laddie has done something bad and Father has seen him do it and I don't know what is going to happen. Rowland says that Laddie killed a turkey. When the neighbor's dog killed a turkey, Father shot it. I saw him do it. The neighbor's dog whined and went round and round in circles until it fell down. Blood was coming out of its nose when it breathed, and pretty soon it died.

In the barn, Father has a rope around Laddie's neck. When Laddie tries to pull away, Father jerks the rope, making Laddie cough. Laddie's fur is tangled and dirty like he's been drug on the ground. A young turkey, about the size of a chicken, is dead on the barn floor. It's torn and bloody and its feathers are wet. "Oh, Laddie," I cry out. "What have you done?" I squat and put out my hand. Laddie wags his tail and starts toward me.

Father jerks him away with the rope. "Don't be good to him, Linley," Father says. "We can't have a dog that kills poultry. Don't you see that?" Father looks angry but his voice sounds kind of sad. "Once he's tasted blood it's not likely he'll ever quit."

"He doesn't know, Father." I'm trying to keep from crying, but I can feel my face screwing up and my voice is going high. "Please, Father, please."

"That doesn't help," Father says. He sounds impatient now. "If he kills again, that's it. He goes." Father hands me the rope that's tied to Laddie's neck. "He's your dog. If you want to save him, you must do exactly what I say."

Laddie is tied by the rope to a post in the barn. I have gathered the baling wire and wire cutters and the roofing tar that father told me to get. I have to wire the turkey around Laddie's neck and paint it with tar so that Laddie can't chew it off. Laddie has killed the turkey and now he has to carry it around his neck until it rots away. Father says we have to do this because we only have one chance. I am not supposed to be good to Laddie. He must learn not to kill.

The dead turkey is covered with flies. Tiny yellow eggs are already stuck to the places where the blood has dried. I take a stick and dab tar on the turkey until its feathers are all plastered down and the torn places are filled and its eyes are stuck shut. I punch the baling wire through its body and around both legs.

I take the rope off Laddie. He's glad and wags his tail and tries to lick my face. "Bad dog," I tell him, "Bad dog." I tie the turkey around his neck. The tar sticks to his fur. "Bad dog," I repeat.

After three days, Mother won't let Laddie near the house anymore. We are told to keep the yard gates shut. "It's intolerable," she tells Father. "I can smell him even here in the house."

"Lucy, it's our one chance for the dog. I owe it to the boy to give it a try."

"It's not just the smell, you know," she says. "I can't bear the thought of it."

"That doesn't help any," is all Father says.

At the end of the week, Laddie quits coming for the food I have been carrying out to him. I find him where he has crawled back into a space under the floor of the storage shed. I call to him but he won't come. I push the food under to him. I bring a basin of water and push it under too. I do this for two more weeks. Sometimes a little of the food is eaten and some water taken, but often, both are untouched.

Once, during this time, I see from a distance that he has come out from under the shed. The turkey around his neck drags on the ground when he walks. Even from far away, I can see that the turkey is slimy and bloated from rot. "Laddie," I call. I run to him, but before I can get to him, he crawls back under the storage shed. I see him there in the darkness. "Laddie, I'm sorry." I try to crawl in but it's too tight and I can't reach him. The

smell of him gags me. "Laddie," I say again.

And then one day, he's out. I find him in the barnyard, the baling wire still wound around his neck where the turkey has rotted off. I take the wire off, but he doesn't wag his tail or try to lick me. He doesn't do anything at all. I take him to the washroom and fill the washtub with warm water. I lift him into the tub and wash him with soap. I scrub him and rinse him and draw more water and wash him again. I dry him with a towel and brush him, and I keep telling him that it's OK now, that it's all over. I let him out on the lawn by the house where the sun shines through the elm tree, and go back to clean up the washroom.

When I come for him, he's gone. I find him under the storage shed.

* * *

I am 60 years old. Father is 93 and he's in the hospital with pneumonia. It's not at all certain that he

will survive this illness. My brother Rowland and I take turns watching him through the night. Rowland has gone to get rest. It's nearly two in the morning. Father is fitful. He's suffering from diarrhea, and it awakens him frequently in such a state of urgency that I do not dare to doze off myself. Father is embarrassed to use a bedpan, but because he's too weak to reach the toilet by himself he needs me to get him there in time.

I watch him there on the hospital bed where he labors in his sleep to breathe, his thin chest struggling with the effort. Father has lived long and is much softened with age and with grandchildren and with great grandchildren who have coaxed him out of his darkness and fear.

A quarter past three. Father calls. "Linley, I need to go." He is trying to sit up and get his feet to the floor even before I can get to him. I help him up. He has so little strength, and yet he uses every bit he has to walk himself to the bathroom. I support him as we walk around the foot of the bed and through the bathroom door, and then I realize we are too late. His hospital gown is pulled open in the back and diarrhea is running down his legs and onto the linoleum where he tracks it with his bare feet.

He looks at me with the most urgent appeal. He is humiliated by what he has done and his eyes ask of me that it might never have happened. I back him up to the toilet and sit him down. A neon ceiling light glares down on us. In the hallway beyond these walls I can hear the voices of the night nurses on their rounds. I shut the bathroom door and, when the latch clicks shut on the two of us, the sound of it sends a shiver through me. This old man, sitting soiled in his own filth, disgusts me; and then, suddenly, there rises in me an unutterable tenderness.

*I wash him as though I were washing my
very own flesh, until all the awful,
rotten things are cleansed away.*

It's OK, Father." I tell him. "It's OK." I find clean towels and a wash cloth and soap. I run water in the basin until it's warm. I take off his soiled hospital gown and mop the floor under his feet with it and discard it in a plastic bag I find beneath the sink. I wash Father carefully, with soap and warm water, removing all the diarrhea from around his anus and the hair on his testicles and down the inside of his legs and between his toes. I wash him as though I were washing my very own flesh, until all the awful, rotten things are cleansed away.

In the morning, Father is breathing easier, and he survives another year before dying on the eighth of December, 1993.

* * *

I have written of these things out of gratitude, so that others might know, as I have come to know, that pain summons its own healer. You do not have to seek outside yourself for deliverance. If shame is all you have, embrace what you have, honor it and care for it with all your attention and kindness. In your own grief you will find the power to convert shame to compassion. ❖

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

Thai Parents Expect Too Much From Their Kids

[Reprinted from the first issue of *Thai Youth Journal: The Next Generation*, a newsletter published by the Thai Youth Club of Wat Dhammaram in Chicago.]

You are sitting in your room working diligently on your homework from school when your father knocks on the door. "Come out and play some music for me," he says, "You need to practice your (song/dance/Thai)."

You yell back through your door, "I'm doing my homework!"

He says, "Come now!" What can you do? You can't just sit there and ignore his request; that would only make him angry. Being the good kid that you are, you get up and do whatever he wants without complaint. When you are done, it's late, you still haven't finished your homework, and you have a major test tomorrow on electron configuration in chemistry class. On top of all that, your parents don't want you to stay up late, so they command you to go to sleep.

Two days later, you come home with a "D" on your chemistry test and a note from your teacher about not doing your homework. Your father starts to give you a lecture, and when you try to explain about the night that he took you away from your schoolwork, he says, "Don't talk back to me!"

What's a kid to do? ❖

—Anonymous



Lesbian couple with their daughter, dog, and second child on the way.

Photo by Helen Nestor.

A Special Section on BPF's BASE Program

IMMEDIATE FAMILY, EXTENDED FAMILY, EXPANDED FAMILY

I. A Quilt of Experience

In April 1995, BPF started the BASE program (the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement) to provide a six-month structure for a group to combine service and social action with Buddhist meditation practice and training. Participants worked 15-30 hours a week in a hospice, a cancer resource center, a medical clinic for homeless people, a soup kitchen, in environmental education, and with anti-nuclear organizations. An innovative aspect of the program was the ongoing twice-weekly group meetings and the monthly retreats where members had the opportunity to collectively deepen their understanding of the interface of Buddhist practice with "social change practice." The following writing comes from members of the 1995 BASE pilot program, and emphasizes BASE as a family.

* * *

During the first meetings of the BASE program I asked myself: How will I fit in? What parts of myself will I be comfortable sharing? How passive or assertive should I be? I do this in every new group—sitting back to see who is most dominant, who is most passive and then navigating a way of minimal conflict for myself between the extremes. Where did I learn this way of being, or holding back from being, myself?

After several months we all more or less settled into certain roles (roles we've all undoubtedly had plenty of experience playing) defined primarily by our ways of communicating with each other. A breakthrough for me happened one evening when anger appeared in the form of bitter comments between two members of our group. This was disturbing, especially given the fact that the two members involved, in my mind, were parental fig-

ures. "This has nothing to do with me," I very consciously assured myself, and I remained silent as I have done countless times in the past, during hurtful moments between family (and more recently with BASE) members. More than anything I just wanted to leave. But in an effort to distract myself, I looked down at a piece of paper with a dharmic quote we had read at the outset of the meeting: "How nice to understand directly from mind to mind, not minding the

differences of personalities." The contradiction was too much for me to continue to sit with in silence. With great effort I expressed my perception of this contradiction to the group and immediately felt a shifting of relationship, both to the family within and the family sitting around me.

So it is clear to me now that any intimate group experience, like any intimate relationship, evokes my original family experience to some extent.

I bring my family wherever I go, both blood and soul kin.

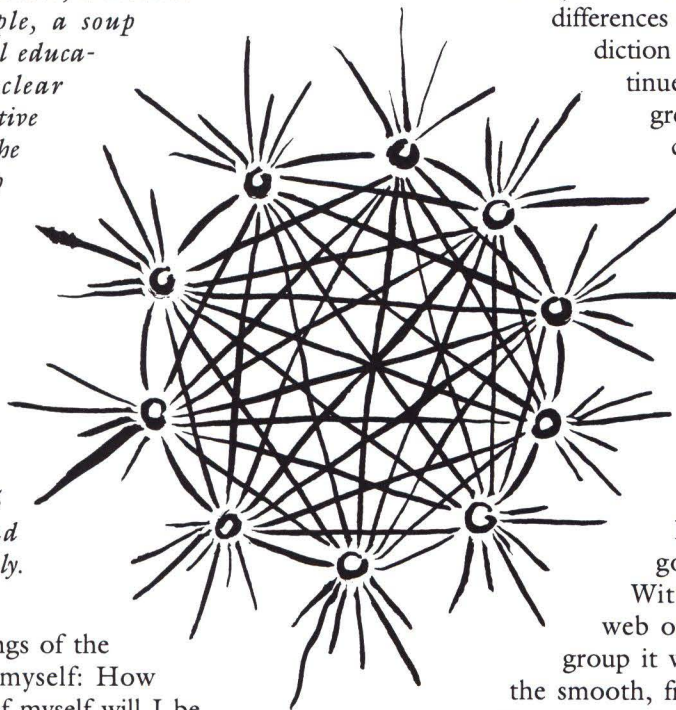
Within the small yet complex web of relationships in the BASE group it was all there, the rough and the smooth, from hypermindful tiptoeing so as not to push another's buttons during group discussions, to the simple and nourishing bidding, "Good night dharma sisters and brothers," after an evening meeting.

I've emerged from the BASE program with nine new members to add to the extended family in my heart and mind. —*Damien Raffa*

* * *

Deer Park in Sarnath, 483 BCE (or so) —

Gathered at his feet, this Holy one. We Indians of many castes and professions sit shaven-headed in forest, rapt. We chose the saffron robes to quietly proclaim our letting go. We practice days and nights. We hear each word and one by one drop off this samsaric wheel like flies. We hear the words exact, and you with your



Damien Raffa,
BASE Family Portrait

skill, your divine eye that can see through lifetimes, you know exactly what to say to bring us to that place of complete freedom—no more wanting. Coolness, oh cessation. Suffering finally brought to an end through many moments of simply being awake.

BASE weekly meeting in Berkeley, 1995 —

We tumble in the front door of Maylie's house, some exhausted from a day at the cancer center or keeping vigil at hospice. We gather for a half hour sit. One of us comes in halfway through, scratching her mosquito bite and loudly squishing her buckwheat-hulled zafu. The bell rings and we bow to one another. We are an eclectic group in sweats and jeans and ethnic shawls. Mix of races, classes, sexual identities, choosing to live simply as we do this work. One says the news she heard today on KPFA was so devastating she has been in tears since 6 PM. (They're rounding up the homeless in Golden Gate Park, no end in sight to the war in Bosnia—) We offer thoughts on maintaining mindfulness through periods of

ing our time together. She was frustrated and wanted to leave. There seemed to me no way to resolve the issue in the little time remaining. "Don't panic, just breathe, don't panic," I said to myself as I felt a dizzying, sinking feeling in my gut.

A flurry of responses came from the group: feelings were expressed, mistakes were admitted. Yet I sensed a mood of separateness.

Earlier someone had suggested that we each share appreciations about others for the closing ritual, but in the moment this didn't seem suitable. There was a reflective pause. Then someone said that since we all acknowledged making mistakes, perhaps the asking of forgiveness would serve better as a closing ritual.

So this is what we did, and it allowed us to come together again, and to move on.

I was silent in wonder as I rode home afterwards. For six months we had been like ten people in a raft, mostly paddling together, sometimes paddling apart, and

sometimes just drifting. Once again, something unpredictably graceful had arisen to allow us to move on. I learned the importance of forgiveness, and that it follows only after the acceptance of each others' limitations in addressing our unmet needs.

—Henry Wai

* * *

We went for a weekend retreat on Stinson Beach and decided to spend an hour or so picking up trash along the waterfront. It was a beautiful day.

We brought along the small plastic bags you tear off the roll at supermarkets. It was not a very dirty beach. We walked along together on the access road, stooping to retrieve cigarette butts and bits of plastic and broken glass. As two of us spotted the same piece of tinfoil and headed a little competitively towards it, I thought how much work in the world there is to do. How eager we are to do it, and yet, on this day, how removed from its urgency. As we spread out along the beach, there was more rubbish. I found a large plastic garbage bag and gradually filled it, so that as I slung it over my shoulder to go back, it was a proper burden; I



Maylie Scott, Pam Weiss, Diana Winston, Kate Savannah, Mora Rogers, Damien Raffa, and Henry Wai. [Missing: Chuck Hotchkiss, Donald Rothberg, and Ronda Madero]

overwhelm. Wisdom from within gets circulated, to calm the fear, frustration, anger. Moments of suffering (our own and others) brought to an end through trying again and again to be awake together. Momentary cessation. Relief. —Diana Winston

* * *

Moving together with encouragement and forgiveness

During the program evaluation at our last retreat, I was taken aback by what I heard from one participant, who was very agitated by the previous night's verbal exchange and hadn't slept all night. She felt that the group had not acknowledged an important issue dur-

enjoyed a sense of accomplishment. Missing a turning, as I am apt to do, I carried the bag until I was quite tired and nervous about how lost I was. As I walked, I thought how this small adventure replayed the life of the group: a lot of quite energetic talk about experience and action, then the lonely going out to do what one can, often with some questioning, some sense of absurdity, to find what there actually *is* to do, and then looking forward to the comforting return to the dharma nest. —*Maylie Scott*

* * *

I experienced the BASE program as a temporary family dedicated to exploring and sharing our lives as engaged Buddhists. The group became our container.

This emphasis was in some ways a surprise. Although we planners of the program had thought some about the importance of group process, we had given more attention to different aspects of “training” members of the group in engaged Buddhism, and to dealing with issues arising in the group members’ social service and/or social change work.

But as the program developed, the group members themselves led us to consider more fully our group life together. As we took more risks and felt greater trust, we realized that the group met a deep longing felt by each of us, a longing to integrate the psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of our lives. We opened up to each other in ways that brought together, for example, my fears about intimacy and anger; your despair over continuing ecological devastation; her difficulties with working day in and day out with people with cancer; his joy about teaching composting to inner city youth; and their interpersonal friction in the group. The group helped us make connections between personal psychology, group dynamics, and social systems. Increasingly, we came to approach difficulties of any kind in the spirit of engaged Buddhist practice.

At the end of six months, our family dispersed, some to faraway places. Yet each of the participants was, I believe, touched profoundly by our explorations of how to live an engaged dharmic life in this often difficult society, attending together to all the parts of our lives. We were able to do this, at least temporarily, with more support and less isolation, through the experience of a “base community,” a small local sangha that each of us, I think, came to see as vital to our lives as engaged Buddhists. —*Donald Rothberg*

* * *

In the Soto Zen tradition, there is a practice of sewing Buddha’s robe in preparation for a lay or priest ordination ceremony. With each tiny stitch sewn, one is instructed to recite the mantra: “*Namu kie Butsu*,” I take refuge in Buddha. Or, more literally: “I throw myself into the house of Buddha.”

It is in this “house of Buddha” that we meet, explore and become intimate with the Triple Treasure of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. In our pursuit of the Buddha-Dharma, however, it seems that the jewel of Sangha—our Dharma family—is often neglected. Dazzled by the brilliance of the teaching, we can too easily forget that the light we seek is embodied in our fleshy, messy, unpredictable Dharma brothers and sisters.

Meeting twice a week for six months, the BASE program provided a container, or “house,” to verify the importance of Sangha. Sitting together in silence, talking, laughing, crying, bumping, and sometimes bruising, a unique set of relationships was born. Comprised of individuals drawn together by a deep concern for the world, a commitment to Buddhist practice, and an interest in weaving these two passions together, BASE offered a space for us to share our joys and struggles. And perhaps most importantly, it provided an opportunity for us to explore our (often significant) differences. This was hard, messy, wonderful work. It stretched me to develop a deeper and deeper respect for differences that ultimately proved to be at the very heart of the love and support we shared.

They say, “Home is where the heart is.” For me, the BASE group provided a special kind of home, where I could experiment with new ways of relating, tiny stitch by tiny stitch. —*Pam Weiss*

II. Practice

Making A Dent?

by Diana Winston

Following are several excerpts from the journal Diana kept during the first BASE project, while she was a volunteer at the Tom Waddell Medical Clinic for the Homeless in San Francisco.

June 20

On my walk to the Tom Waddell Clinic, I mindlessly browse the windows of the hip art galleries and clothing stores of Hayes Valley. Finally I remember to stop and say: OK, why am I doing this? If it is just to be “helpful” then I am missing the point. I need to remember the context. I am doing this in order not to let suffering out of my sight. Thich Nhat Hanh says, “Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world.” The more I can see suffering, in myself, in others, the more I can open to the possibility of freedom from suffering.

As I near the clinic I remind myself to set my intention: *May this day of work be the cause and condition for*

the liberation of myself and all beings. May I be present. May my ego be removed from what I am doing. May I non-judgmentally notice the mindstates that arise.

July 11

I accompany Annie to the Social Security office to apply for disability. She is a functioning schizophrenic with what appears to be obsessive-compulsive disorder. She tells me in detail about buying a cup of coffee, tells me what she hates about the homeless shelter, why she hates “her” (her mother), who Annie believes is responsible for the fact that she’s on the street. Annie is 34 and has been homeless since she was 24. Occasionally she gets temp work but she tells me she always gets fired because she can’t think clearly and frequently goes into rages. She has difficulty concentrating and looking clean for interviews; she seems to be at odds with people in the shelters. So she’s on the street. She is Filipina, and this is unusual, since I have the impression that most Asians have a strong community that protects them from street life. But Annie says that

“Yes,” she sputters, “I can wash and dress myself. I can brush my teeth. But the thing is, I have no place to do it.”

her parents were isolated from Asian culture during her early life.

One of the sheets she has to fill out for SSI asks if she has difficulty performing daily activities like brushing her teeth, washing, dressing. She looks at me exasperatedly. “Yes—no,” she sputters. “I have to leave that one blank. I can wash and dress myself. I can brush my teeth. But the thing is, I have no place to do it.”

My mind opens and I see the horror of a system in which the basic necessities of life are not available to a homeless woman. What happens when she gets her period? I am shocked by my own naiveté. I never really paid much attention until I started working at the clinic. How is this possible? How is it that we don’t know? I begin to fantasize about setting up public bathhouses on street corners, filled with free toothbrushes, sanitary napkins. Could I get Colgate to sponsor this fantasy?

Annie asked me, “Why do you do this work?” I explained BASE and casually mentioned I was a Buddhist. When we parted that day, she said, “Thank you so much for accompanying me—it was such a luxury. At least the Buddhists are looking out for me!”

July 14

We went as a group to clean up the beach. I was hot and I didn’t want to be there. When I saw how much trash was there it seemed like a Sisyphean task. Holy

shit, how could I possibly begin to cut through this endless trash? It felt like a beach of plastic with sand sprinkled on top.

So I began to fantasize, thinking about some old boyfriends. I mindlessly picked up the cigarette butts, the pieces of styrofoam which will never ever biodegrade, the candy wrappers, the broken plastic children’s toys. It was so-o-o-o-o boring. Suddenly my mind questioned: Am I doing this just to get it over and done with? Or can there be a bigger context, the context of liberation? In order to not just be do-gooding, I had to set my intention. OK, I thought, beach garbage is endless, may I pick it all up... and may I make a teeny tiny dent in order to work for not only my liberation but the liberation of all sentient beings, particularly the sand creatures.

But where were the other BASE volunteers? Were they all working together, having much more success than I was? How come they had abandoned me? Ah yes, the task at hand... I began to inhabit my body, feeling the sensation of picking up the trash. This was only slightly more interesting. So I watched the aversion. Here I was trying to save the planet and all I could think about was how hot it was and whether I had enough sunscreen on. I noted *boredom, self-judgment*. This sucks. We couldn’t possibly be doing any good. *Overwhelmed, doubt*. And then mindfulness injected a bit of interest: Oh, here’s some pretty trash. Wow, this could be a ring. *Interest*. I slide the plastic orange circle onto my finger and noted *delight*. I wonder if I’ve picked up more trash than anybody else. *Comparing*. It became a game.

I smiled with relief as the hour ended, realizing I didn’t always have to be a bodhisattva and that here in concrete terms was a small example of meditation practice turned toward social action. Would I get liberated from it? Probably not, although the Buddha said there is a tremendous benefit from just one moment of mindfulness.

August 8

Sarah is speaking to me of the CIA’s plot to get her. She tells me she has Oprah’s phone number and can’t wait to get on the show in order to expose the “war zone” on the streets. “I am at war every day,” she tells me. As she babbles from her world of delusions, there is nothing I can do except muster the courage to be completely present, and to gently, silently send her *metta* (lovingkindness). *May you be happy. May you be free from suffering.*

August 15

I walk Renee to the bank. She’s blind, fat, covered in eczema. Renee mumbles to herself, but when I ask about it, she tells me she is not crazy, just that her world is so small that she needs to talk to give it some depth. It

takes her what seems like hours at the bank, and I exchange glances with the pink-haired, multi-pierced teller. We are both patient. But I grow more and more weary thinking I am doing nothing, that I am trying to change the world and the best I can do today is walk a blind person to the bank. And I feel like a spectacle as I navigate the Tenderloin in my \$70 CP Shades skirt.

I exhaust myself worrying if I am doing any good. Later, when I speak to Tony, my mentor at the clinic, he says you can never really know what effect your actions have on anything. You may have changed someone's life, gotten them off the street by that trip to the bank. You can never really know.

September 12

As I'm walking home from a grueling morning in the Social Security office, a woman with a baby in her arms, dirty fingernails outstretched, asks me for money. Ironically, I'm always asked for money on the day I work at the clinic, and on this one day I feel OK about saying sorry, not today.

But I'm jolted by this woman's presence, as if it's the final straw. I'm overwhelmed by the enormity of the homeless situation. There's so much that needs to be done, and there's nothing I can really do. Nothing, anyway, without risking my comfort. As for risking my time, I only work on Tuesdays at the clinic. My God, I have it so good, and look at this poor woman. I really have to go—I have a lunch date at noon. I'm definitely not truly willing to risk my privilege. Am I willing to give up my car? Work full time with suffering? Be a Buddhist Worker? No, I am not helpful enough. I am no good as a social change worker. I stumble down the street.

In Civic Center Plaza, my vision grows foggy and suddenly, looming out of the fog in a dreamscape, I see hundreds of homeless people, lying down, chatting, begging. They are all around me, everywhere I look. I dash backward from this horrific not-nightmare, and almost trip over a blond woman passed out face-down on the fountain rim with a bloody gash in her leg. Her wound is festering, undressed. It takes up all of my vision. All I can see is a gaping sore in this woman's frail body. I feel like I'm going to vomit, and I run down the street scratching tears out of my eyes, not wanting to see the truth anymore.

October 3

The social worker I tag along with at the clinic, Marian Pena, is an inspiration to me. Only this week did I find out she used to be a Catholic nun in a social change community for 15 years. Yes, that makes sense. As a social worker, she knows her job is to attend to people as they come in, to give them just what they need, based on their level of willingness to accept help.

Henry has been coming to Tom Waddell for the past five years, and is basically one of those bang-your-

head-against-the-wall cases. He is a chronic alcoholic, has been put in rehab several times, and always finds himself back out on the streets drinking. Marian tells me he hasn't had a shower since the last time she bodily forced him into one, a whole year ago. He walks into her office, stinky, filthy, with a long Santa beard and ill-fitting clothes. Marian's hawk-eye scans him. "Henry, you're not wearing socks, are you?"

"Oh no, well—" he mumbles underneath his food-covered beard, "I can't put 'em on anymore—it hurts too much to bend down."

"Do you want them?" she asks.

"No-o-o, can't wear 'em these days."

"How about if I put them on?"

He grumbles, but doesn't say no. I run downstairs to the nurses' station for a pair of socks.

As Marian puts the socks on Henry, she asks him in a business-like manner if he would please take a shower this time. "No—can't," he replies. She sighs and gives him bus fare. As he heads for the door she yells, "Quick Diana! Could you chase after him and tie his shoes? He's going to trip otherwise."

"Henry," I call, "wait!" I kneel down and tie his shoes. Doing what needs to be done, completely in the moment, I bow to this other human being, laying my hands on the altar of his feet. ❖

Diana Winston is the coordinator of BASE and has been noting her mindstates since 1989.

III. Theory

What Is To Be Done?

Small Groups and Engaged Buddhist Practice

by Donald Rothberg

The following article is based on a portion of a talk given by Donald Rothberg at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California, in September 1995. Donald's talk was the first in the Numata Lecture Series on Socially Engaged Buddhism.

One of the ways engaged Buddhists can respond to the suffering of our times is to make socially engaged spiritual practice more accessible. But how can our social action on every level be lived as spiritual practice? How can the richness, focus, and support of spiritual practice be embodied in social action? How can the challenges and insights of social action deepen our practice?

There are, I think, two main but not necessarily competing models of the place of spiritual practice in

socially engaged Buddhism. The first model is that of engaged Buddhism as an *application* of traditional formal practice to the social field, bringing what one has learned there out “into the world.” A second model is that of socially engaged Buddhism itself as a *path* of spiritual development. It is significantly through activity in the world that spiritual (and other) learning occurs.

While this second model of engaged Buddhist practice is somewhat fresh and undeveloped, a number of its components are clear. The foundation of Buddhist activism seems to be, as Thich Nhat Hanh and others suggest, the cultivation of awareness, wisdom, and compassion in everyday life, especially in work, family, and interpersonal relations.

Socially engaged Buddhists also need spiritually-based analyses of contemporary institutions and systems (social, political, economic, ecological, etc.), integrating the best of contemporary theories and practices. This is important in order to clarify contemporary trends so as to act strategically on a large scale and in alliance with others, and also to understand how the various systems influence our consciousness and actions; for example, how systems of race, class, and gender operate, or how we are affected and affect others through our participation in an economic system that enriches some and deeply impoverishes others.

I want to focus, however, on the special role that I believe small groups may play in engaged Buddhist practice. In the BASE group, for example, each individual was socially engaged outside the group, in volunteer activities, in activism, and/or in paid work in social service or social change, and looked to the group for support, training, and exploration. Such groups, 5-12 in size, which support daily life practice as well as study and social action, can be thought of as practice

and transformation communities. There is considerable historical experience of such groups as pivotal to social transformation around the world: the Christian “base communities” in Latin America and Asia; the mostly European and American radical traditions (especially anarchist) of small groups, councils, collectives, and affinity groups, sometimes functioning as small-scale agricultural and economic enterprises; and women’s “consciousness-raising” groups.

Of particular importance in the BPF BASE group (explicitly named to refer to Catholic base communities) was the exploration of “group process”—the relationships within the group and the development of the group in intimacy, trust, intensity, and balance. This is, I think, a somewhat different model of practice than the usual Buddhist model of the cultivation of individual awareness through attention. Rather, there is what I would call a relational model of practice, in which individual awareness is certainly basic, but in which interaction with others elicits our suffering, insight, and the attempt to work with challenges and difficulties. A relational model of spiritual practice can be seen as more “feminine” and contrasted with a more “masculine” heroic spiritual practice of the individual, who begins in separation, and comes to know the relationality of things only on reaching spiritual maturity.

Such group work, particularly when linked to social action and issues, uncovers aspects of our greed, hatred, and ignorance (as well as generosity, love, and insight) that are not always accessible through individual formal practice. In fact, some people may even find individual spiritual practice a way to flee from fears and confusions that become very evident in a group setting. Long-term practice and high levels of spiritual insight can co-exist with unresolved issues on a relational and social level.



Prudence See,
*Music in the
Sitting Room*

Of course, there are many dangers of such a model of practice: group-think, subtle (or not so subtle) domination by some group members, self-absorption and self-centeredness, loss of perspective, imbalance between process and task completion on one side or the other, preoccupation with the pain of contemporary conditions, a loss of spiritual equanimity, and so on. Particularly helpful to the BASE group has been the guidance of traditional Buddhist precepts, and the development of group guidelines or norms.

Might wisdom and insight reside at times not so much in individuals as in groups?

Developing such a simple model of practice in groups helps us respond to current problems on a number of levels, and makes a significant contribution to the question of "What is to be done?" First of all, someone doing social service and/or social change work in the context of spiritual practice may find that the support the group provides is necessary to avoid the all-too-typical burnout of activists. People can form such groups at work or with their fellow activists if they don't already belong to one. Secondly, in the context of a small group, activists respond to problems not just negatively by stopping injustices, but also very positively by developing a community guided, at best, by love and understanding, thereby avoiding a very typical gap between means and ends. (As Thich Nhat Hanh writes, "Peace is every step," or as the Quaker organizer A.J. Muste once said, "There is no way to peace; peace is the way.") The small group may well be a vital aspect of a transformed society.

Thirdly, the engaged spiritual small group integrates psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of our experience, at a time when traditional Buddhist forms (retreats, meditation groups, weekly community meetings) may lack the focus to bring together these different aspects. Many contemporary learning forms, such as psychotherapy (with its generally individualistic focus), may also be unable to provide this integration, an integration which can be particularly healing at the present time.

Fourthly, small groups can explore non-hierarchical modes of spiritual authority and spiritual development. While recognizing the value of traditional teachers and traditional teachings, the group can open up a number of questions. Do traditional teachers necessarily have wisdom in relation to social, political, or ecological concerns? Might wisdom and insight reside at times not so much in individuals as in groups? (Thich Nhat Hanh often mentions that it may not be individuals that get enlightened, but rather a society.) What do

spiritual leadership and authority mean in the context of small, egalitarian groups?

What is to be done? I want to invoke two voices that encourage our engaged practice. The first is the visionary voice of Joanna Macy calling for yet unknown forms of group life to emerge in response to current conditions:

What I feel my whole psyche turning toward, breathlessly, as if this is the most appropriate act right now, is collective listening, listening together, in part listening for what the question is. I don't know exactly what this process of listening would look like, but I imagine that it would involve being together in ways that allow a lot of silence, non sequiturs, and unintelligibility. Maybe at one point somebody would just bark or sigh; we're being asked to take in that which is beyond the reach of our minds, of our acculturated minds. Both the ways in which our world is dying and our response to this dying are beyond the reach of conventional thought. ("Asking to Awaken," ReVision, Fall 1994)

What is to be done? I close with the also visionary voice of Walt Whitman, writing in 1855 in the preface to *Leaves of Grass*, pointing toward the basic, everyday aspects of our responses:

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and the sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families...re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. ❖

Donald Rothberg is a long-time Vipassana practitioner and a BPF Board member. He teaches at the Saybrook Institute in San Francisco, is a co-editor of the journal ReVision, and writes and lectures on engaged Buddhism. He was one of the two mentors of the first BPF BASE program.

Please Help BASE!

BPF's BASE Project is seeking Bay Area Hosts for the February–August 1996 Program.

BASE provides a six-month program of retreat, study, and community for service/social change workers. This is a wonderful *dana* opportunity: support the work of socially engaged Buddhism by offering a room in your home to a BASE participant. Call 415-776-3259 for more information.

Living Buddha, Living Christ

by Thich Nhat Hanh

G.P. Putnam/Riverhead Books, 1995, \$20

Reviewed by Merrill Collett

I grew up in a family where Christianity played a very destructive role. Mom and Dad had both been raised as Protestants, but in different denominations. These doctrinal differences didn't matter until their marriage broke down; then the two of them commenced firing away at each other with dogma. I was ten at the time, and their stormy theological disputes seemed not only silly but scary. After their bitter divorce I shunned all religion, including Buddhism, for 30 years.

Thus it was with a certain amount of suspicion that I approached this discourse in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Certainly Christians could learn something from Buddhists, I thought, but do I, a Zen Buddhist, really need to know about the "living Christ?" As it turned out, my distrust set me up perfectly for Thich Nhat Hanh's powerful message of reconciliation. After reading his wise and loving discourse, I have a much deeper appreciation of the vital essence shared by these two religions and their founders. The subject of *Living Buddha, Living Christ* is neither Buddha nor Christ but rather life itself.

Life has found an apt medium of expression in Thich Nhat Hanh. Any of the many thousands of Americans who have heard him speak know the tremendous healing energy of his presence. This clearly but elegantly composed book confirms his skill in transmitting that same energy through the written page. In my opinion not all of his 27 books have done this; at times I have found his words a little too sweet for my taste. But in digging for the common root of Buddhism and Christianity, Thich Nhat Hanh uses poetic language with the keen edge of a Zen master. I was particularly impressed by the profound and convincing chapter on death. The short section on reincarnation beautifully complements Shunryu Suzuki Roshi's famous lecture on this subject ("Nirvana, the Waterfall").

The book's great strength is its fresh perception of Christ. I tend to confuse the man with the church and reject them both. For me there have simply been too many cases when Christianity has motivated men to kill in its name. But Thich Nhat Hanh does not take a conditioned view. Instead he looks at Christ through eyes fully opened and sees a realized teacher who says "I am the way" not in order to exalt his own teachings but to point us toward unbounded existence. "The way is Jesus

Himself and not just some idea of Him," writes Thay. "A true teaching is not static. It is not mere words but the reality of life. Many who have neither the way nor the life try to impose on others what they believe to be the way. But these are only words that have no connection with real life or a real way." He questions whether churches today are making real the teachings of Jesus and advises that "Jesus needs Christians."

Running through the book like an undercurrent is a critique of Christianity's tendency toward intolerance (my parents' disputes, for example). Referring to Pope John Paul II's contention that Christ was unique, he writes, "the notion that Christianity provides the only way of salvation and all other religious traditions are of no use...does not help." The book is powered in good part by an abhorrence of exclusivity of any kind. Thich Nhat Hanh reminds those who would take righteous pride in their Buddhism that "Buddhism has no separate self." He sees hegemonic claims of "one true religion" as the source of terrible separation and suffering.

The many quotes from Thomas Merton call to mind just how much he and Thich Nhat Hanh are alike in their monastic-inspired social activism, their strong love for humanity, their penetrating insight into the commonality of religious experience, and their total devotion to practice. Merton helped bring Zen meditation to Catholic communities; I hope that with this book Thich Nhat Hanh will give Zen Buddhists a greater appreciation of Catholic love. There is much to be said for having not only a peaceful heart but a passionate one.

Unfortunately, the passion of Christianity gets obscured when Thich Nhat Hanh equates Buddhist mindfulness with the biblical Holy Spirit. Acute attention to the suchness of this moment can expand the mind to the realm of awe, but this is not the same as being moved by the Holy Spirit to "speak in tongues" or perform Pentecostal "holy rolling." Although Thay understands a great deal about Christianity, this—usually Protestant—manifestation escapes him.

For engaged Buddhists, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* offers some intriguing insights into the social action thinking of the man most identified with the movement. In his chapter on peace, Thich Nhat Hanh quotes extensively from the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says we should love our enemies. He distinguishes these teachings from the Liberation Theology of progressive Catholics who speak of God's option for the poor. "I do not think God wants us to take sides," writes Thay, "even with the poor."

The problem is that Liberation Theology creates enemies. Some Latin American Catholic clergy like

"I do not think God wants us to take sides," writes Thay, "even with the poor."

Continued on page 48

An Unspoken Hunger

by Terry Tempest Williams

Vintage, 1994, \$10

Reviewed by Melody Ermachild Chavis

One of the nice things about our Buddhist community is the way we go around claiming people whose ideas we love. "She's so *Buddhist!*" we say. Because Terry Tempest Williams, a fifth generation Mormon, writes about nature in a way that seems like Dharma, we want to make her ours.

A woman bred in the broad embrace of the Great Basin, Tempest Williams tells stories from her deserts and mountains. In her collection of essays *An Unspoken Hunger*, now out in paperback, she says her work is "fueled by tenderness born out of a connection to place." She is a spiritualist, a naturalist, and an activist, and her writing weaves these layers of her life together.

Theodore Roszak has compared modern people to starving refugees, wandering lost from our homes on the earth. Tempest Williams offers us food. She writes the way she lives, with her heart and eyes open to the stream of messages coming to us from frogs, rocks, and images in the news. The truth Earth offers is available to us all the time, if we will only open to it. We read her and we think, "This is how I want to live my life."

The Dalai Lama, speaking about the urgency of our situation, says that "we need to find a universal, secular spirituality separate from religion." Tempest Williams' work is a contribution towards finding such a way: by walking a path back to earth through biology, dream, myth, and history.

Tempest Williams breaks the bounds of usual nature writing. She does not just go outside, immerse herself, experience an epiphany, and go home to write about it. She does the very hardest thing, weaving into her nature essays the warplanes screaming over the bighorn sheep preserve, the Gulf War she sees raging on T.V.—the whole complex reality assaulting the wild world.

Maybe because she works on many levels, there are occasional spots where she goes on too long, for me, about passion and mystery and I want to ask her nicely, "How about a bird now?"

But these lapses are rare, and driven by her justified sense of urgency and anger. Most of the time, we are looking intimately with her at detail. In "Redemption," an essay about "Jesus Coyote," we see his ragged skin, crucified on the barbed-wire fence "pulled away from the dog-body by an angry hand and a dull knife."

Everyone who reads Tempest Williams uses the word "brave." She writes from a shockingly personal place. My favorite essay in *An Unspoken Hunger* is "Undressing The Bear," about the erotic, mythical connection between women and bears. She makes the bald-faced statement, "I believe in the power of Bear,"

and she unabashedly tells stories of women who dream of dancing and making love with bears in order to "embrace our authentic selves." Women everywhere who are bear dreamers will thank her for writing this.

In the essay "In Cahoots With Coyote," she tells how she started out to read scriptures from The Book of Mormon to a congregation assembled around a campfire. Some coyotes outside the circle of firelight started howling, and Tempest Williams threw back her head and led the people to join the coyotes in "a desert howllelujah chorus!" I don't know if this is the kind of universal secular spirituality His Holiness has in mind, but I would have liked to have been there. ❖

[Terry Tempest Williams' newest book is *Desert Quartet*, Pantheon, 1995, \$17, in hardcover.]

Melody Ermachild Chavis is a writer, a private investigator, a Zen student, and a grandmother.

Lovingkindness:

The Revolutionary Art of Happiness

by Sharon Salzberg

Shambhala, 1995, \$18

Reviewed by Sylvia Boorstein

Sharon Salzberg's book *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* is wonderful. It is unique: the only readily available English language presentation of *metta* [lovingkindness] practice, complete with detailed instructions, theoretical explanations, and homey stories. The ease of Sharon's storytelling allows, even causes, the casual reader to learn profound dharma. The paragraph on page 4 that begins with the words, "Cultivating the good..." is, in my opinion, worth the price of the whole book.

"Wow," you must be thinking, "this is an *opinionated* view from a *biased* reviewer." Of course it is! Sharon is my good friend, my metta teacher (and therefore my benefactor), my dharma buddy. I love her. But bias and opinion, and the overcoming of bias and opinion, are what metta practice is all about. If I loved everyone I know, and everyone I don't know, as much as I love my benefactor, I would be a completely happy person. If everyone loved without bias, we would all be happy. And the world would be peaceful.

In spite of the Third Patriarch's dictum about no preferences, we are creatures of preferences—*habituated* preferences that keep us locked in the confines of alliances and vendettas, familial and global. Metta practice simultaneously alerts us to the pain of a locked heart and provides the keys for its opening.

Sharon's description of the joy of metta is so inspiring and her instructions for beginning metta practice so spacious and forgiving (very metta-like), I cannot

imagine anyone not wanting to start immediately. This is important. I spent many years as a Vipassana practitioner avoiding metta (it sounded sappy, and it felt phony), because I didn't understand it. My conversion experience occurred during a period of intensive practice. I was desperately uncomfortable with my mind, my body, my teachers, my path, my situation—when “May I be peaceful, may I be happy, may I be free of suffering” arose in my mind spontaneously and fervently. I felt better. I sought out Sharon for formal instructions, and she became my teacher and my friend.

In *Lovingkindness*, Sharon is everyone's teacher and everyone's friend. Nestled among traditional practice formulas, alternative instructions, and contemporary illustrations of the daily and immediate effects of metta practice are sentences that startle and delight with their clarity:

“The legacy of separation impoverishes the spirit.”

“Without the rigidity of concepts, the world becomes transparent and illuminated, as though lit from within.”

“When wisdom recognizes our oneness and sees the interconnectedness of all beings, it fills us with a degree of happiness that transforms our lives.”

It's important to remind potential readers that Sharon's book is more than a metta book. It includes a presentation of *all* the *Brahma Viharas*—equanimity, compassion and sympathetic joy, as well as lovingkindness—making the passionate point that these (literally) “divine abodes” are not difficult, distant destinations to be arrived at, but rather innate qualities of clear mind to be remembered. In her chapter on generosity, she reminds us that sharing creates the sense of abundance in both the donor and the recipient. Reading her book produces the sense of having been gifted abundantly. ❖

Sylvia Boorstein has taught Vipassana meditation for ten years. She is co-founder of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre and author of It's Easier Than You Think: The Buddhist Way to Happiness. Her next book, Don't Just Do Something, Sit There, is due out in February.

**The American Zen Teachers Association
announces the following services**

- * *Registry of Zen Teachers* in North America. For information, contact: *Secretary*, San Francisco Zen Center, 300 Page St., San Francisco, CA 94102.
- * *Copies of Ethics guidelines* and grievance procedures in use in various Centers. For copies, contact: *Buddhist Peace Fellowship*, Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704.
- * *Information, counseling*, crises intervention to assist individuals and Sanghas facing abuse of power or trust. Contact: *Jan Bays*, 1720 NE Brower Rd., Corbett, OR 97109.

***Zen in the American Grain:
Discovering the Teaching at Home***
by *Kyogen Carlson*

Station Hill Press, 1994, \$9.95

Reviewed by John Benson

If you are new to Zen Buddhism or just curious, *Zen in the American Grain* is a gem of a book written in a style that gets right to the point. As early as the author's preface, we learn that “Awakening to the Way-seeking mind is the first step in acquiring wisdom.” The following 24 short chapters focus with clear logic and simple prose on how Zen relates to everyday life. For example, the second chapter flows around the thought that “Zen practice means to induce changes in ourselves, and so to remain mentally open and flexible.” And a later chapter explores the meaning of “Ships of fame, ships of gain”—a Zen master's reply when asked by a student why the student had not yet attained the Way.

Zen in the American Grain is written with considerable insight and humor by an American who grew up as a Christian, spent ten years in a remote monastery, and has directed urban temples since 1982 in equal partnership with his Zen monk wife. As American as beer and pizza, author Kyogen Carlson can relate to the challenges of maintaining a flexible, positive, cheerful and humble attitude in the midst of urban living. For instance, picture a Zen monk walking his St. Bernard in the inner city neighborhood of this Portland, Oregon temple. Suddenly he is sprayed with a garden hose by a woman crouching behind a bush. How Carlson handles this and other situations is discussed from a practical spiritual perspective that can be helpful to just about anyone. ❖

John Benson is the author of Transformative Adventures, Vacations & Retreats: An International Directory, and is the head of New Millennium Publishing in Portland, Oregon.

Living Buddha (continued from page 46)

Colombia's Camilo Torres have gone so far as to take up arms against their governments. But Jesus offered a way that is more radical than violence, and Thay has followed the same path. While so many other members of his generation went to war against U.S. imperialism, he learned how to transform his anger and sorrow into fathomless love through practice. The message of this extraordinary book is that we can do the same.

“We are entirely capable of touching the ultimate dimension,” writes Thich Nhat Hanh. I believe him, because I know that's where he lives. ❖

Merrill Collett is a resident of San Francisco Zen Center. His book on hospice work, Stay Close and Do Nothing, will be published by Andrews and McMeel in 1997.

Cultivating the Mind of Love

by Thich Nhat Hanh

Parallax Press, 1995, \$14

Forty-five years ago in a time of war, a young Vietnamese monk caught sight of a nun standing on the temple stairs and he fell in love. The monk who tells the story is Thich Nhat Hanh. We never learn the nun's name. As we have come to expect from Thich Nhat Hanh, there is a teaching in this.

I want you to know that, to me, there is no difference between the Snake Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, and this love story. Hearing the love story can help you understand the Dharma, and hearing the Dharma can help you understand the love story. You may ask, "What happened next?" What happened next is up to you. If you ask, "What is her name? Where is she now?" you might as well ask, "Who is Thay? What has happened to him?" This story is happening to you and me right now. With an open heart, through the practice of looking deeply, we have a chance to touch the reality. This is the way taught by the Diamond Sutra.

Cultivating the Mind of Love is Thich Nhat Hanh's latest book from Parallax Press. Though it has fallen somewhat under the shadow of the also excellent but more mass-marketed *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, this is his most personally revealing work since *Love in Action*, which collected many of his earlier writings about war and Buddhist social action. Here Thich Nhat Hanh weaves the threads of his own experience of first love together with his interpretations of the Mahayana sutras—the *Diamond Sutra*, *Lotus Sutra*, *Avatamsaka Sutra*, and *Prajnaparamita*—into whole cloth, to clothe us as we try to make a life of mindfulness.

There's a challenging simplicity about Thich Nhat Hanh's writing and teaching. When he writes that, "Transformation is possible only when you are in touch," he is making the case for sangha, or community, a case that has become his central teaching in recent years. It sounds easy. But my own experience living in community underscores the difficulty of living "in touch." Habits, fears, and desires pull us away from ourselves and each other, away from our vows to save all beings. In Thich Nhat Hanh's case his understanding, his vows, and his sangha helped him nurture this love and turn it from beckoning passion and attachment to something else. Even when he and his beloved were distant from each other and his letters went unanswered, transformation was still possible.

My love for her did not diminish, but it was no longer confined to one person. I was supporting hundreds of monks and nuns, and since that time we have become thousands, yet that love is still here, stronger and larger.

What do we make of these words? They are simple, but the intention behind them has incredible strength. Even our own romantic love in our lives as householders can be the ground for practice and transformation into a love that encompasses all of life. All our feelings are like the wind and if we are tempered by the mindful practice of complete community—the kind of community Thich Nhat Hanh extracts from his reading of these towering Mahayana texts—we enjoy this wind, we bend to it and never break. ❖ —Alan Senauke

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha

Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

Wisdom Publications, 1995, \$75

Ten or fifteen years ago the basic books of Buddhism were hard for most of us to come by. The Mahayana Sutras, with their cosmic vision and appeal to lay practitioners, seem to have found first favor with translators and publishers. But the Pali Suttas, taken to be the earliest and most fundamental teachings of the Buddha, were still confined to leather-bound editions and stilted language aimed as much at philologists as practicing Buddhists. Wisdom Publications, Bhikkhu Nanamoli, and Bhikkhu Bodhi have taken a step to

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correct all this with their excellent edition of the *Middle Length Discourses*, or *Majjhima Nikaya*, one key volume of the original Pali Suttas.

The 152 short suttas in this volume cover an astonishing variety of teachings and styles, including dialogue, drama, parable, and debate. We find here the “Sattipatthana Sutta” or the “Foundations of Mindfulness” and the “Anapanasati,” or “Mindfulness of Breathing,” two suttas that are familiar to many of us. But there are numerous gems that may be new to us. The “Kosambiya Sutta” discusses the resolution of disputes. The “Angulimāla Sutta” relates the transformation of a great criminal into an *arhat*, or holy man. There are many other wonderful texts.

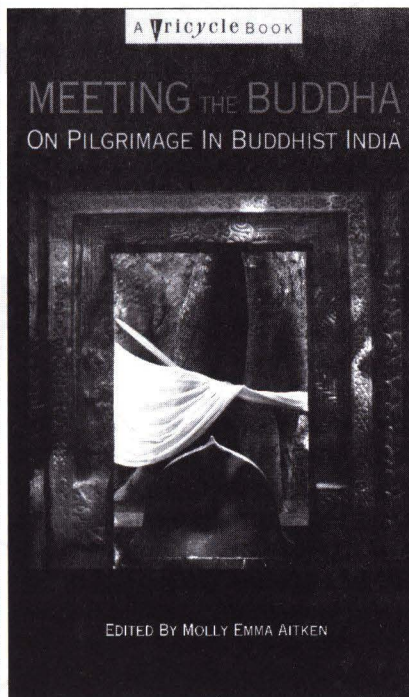
Bhikkhu Bodhi pays due respect to the groundwork that was done on this text by Bhikkhu Nanamoli in the 1950s. Nanamoli’s hundreds of pages of handwritten translations of the whole work were found among his papers in Sri Lanka after his death in 1960. We also owe a great debt to Bhikkhu Bodhi for his editorial vision, for completing and polishing the text, and rendering the Pali into serviceable English. I think this is the greatest gift of the book. Buddha is no longer a 2500-year-old Indian monk who wandered into the Victorian era. He has a voice that is plainspoken and at once kind and strong. You can read these suttas aloud—as my wife and I have been doing nightly—and get comfortable with the Buddha’s voice in a way that unlocks the teachings.

He has also included a long and readable introduction that cross-references basic Buddhist practices, beliefs, and doctrine with particular suttas. The *Nikaya* itself is indexed in several different ways, including short summaries of each sutta, making it a book we can use to research our own experience.

Turning Wheel readers might hope to find suttas that directly express or evoke socially engaged Buddhism. If so, we may be disappointed. Almost all of the teachings are given to monks and nuns, homeleavers, unlike most of us. But I encourage you to look deeper. The core of the Dhamma here is about training the mind, looking as deeply as we can at the true nature of interdependent reality. It is about offering up, with *upaya*, or skillful means, as much liberation as we are able to embody. The saving of beings, as expressed in all the schools of Buddhism, proceeds from this basis. We should not be intimidated by the suttas’ determined quest for liberation. Rather, we should make it our own, and make it fit our own societies.

Wisdom Publications has recently released a sister volume of Pali Suttas, *The Long Discourses*, or *Digha Nikaya*, translated by Maurice Walshe (published earlier as *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha*). This is, of course, another great fountain of wisdom. Some of us may recall ad pitches from our youth: Kids! You’ll want to own the whole set! ❖

—Alan Senauke



65TUW

Molly Emma Aitken’s *Meeting the Buddha: On Pilgrimage in Buddhist India* is a splendid and extensive sample of the journals of those who visited the geographical source of Buddhism. The book is by turns harrowing, comic, poignant, and transcendent, and owns a wonderful introduction by Andrew Schelling.”

—Jim Harrison,
author of *Legends of the Fall*

Meeting the Buddha is both a testimony to the power of pilgrimage and a call to make the journey oneself. Through pilgrimage accounts, religious literature, historical research, and stories of secular visits reaching from the time of the Buddha to our own day, this beautifully compiled collection takes you on a colorful journey to each of the eight Buddhist pilgrimage sites of India.

A Riverhead Trade Paperback 304 pp., B&W photographs. \$12.00

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COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Ken Saro-Wiwa, Nigerian writer and environmental activist, was hanged by his government in an act of judicial murder on November 10 for trying to reclaim his own Ogoni tribal home from the environmental ravages of the oil industry led by Shell and other Western corporations. (See the "Readings" section for more about Saro-Wiwa.) While human rights organizations campaigned vigorously for his release, and Western governments piously protested his execution, the oil companies doing business in Nigeria actually sat in the kangaroo courtroom and did not lift a hand in his defense. Western governments allowed no sanctions that would impede the flow of oil and money. Nor have I seen that his death has had any effect on the price of gas at the corner station. Lately I think of him each time I get in my car. The web of right action and the web of privilege are not two separate things.

Yitzhak Rabin had been an Israeli general, a military man who had arrived at the end of military logic. He found that violent means held no promise of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, so as Prime Minister he turned to negotiation, compromise, and reconciliation—the tools of a peacemaker. For that sea change he was loved by many and reviled by others. On November 4, a young Israeli law student, Yigal Amir, assassinated Rabin at a peace rally in Tel Aviv.

We mourn the loss of these two men, and many other lesser known women and men who risk everything for peace. In the dharma we see that each of us can be like them. But the dharma also includes our shadow, and we recognize within ourselves Nigerian judges and young assassins. Guided by the Buddha's deep moral precepts, we choose our life and the seeds we wish to plant. May we understand that our own lives directly touch life and death in Nigeria, Israel, Tibet, Burma, Mexico, Bosnia... May we plant wisely.

* * *

As the darkness of winter deepens, we take stock of the year just past and rededicate ourselves to peace and light. This has been a productive year for BPF. Fifteen hundred new members, the first BASE program, a summer institute on transforming violence, the funding of mobile medical teams on the Thai-Burma border, and more. In 1996 we hope to keep clarifying our way and extending our circle of compassion and action. A new BASE group has begun in Arcata, along California's northern coast, and a second Bay Area group is scheduled to start in February. Later in the year we plan to offer our first engaged Buddhist workshops in the Midwest and on the East Coast, and we hope to see versions of BASE taking shape in regions beyond California. Our membership is more truly

national than it has ever been, and I think that our efforts and program will increasingly reflect the fact that socially engaged Buddhism is taking root in many places. We are also pleased that funding support from the Kaiser Family Foundation will again allow us to underwrite medical clinics along the Burmese border, where life has gotten no easier despite the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. And, with some luck, we may be able to move the national office into slightly more spacious quarters. If you have seen our present office—four people, four desks, three computers, phones, fax, and stacks of paper in about three hundred square feet—you have some idea of why we might yearn for a little more room to breathe.

* * *

The BPF staff welcomes new board members Paula Green, Barbara Hirschowitz, Petra McWilliams, Greg Mello, and Donald Rothberg. Some of them are old friends; some are new. But we look forward to the kind of close work that always goes on between the BPF board and staff. And thanks to BPF members who helped make the nominations and cast ballots in this year's board selection process.

We also extend our deepest appreciation to our friends who are leaving the board: president Stephanie Kaza, treasurer Diane Solomon, and Ken Kraft. I could say many wonderful things about the work that each of them has offered to BPF, and the mark that each has left. They are now spared the constant phone calls and long meetings. But I know we can count on their friendship. We bow to them in gratitude.

* * *



Maya Elizabeth Howe Pace

Here at my column's end I'd like to mark a fortunate new beginning. Former BPF board president and National Coordinator Margaret Howe and her husband Gary Pace are the proud parents of Maya Elizabeth Howe Pace, born October 25, 9 pounds, 5 ounces. All of us at BPF wish Maya, Margaret, and Gary great happiness, health, and satisfaction in their work together for the sake of all beings.

— Alan Senauke

CHAPTER & ACTIVIST NEWS

A few highlights of the fall work of the **East Bay Chapter**: Chapter member Charlie Hinton reported on his recent trip to Guatemala which included a visit to Panamiquip, the sister community of the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC). His slides and talk expressed the hardship as well as the efforts these people are making toward alleviating their poverty and suffering. Members of the Chapter had an opportunity to give direct aid to these communities by helping Sandy Hunter organize and staff a three-day Holiday Gift Bazaar, to sell beautiful handcrafts made by skilled craftspeople of Guatemala and Haiti. The proceeds of the sale will be distributed to them by EBSC.

Another outstanding event was a first-hand account of the Women's Conference in China. Fran Peavey and Tova Green brought us a compassionate story of the urgency of the situation of women the World over. They also expressed appreciation for the huge task which the Chinese undertook to house such a large number in the city of Huairou. In spite of much confusion, Fran and Tova felt it was carried off well. It seems wise to credit the Chinese, rather than blame them, as the press was so inclined to do, when they are behaving in a civilized way. —*Margo Tyndall*

Members of Washington's **Seattle Chapter** have completed introductory training in nonviolent conflict resolution with a local group, Peace Between People. They will be moving on to advanced training, and then to the training of others. The chapter is also working with the Nonviolent Action Community of Cascadia on projects focusing on Youth and the Military, and Deep Listening. Chapter member Vana Yakich is traveling back to Zagreb and India for seven weeks to continue her work on Zones for Peace. Another member of this very active chapter has founded the Intercultural Buddhist Council (IBC) to promote interaction and communication among Western and ethnic Buddhists. The chapter hosts a visit from the IBC once a month.

Hawaii's Oahu Chapter held the first of a series of talks by Aitken Roshi on Buddhadasa, in October 1995. The chapter is focusing its efforts on the anti-nuclear movement (having recently taken part in a demonstration of 2,000) and is participating in a substance abuse program at a local community youth center.

BPF coordinator Alan Senauke met with the **Dharma Council of the Midwest** in October, stopping in Chicago at the Council's invitation to talk about the work of BPF and possible collaboration with the Council and its member communities. After chant-

ing led by the monks of Wat Dhammaram, a short meditation, and Council business, Alan talked about BPF, the BASE program, and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. The ensuing discussion touched on concerns among the Council members about the problems of Asian youth who are pulled between "American" culture and the traditions of their native lands. (See *Thai Youth News*, page 38.) These concerns are shared by Asian Buddhist communities in the Bay Area.

Special thanks to BPF Board member and Council member Jack Lawlor for making this meeting possible, and to Ven. Phangcham for graciously hosting dinner and the meeting at Wat Dhammaram.

The Sydney chapter of **BPF Australia** has been intensely involved in the anti-nuclear movement. They have organized or participated in rallies, candlelight vigils and various other activities to protest the resumption of French nuclear testing in the Pacific and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At a recent meeting, the chapter viewed a videotape of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's opening address to the International Conference on Women in Beijing; and a Burmese-Australian student, Tinzar Lwyn, spoke to the group about the current situation in Burma.

BPF's affiliate in Ladakh, the **Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre**, is sponsoring a Nunnery Project, and the groundbreaking ceremony took place last August. Although there are about 400 nuns in Ladakh, there is no nunnery providing a place for their religious education, training and practice. The Mahabodhi Nunnery Project hopes to start five Ladakhi girls in nuns' training next year. The seven-year program will consist of a comprehensive religious education, including courses in Buddhist history, philosophy, meditation and comparative religious study as well as the study of the Tibetan, Pali and English languages.

"Once ordained, these nuns will work for the amelioration of the condition of the nuns and women in the villages in Ladakh. This will in due course enable these nuns to play a significant role in promoting the welfare of the community and the dissemination of the deeper knowledge and understanding of the Buddha Dharma."

—*Aney Palmo* (See inside back cover for address.)

BPF's **Bangladesh** affiliate is organizing their first Buddhist women's training in nonviolence at Cox's Bazaar this month. In March they hope to send a delegation of five men and women to Cambodia for INEB's Ordained Sangha Meeting.

[See the Announcements & Classifieds section for information on upcoming events.]

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

Announcements

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

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

THE BUDDHIST AIDS PROJECT (BAP) is a small, grass-roots group providing free information and referral to Buddhist resources, events and AIDS services to anyone living with HIV, their families, friends, and caregivers, and all others who want our assistance. The Project is putting together an anthology of articles—*On Meditation and AIDS, Buddhist Practice and Living with HIV*—to be published by Parallax Press in late 1996 or early 1997. We welcome pertinent articles from people living with and responding to AIDS/HIV, now or since the beginning of the epidemic, including all care-givers and people who are HIV negative. BAP, 555 John Muir Dr. #803, San Francisco, CA 94132; 415/522-7473.

NEEDS OF HOMELESS WOMEN and children—Help people in need by donating personal care items: toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and hand lotion; and cereal or soup bowls, to the Women's Daytime Drop-in Center in Berkeley. To make a donation or for information, please call 510/548-2884, or 510/524-2468 to arrange to have donations picked up.

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

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

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

SPIRIT IN EDUCATION MOVEMENT

is a new education group and alternative study program founded by Sulak Sivaraksa and others in 1995 and based in Thailand.

SEM will offer courses in alternative and sustainable development, conflict resolution, and deep ecology, among other things. Courses will be small in size, will be given in rural settings, and will include a creative and spiritual dimension.

For further information, please contact Sulak Sivaraksa or Jane Rasbash, Spirit in Education Movement, 113/115 Fuengnakorn Rd., opp. Wat Rajbopit, Bangkok 12022. Tel: 662-223-4915, fax: 662-225-9540.

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

CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED to feed Sunday dinner to homeless women. Please send to Padmasambhava Buddhist Center, 151 Lexington Ave., Apt. 8A, New York, NY 10016. For further info contact Marie Friquegnon at 201/595-2173.

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

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

BPF and its affiliate, **INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY AND AGING** (ISA), will be co-sponsoring a Day of Mindfulness on March 10, 1995 at the Berkeley Zen Center. The purpose will be to focus on our own aging and on how we care for older parents. The program will include a dharma talk by Maylie Scott, and will begin at 8:45 AM. A donation of \$15 is requested. For info call ISA 510/649-2566.

IS NOTHING SACRED? Retreat for Women Survivors of Sexual Abuse by Buddhist Teachers, January 19-21, 1996, with Marie Fortune, Jan Chosen Bays, and Yvonne Rand. To be held at Larch Mountain Center, PO Box 310, Corbett, OR 97019. Cost: \$225. Registration limited. For more information contact: Jan Bays 503/695-2103, or Yvonne Rand 415/388-5572.

Classifieds

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

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

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

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Gratitudes

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P.O. Box 4650
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Tel. 510/525-8596
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Jim Austin
43 Richfield Road
Arlington, MA 02174
617/643-2343

EAST BAY
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(MELBOURNE)**
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9 Waterloo Crescent
St. Kilda 3182, Victoria
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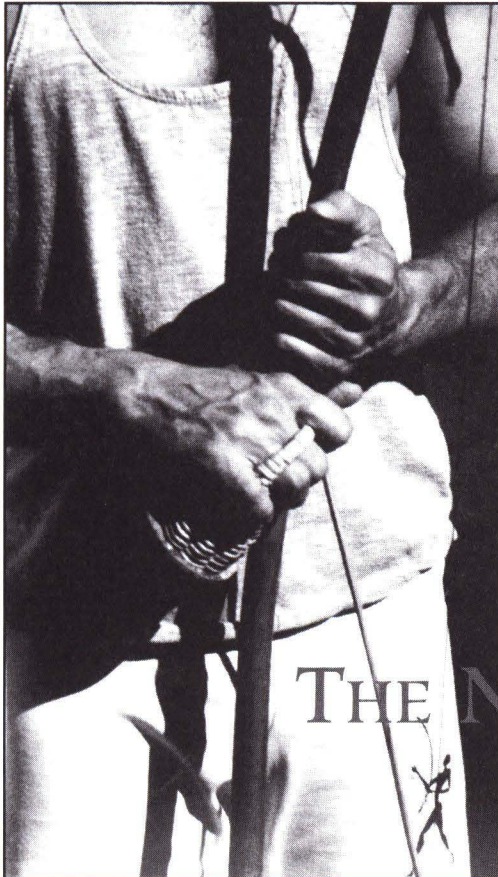
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