



PIMC NEWS

PORTLAND INSIGHT MEDITATION COMMUNITY

www.portlandinsight.org

OCTOBER 2002

Tides

By Robert Beatty

I am sitting cross-legged on the highest point of a tiny island in Desolation Sound between the mainland of BC and Vancouver Island. Others have sat in this deep green moss. Humans have lived here for more than ten thousand years. It's the third day of scudding gray clouds caught in the pines of nearby mountains. The wind speaking through the trees above me drops showers of pine needles and other detritus of a summer's growth like dry rain. The air is cool and periodically a squall passes through with windy gusts of up to thirty miles an hour and steeply slanting rain that requires a retreat to the tent. A few weather beaten shore pines and an Arbutus tree the color of monk's robes stand between the surfacing oyster beds, the turbulent gunmetal waters of the inlet, and me. Mysterious patterns of calm dark water snake their way across the more turbulent surface.

Not long ago several thousand people of the Salish tribes lived in forest villages in the surrounding nearby coves. They

came to this island to harvest the countless clams and other sea life. Generations came and went as the rhythms of nature, tribe and family life unfolded. Babies grew into elders sitting around campfires as later generations of children played and learned to gather berries and roots, hunt for game, and harvest the fish and mollusks. For the natives this time of year was filled with smoking of fish and preparations for the long and wet winter in the longhouses. Not long ago Europeans with guns and disease came and claimed most of the land for themselves. I sit here today, a Caucasian of French and Irish descent imagining the lives of those who sat here before. Their bodies, villages and ceremonies are long gone, along with most traces of their having lived. What remains are their middens filled with the shells of their feasting, arrowheads of their hunting and patches of rich soil where they piled organic debris.

Each year I return to this familiar mossy rock. It has perfect indentations for my feet and a vast view of ocean, cliffs, forest carpets of trees and snow laced mountains. Sitting here allows my mind to settle, clear and to come into balance with the rhythms of the natural world. The habitual nagging, and mostly unconscious, tension which signals something "important and urgent" to do dissipates. Days pass and the intensity of the wandering mind diminishes. I experience moments of just sitting, just breathing, just present to the great mystery around and inside me.

In the novel The Lady of Lotus, the author imagines the life of Siddhartha and his wife Yasodhara. Before he became the Buddha, Siddhartha went with Yashodhara for a picnic in the countryside. As they climbed upon the tumbling remains of an old castle he found himself ruminating: "Those who lived here were no different from me. Everything they became and created has crumbled to dust. Surely it will be the same for Yashodhara and myself and our city of Kapilavastu." This reflection on the impermanence of everything ultimately led to his abdication and his seven-year quest for liberation.

My human lifetime too has been one of countless comings and goings. It's more than a decade since my parents died. I've had friends depart through accident, illness, career moves, and divorce. The person I see in the mirror has gray hair and a face lined like my father's when he looked "old." The

Continued on page 2



From the Board

By Judy Smith

The PIMC Board of Directors held regular meetings in July and August. Below is a synopsis of the agenda items. We are excited about the direction the Sangha is moving and find participation in the Board to be a gratifying and humbling experience.

In-Town Retreats

We decided that our current location, Friends of the Dhamma, is too small for the retreats led by Robert and a new location is being sought. Doug's retreats will continue to be held at Friends of the Dhamma. We explored ideas of increasing attendance and assisting people to better understand the value of practice for a larger piece of time than what is experienced on Sunday evening. We will continue to brainstorm about this topic.

Decision making skills and conflict resolution

Toby Fitch, our volunteer consultant, is a professional in helping groups work effectively together to

develop cohesiveness, and develop and reach long term goals. He has been attending all of the Steering Committee meetings for the last two years and will be continuing to offer his expertise to the Board from time to time when needed. He is an invaluable resource and we are grateful to have him in our midst. In this meeting he led us in a lively and informative discussion that gave us some guidelines for making decisions on issues that will come up in the future. Toby also suggested that the Board make time on a quarterly basis for long term planning – to set goals and ways of achieving them, and develop priorities.



Adopting a budget

The dominant issue of the August meeting was the discussion and approval of the PIMC budget, which was brought forth by Dick Teutsch, our treasurer. We approved the budget giving Robert a \$30,000 a year salary which will allow him to focus more intensely on his role as spiritual counselor and teacher to our Sangha and cut back on his private counseling practice. At this time a job description was presented to the Board of Robert's role as PIMC's spiritual leader. More details on this can be found in the August newsletter. The newly adopted budget will be available at the Sangha Community meeting on Sunday, October 6th. Along with this we briefly discussed ways of increasing Dana to support the budget. We decided to have a more in depth discussion regarding Dana at the next meeting and bring our ideas to the larger community at the meeting on October 6th.

Counsel Member of Northwest Dharma Association (NWDA)

We had a speaker phone conference with Steve Wilhelm of NWDA inviting PIMC to join the association as a council member. The

Tides *continued from page 1*

unsettling evidence of utter impermanence manifests in every experience I have.

Last year my beloved miniature husky Kali was here with me. She and puppy Maya romped and wrestled and I worried that they might fall over the rocky ledge. Today only Maya lies curled up in the moss next to me while I meditate. Kali was killed by a car and has joined the Salish.

The ocean breathes in it's own daily rhythm of huge tides, with fourteen feet between high and low. The island grows by about 50% at low tide as the intertidal shelves that teem with life surface like giant barnacle-covered ocean monsters. As I sit in meditation the oyster beds below emerge or vanish as the tide moves. The incoming tide surges quickly like a flood swamping more ground by the second. There is a hissing I imagine being the breathing out of all the shellfish that have been holding their collective breaths since the water left hours ago.

A seal's black head slides above the ocean surface about sixty feet offshore and makes noises sounding like a cross between a baby's cry and a snort. Is this the same seal that called out to us last year? Where is the pup that was with her? Does she miss the pups that have come and gone? In the underwater world as well there are creatures living and

dying, hunting and being hunted.

After billions of years of journeying through the evolution of species I find myself as a self-conscious human, a separate individual sitting here on a particular island, on "my" rock, clinging to the experience of myself as separate from the dance of nature. As I meditate, mindfulness slowly calms the thoughts and attachments that create this sense of separation. Ease arises as the mind resonates and harmonizes with the ebb and flow of the natural world. I melt into the infinite dance of coming and going, of rising and falling; I am an inseparable part of this thin layer of life existing between the rocks of planetary crust and the cold vastness of space. Everything is just as it is, requiring no action or interpretation. Then my awareness shifts and I feel body sensations; eyes full of ocean and mountains, ears hearing wind and waves all intrinsic to the flow of life. In this moment I am once again a separate self, an individual observer of life. The "great tide" waxes and wanes as my separate self comes into being and then dissolves into the vast ocean.



Robert Beatty is the guiding teacher of the Portland Insight Meditation Community.
rbeatty@easystreet.com

NWDA, through the Northwest Dharma News, various events, and its Web site, provides the Northwest Buddhist community with information about classes, meditation, and events throughout Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. It will allow PIMC to have representation in the association and participate in its direction as well as give us a sense of belonging to the larger community. We voted unanimously to join NWDA Council.

We invite any Sangha member to attend our meetings. The next meeting is Monday, October 21st from 6:30 to 8:30pm. Please contact me for more details if you want to attend. We encourage ideas and feedback from all of you. Also, if you have an idea or project in which you'd like to see PIMC involved, please contact me.



*Judy Smith, PIMC Board Facilitator
can be contacted at 503-274-0673,
thirdage@europa.com.*

Annual Raft Float was held in August

By Ted Viramonte

One of the first (and certainly the longest running) activities to build sangha community--the annual whitewater raft float--occurred in its usual calendar slot: the first weekend in August.

Hosted by Ted and Val Viramonte, the annual float saw 13 Willamette Valley residents travel to Madras, camp out, meditate, eat, drink and be merry. Oh yeah, they also floated the Deschutes River from Harpham Flats to Sandy Beach.

Lyn Dorian provided John Black with his birthday cake--candles strategically placed, Phil Harris provided much levity, Ted provided a dharma talk about how the sangha is our heritage, the children provided a con-

stant source of amusement, and everyone provided much entertainment during a spontaneous talent show Saturday evening.

The warm weather was appreciated and warm hearts were in abundant supply.

If this sounds to you like the blast that it was, mark your 2003 calendars for the first weekend in August. 2003 will be the 10th year of the raft float!



Ted and Val Viramonte live in Madras. They stay connected to the sangha through the PIMC list serve where Ted provides the Thought Of The Day.



Ted and Val

Photos Courtesy of Ted Viramonte



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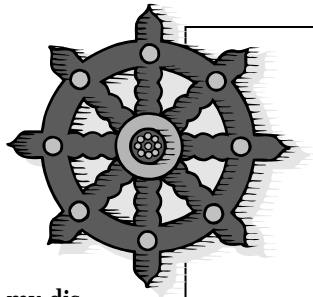
Good Time



was
had by all

Treasurer's Report

By Dick Teutsch



Benefits of Tax Deductible Status of PIMC Donations

This month I will continue my discussion of our sangha's finances that I began in the previous two newsletters.

Last month, I reported that the board adopted a budget for the remaining months of 2002. The budget reflects our best estimate of money coming into the sangha, comprised primarily of dana and what Robert receives when he periodically leads reading groups and the newly formulated Beginner's Group. And of course the budget includes the monthly expenses we anticipate paying.

These current projections suggest that we will be operating at a deficit of about \$1,500 per month. We are hopeful that sangha members will find it possible to offer additional dana in an amount sufficient to offset our shortfall.

Please remember that since the Internal Revenue Service has officially granted us 501(c)(3) status, you are entitled to an income tax deduction for any amount you contribute to PIMC. Following is an example of the benefit of that income tax deduction. The example assumes that you itemize deductions and are in the combined state and federal income tax bracket of 25%.

To summarize the example, if over some period of time a person has been able to give \$100 in dana, now with tax deductibility, the person could give PIMC \$133. The tax savings would be \$33 so the donor would incur the same final cost of \$100 as before. In a way, this puts the state and federal governments in a role as financial partners in our efforts to support the work of the sangha. The member spends the same amount after tax as before (\$100), but the sangha receives \$133.

As always, I welcome any questions or comments about the ideas in this column or about sangha finances in general.

Richard Teutsch, Treasurer of the PIMC Board of Directors, can be reached at (w) 503-224-4089 (h) 503-335-8333 teutsch@arcadiafg.com

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If over some period of time in the past a person has donated \$100:

Cost of past donation of \$100 with no tax deductibility \$100

Cost now with tax deductibility:

Donation \$100

Tax savings at 25% - \$25

Net cost of donation after tax \$75

With tax deductibility a donor could now contribute \$133

Tax savings at 25% - \$33

Net cost of donation after tax \$100

pilgrimage in
buddhist
thailand

JANUARY 2003
Teachers, Temples,
Practice Centers

Robert Beatty
Nancy Turner

www.RobertBeatty.com 503.241.4519

October 2002 - PIMC Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 5:30pm First Meeting: Beginners Meditation Group (see page 9 for details) *7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	2 9am-12pm Meditation & Meditation Interviews – PDC	3 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	4	5
6 * Children's Sangha Begins! 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC * 5:30pm Newcomer Orientation & Instruction - PDC * 6:30-7:15pm Meditation * 7:15pm Community Meeting – PDC	7	8 *7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	9	10 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	11	12
13 * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction – Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk –PDC	14	15 *7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	16 9am-12pm Meditation & Meditation Interviews – PDC	17 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	18	19
20 * Children's Sangha 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk – PDC	21 6:30 pm Board Meeting	22 *7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	23 5 pm Preliminary Newsletter Deadline	24 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	25 5 pm Final Newsletter Deadline	26
27 * 9-5 Day Retreat with Doug Pullin At Friends of the Dhamma * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk – PDC	28	29	30	31		

* PDC = Sunday Evening and Wednesday Morning Events - Portland Dharma Center, 2514 SE Madison, Portland

* Tuesday Evening - Dalton Home: 11965 SW Foothill Drive, Beaverton

* Thursday Evening - 2311 E. Burnside on the 3rd floor, Portland

* Sunday Day Retreat - Friends of the Dhamma Resource Center, 1701 NW Thurman St. (2nd Floor), Portland

Half Day A great opportunity to come together for three hours of uninterrupted sitting and walking.

Retreats Continue: Wednesdays: October 2 and 16. From 9am - noon at PDC.

One Day Retreat In October With Doug Pullin

Sunday, October 27th, 9-5. Held in Portland
at Friends of the Dhamma Resource Center.

Pre-register with Theresa Friedline at (503)
289-7570 or tessie769@yahoo.com.

Residential Retreats With Robert Beatty

October 14-20th
Hollyhock Retreat Center
Cortes Island, BC
www.hollyhock.bc.ca
800-933-6339

December 6-12th
Cloud Mountain Retreat Center
Castle Rock, WA
www.cloudmountain.org
888-465-9118

Further registration information at www.portlandinsight.org

A Westerner Buys Thai Assurance

By Nancy Turner

Last January Robert and I traveled to Thailand. Among a trillion exotic sights, I particularly remember exploring the Chiang Mai Night Market, the mother of all markets, located a block from our River View Hotel. Hundreds of small stalls stood crammed together in an indoor market area and spilled out into the street, allowing only a narrow passage for foot traffic. Akha hill tribe ladies peddle their wares while tourists shuffle and gaze at the chaos of brightly colored fabrics, beautifully hand crafted items from all over Thailand, and junky counterfeit designer goods.

On Thanon Chang Khlan Street, next to a stall displaying silver jewelry and opium pipes, I encountered what I was seeking - Buddha amulets. I'd read that each one functions for a specific event and is carefully crafted to protect a person from such things as snakebite, plane crash, car wreck, unfaithful lover, or jackfruit crop failure.

As a westerner, my mind has been trained to evaluate the meaning of an idea and to test the truth of a concept by looking for practical results. I'm judgmental of speculation. The idea that an amulet can influence daily events appears irrational and not substantiated by known laws of science.

I inhaled a whiff of sweet incense and studied the amulets created from bronze, silver, clay, plaster or gold; some had been mass-produced; others crafted by monks and given special blessings. I found the vast array of objects artistically impressive and irresistible.

Like many Americans, I purchase health insurance, car insurance, and house insurance. Most Thais are not so fortunate. It's an expense few can afford. Instead, a Thai confidently wears a sacred talisman hanging from his or her neck, as a source of assurance that no accident will happen.

The salesman put down his ceramic bowl of rice and fish and reached for his solar powered calculator. Without bothering to bargain, I bought a chain necklace and a half-inch "gold" Buddha encased in glass, for four hundred baht, or roughly nine dollars.

"What does this Buddha protect me from?" I asked the salesman.

He beamed a broad smile, "for good luck".

I folded the little plastic sack containing my necklace into my canvas bag and pointed to a clunky clay figure and asked again. "What does this protect from?"

"For good luck," he said, nodding his head up and down.

I wondered if he tells all farongs (westerners) the same thing. Maybe he assumes I think using amulets is superstitious. We so easily misunderstand one another.

"Isn't this one for something else?" I asked, pointing to a bronze figure with a message in Thai inscribed around the edges.

"All same; all same," he nods again.

Because of our language barrier, I could only imagine what he must be thinking. Every day he sees tourists who are voraciously attached to the material world, and maybe a

few who scoffed when he tried to explain his beliefs. In spite of our miscommunications, I persisted. "No problems for me from now on? How can you be sure?"

He waved one hand with its palm skyward, in a sweeping gesture across his display of amulets. "Yes, yes, that right. No problem." He grinned; his eyes squint like short dashes across his leathery face.

I began thinking about events and synchronicities I could not explain; mysterious forces beyond my comprehension; I remembered times when I had been amazed at what emanates from an intangible reality, and I remembered that I live with many unknowns. I wondered if I should buy something to prevent plane crashes. My impulse was to ask more, but he looked down and returned to his bowl of rice and fish, muttering, "you safe now, you safe now". It looked to me that he had decided it was not worth the trouble trying to explain the intricacies of some grand mystery. He likely believed I would not be able to comprehend what he knows.

I wear my tiny Buddha most of the time now. I wonder about my reason for choosing to do so. Maybe I like it because it's pretty to look at. Visual images and artistic creations have mysterious and often unconscious influences on our psyches. As I move through the day, the tiny glass case taps lightly on my chest; activating a hypnotic cue; triggering a positive thought; hinting, "be here now". I am reminded of my talisman's sacred significance and the intention of the person who created my magic amulet. In that moment, I feel safe.

My sense of freedom from danger is an illusion, of course. Accidents happen; Mistakes are made; Dukkha is a part of life. Not long ago a candle was left unattended in our house and flames destroyed a child's international doll collection. A smoldering boom box emitted a sticky plastic smoke that rose through heat ducts, permeating the house. The fire was quickly extinguished and firemen, dressed in boots, heavy coats and face visors, set up a gigantic fan that displaced smoke with fresh night air. The cleaning and repairs during the following weeks were paid for by our homeowners insurance.

I like to think of my tiny Thai Buddha as a figure that assures my well being, inspires confidence, and provides a positive counterweight to the daily news. I still send my check to my insurance company; And on my next trip to Thailand, I will buy an amulet against fire.



Nancy Turner is a sangha member and frequent contributor to the newsletter. She and Robert Beatty will be co-leading the January 2003 Pilgrimage in Buddhist Thailand.



The Brahma-viharas

Four members of Robert Beatty's Dharma Leaders Training Program recently held a series of Dharma talks for PIMC. For four Sundays beginning August 25th, Jim Dalton, Doug Pullin, Judy Smith, and Genevieve Arnaut spoke on the four brahma-viharas; metta (lovingkindness), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic joy) and upekkha (equanimity).

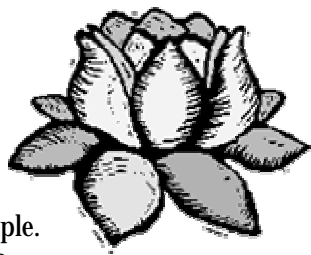
These were skillful talks and were well attended. We look forward to hearing from these emerging dharma leaders again. Here are some excerpts from their talks:

Reflections on Loving Kindness

Jim Dalton

How to introduce the Brahma-viharas? At first, talking about the "Abodes of the Gods" seemed a daunting challenge, but in the end it was pretty simple.

There are four chambers to Brahma's house, and the states of mind that reside in those four chambers are very familiar to the members of the sangha who join with me each Sunday to sit: Loving Kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity. Who could resist a tour through these blissful abodes?



Benefits of Metta (Lovingkindness) Practice

"Monks, when universal love leading to liberation of mind is ardently practiced, developed, unrelentingly resorted to, used as one's vehicle, made the foundation of one's life, fully established, well consolidated and perfected, then these eleven blessings may be expected.

What eleven?

- One sleeps happily;
- one wakes happily;
- one does not suffer bad dreams;
- one is dear to human beings;
- one is dear to non-human beings (Devas);
- the gods (Devas) protect one;
- no fire or poison or weapon harms one;
- one's mind gets quickly concentrated;
- the expression of one's face is serene;
- one dies unperturbed;
- and even if one fails to attain higher states,
- one will at least reach the state of the Brahma world.

Monks, when universal love leading to liberation of mind is ardently practiced, developed, unrelentingly resorted to, used as one's vehicle, made the foundation of one's life, fully established, well consolidated and perfected, then these eleven blessings may be expected."

--Anguttara Nikaya, 11:16

Suffering: The Gateway to Compassion

Doug Pullin

What is compassion?

It is the expression of, or an aspect of our true nature.

It is a strong feeling in the heart to help others be free of suffering.

It is the spontaneous quivering of the open heart in response to suffering.

It is heart in action.

It is a wholesome movement of the mind and body that seeks to alleviate the pain and suffering of beings.

The word compassion is composed of com (together with) and passion (to suffer).

Compassion, the wish to see all beings free from sorrow, pain and harm.

Minds, hearts, actions - all are involved in the practice of true compassion.

Sympathetic Joy

Judy Smith

The Brahma-viharas are the four sublime states of being and can be cultivated in our hearts to bring freedom from suffering. It's a way of manifesting the divine in our daily lives. These qualities already exist within us. Practicing them will enable them to flower and predominate over our fear, hatred, delusion and ill-will.

Sympathetic Joy (Mudita) is

Our ability to be joyful with the beauty and loveliness of life's experiences.

Truth, beauty, goodness delight us - in them we find joy, that is Mudita.

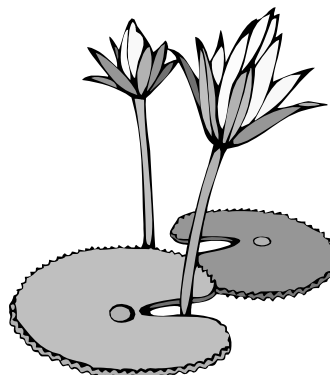
We can rejoice in the goodness of others.

Feel genuine happiness for the good fortune of a friend.

When we are caught in the "self view" envy and jealousy can arise. This can bring about a sense of separation and we can get trapped into the comparing "game" which leads to more suffering and isolation.

Mudita is the antidote for envy and jealousy.

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Equanimity

Genevieve Arnaut



The Brahma viharas culminate with equanimity. It is taught as the “final meditation among the brahma-viharas because it provides the balance for loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy. These others open one’s heart in a wish for well-being ... Equanimity balances those heartfelt wishes with the recognition that things are the way they are. However much we may wish for something, most results are beyond our control.” (Salzberg, p. 146)

What is equanimity (upekkha)? Upekkha translates as balance, or “there in the middle.” Sharon Salzberg defines it as “arresting the mind before it falls into extremes,” and “learning deeply what it means to let go.” Ayya Khema says that it is “understanding that things are as they are...a constant flow & nothing more. We need only to be aware of this perpetual movement, to watch it, know it, but not to put ourselves in the middle of it by wanting that which is pleasant or getting rid of that which is unpleasant.” Mary Jo Meadow states that equanimity “asks us to remain unmoved by the outcomes, or lack of outcomes, of our former brahma-vihara practice... It helps us understand that whatever we might wish for another being, we cannot control their outcomes.”



It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual.

The next Buddha may take the form of a community – a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth.

-Thich Nhat Hanh

Quote provided by Ellen Morrison

Dear Dharma Brothers and Sisters,

You are all invited to a PIMC Community Meeting on Sunday, October 6th at 7:15pm. This will be after our first 45 minute meditation.

Over the last few years we have held these meeting from time to time to give us all a chance to share and dialogue about where we have been and where we are going as a community.

When I began regular attendance six years ago there was one volunteer opening up on Sunday evening and that was it. Today we have increased practice time during the week, non-residential week-end retreats, numerous committees which includes 10 to 12 people volunteering for opening and closing, a thriving outreach group, a newsletter, and seed money to begin thinking about having space of our own that is accessible to us anytime of the week.

One of the topics of the community meeting will be ways to increase dana to cover the budget that was adopted by the board recently. This is an opportunity to hear more about board decisions and have some input into what happens next. Newcomers are very welcome. It's a great opportunity to learn more about the inside workings of the Sangha. See you there!

In Metta,
Judy Smith for the Board

