



PIMC NEWS

PORTLAND INSIGHT MEDITATION COMMUNITY

www.portlandinsight.org

NOVEMBER 2002

Anicca: Impermanence, Uncertainty, Change, Transience.

By Robert Beatty

*Thus should you look upon this changing world.
All component things are impermanent.
All component things are subject to dissolution.
See all of this world
As a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,
A flash of lightening in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom and a dream*

The Buddha

Loudspeaker trucks went through the village of Sayulita last evening telling the Mexican villagers living near sea level to evacuate. Busloads of people carrying a few precious belongings left from the town square. Perhaps we should have fled as well, had we understood the danger. We arrived for our first night in Sayulita too late in the evening to hear the full report. Nancy and I were told a hurricane was headed toward the coast, but no one knew if or where it would hit shore. We joined a handful of people making last minute trips to the store to buy tortillas, eggs, candles, coffee, canned tuna and vegetables.



In a little market where we shopped, the stony, tight-lipped, thirty-five year old woman behind the counter told us we owed 225 pesos. In Spanish Nancy asked what she knew of the storm. "I am not sure, but it is going to be very bad", she said.

"I guess we will know tomorrow".

With an ashen face the woman replied, "If we are alive".

We are taking refuge in a bungalow on a steep hillside above the ocean. We came to Mexico so I could perform a wedding on the beach tomorrow. It is ten a.m. and the morning light has vanished. The air which has been humid and lifeless for twelve hours is suddenly ferocious and wild. Blasts of wind thrash palm trees and the air fills with branches and debris from the ground. The brass deadbolts on the French doors have shallow insertion points that render them more decorative than functional. We consider the worst. If the squall slams through our windows we'll be driven to huddle against the interior rock wall of the bungalow. The shower stall, surrounded entirely by thick stone walls emerges in our minds as a possible sanctuary from flying glass. Perhaps we should already be there. Water alternately sucks under the doors or is drawn out by changes in air pressure. The thud of a door somewhere is followed by the smashing of glass on the tile terrace above our bungalow. The thrashing ocean, about 100 feet below us appears out of the sheets of driven rain and fog. Huge waves roll in from the Southwest, chopped from the North by competing wave trains. As they break, the wind tears off their tops, dragging long streamers of white spray back out to sea. A beleaguered black bird with a yellow beak and bright yellow eyes clings to the railing outside in the lee of our building. Crouching with each gust, it can just barely hold on. During a lull it drops and dives into the bushes below the terrace.

After several hours the rain and winds cease. We emerge to pick our way through plant debris and garbage flung everywhere. We find a world of shredded trees, fallen walls and wreckage. Palm trees are missing their south facing branches. A nearby house has lost half of its palapa roof. Two doors away, at the top of the ridge, a giant Huanacaxtle tree with white branches three feet in diameter, has crashed onto a stucco and tile-roofed dwelling. The tree's shallow

Continued on page 6

From The Board

By Judy Smith

Here are highlights from the September board meeting which was filled with plans for our PIMC Community Meeting which took place on Sunday, October 6th.

Finances

Several questions about our financial plans and our recently adopted budget for 2002 were asked by Karen H by email before the board meeting. We spent a good deal of time discussing her points and ideas. (Sangha questions and input to the board process is encouraged.) Some of her questions included public availability of PIMC finances and budget, cash control procedures, and community input to the budget process.

Fund Raising

It was suggested that we form a fund raising committee. The committee would generate ideas for fund raising beyond our annual rummage sale. The committee would be both initiator and catalyst for fund raising action, drawing upon the energy and talents of many Sangha members. Robert will approach some Sangha members to head up this committee.

Community Chant Book

Robert would like to see our Sangha put together our own chant book that could be used for Sunday night, retreats and other gatherings. Perhaps someone would be interested in donating the money for such an endeavor. We need, first, to do some research on cost.

Short and Long Term Planning

At one of the previous meetings Tobey Fitch, our volunteer board consultant, suggested we find time periodically for long-term planning. Some board members feel we really need short-term planning first. For instance, our

by-laws need developing. One idea was to devote one meeting a year to long-term plans – perhaps a daylong retreat for visioning. It was decided that we would ask Tobey for help on this.

The October board meeting was held on October 21st and will be reported on in the December newsletter.

Next Board meeting: Monday, November 11th. Contact me if you would like to attend and observe. Anyone who is interested is welcome.



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

Children's Sangha

By Robin Helm

This month, I asked some of our children to talk about what Children's Sangha is like for them.

Megan Rosenberg, age 11
Sangha's fun. The first time we came upstairs for closing circle, the grown ups began to chant and we all cracked up and had to run downstairs. We were so embarrassed. Now we are used to the chants and know what they mean. I like doing the projects. At meditation time, sometimes I go to sleep, we all do that. I would like Peggy to come and visit again.

Margie Helm, age 9
Well, in October we get to know the new people. Then we get to decorate pumpkins and wear costumes. Then we got to know people and start saying their names correctly. In December you get to give out presents to a family because they are poor. The rest of the year you study about Buddha and the Dharma and we read books and have meditation. We go upstairs and sing a song with the grown ups and hear

announcements. On the last day you throw a big party and have cake and write a thank you for your teachers who did the whole year.

Emily Helm, age 13

Kids Sangha is fun because you get to meet new people and make friends. The activities are like, playing games, carving pumpkins, making Dharma books, and we do lots of origami. We chant and we meditate, which clears your mind from thinking stuff from the past. We sing fun songs.

Special note to Max: We would like you to come back to sangha as soon as possible! We need you! We miss you! Hurry! From Kathryn and Emily.

In November, the children will begin their winter service project. Stay tuned to find out how you can help!

The Children's Sangha bows to :
Dan Batten, for the CD player and Lyn Doiron, for the Buddha for our altar.

Children's Sangha meets on the first and third Sunday of each month, during regular Sangha times, 6:30-8:45 pm, downstairs. The program is for children age 3 years and up. We are always looking for new friends



You may contact Robin Helm Co-Director, Children's Sangha at (360) 574-7516. randrhelm@earthlink.net

130 Subscribers!

Thank you for donating to this newsletter. You've made this newsletter self supporting. Your donation covers printing and mailing costs for subscribers and printing costs for newsletters for PIMC visitors.

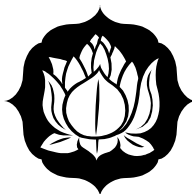
If you picked up this newsletter at Sangha, an orange sheet was included with information on subscribing. A \$25 donation is suggested, but not required, for a one year newsletter subscription.

This newsletter is published bi-monthly in the summer and monthly throughout the rest of the year.



Treasurer's Report

By Dick Teutsch



Thanks to all of you who attended the community meeting on October 6th. Your patience in dealing with the financial nitty gritty of the sangha is much appreciated. And your input is most helpful. The Board is in the process of reviewing what was discussed and implementing many of the ideas as we go forward.

For those who were not able to attend, one of the main points of discussion was our monthly shortfall in meeting our expenses. I gave a detailed presentation of the budget and our financial position. After that, many community members had questions and comments. This lively, positive discussion took a large block of time. However, it is important to lay the financial foundation for our community, and be clear about the funds needed. The goal for future community meetings is to spend less time on finances and to spend more time discussing community matters.

In this community financial discussion, we agreed that ultimately our budget balance when dana from our Sangha members increases by about \$1,500 per month. One way to bring this into focus is that if 75 to 100 of us would increase our contribution by \$15 to \$20 per month, our deficit would disappear.

It's important to note that we are able to pay all the expenses of the Sangha except for the amount budgeted for teacher compensation. Robert has increased his commitment to PIMC and the budgeted teacher compensation matches that increased level of commitment. The details of Robert's commitment are reflected in his job description, which was approved by the board. That job description was published in the September newsletter and was also in the information packet at the meeting.

The benefits as well as the expenses of the Sangha are ongoing. We

discussed the importance of considering our financial contribution as ongoing. If we are not able to attend each Sunday night, it is still important for us to offer our ongoing financial support. Making a regular and consistent monthly dana contribution is very helpful in this regard. Pledge cards were included in the information packet as a reminder to consider a monthly dana contribution.

On thing I'd like to stress is confidentiality. Your financial contribution to the Sangha is completely confidential. Only Robert and the bookkeeping service know the details of individual contributions. No one else at PIMC, not the board or the finance committee, has access to your contribution information.

Speaking of the finance committee, we have just formed one. Karen H has agreed to join with me on the finance committee.

Some members have expressed interest in having their monthly dana deducted from their checking account. We have worked out the details on this monthly deduction. Please contact Karen or I and we can arrange this for

you. This type of contribution will also be confidential. The finance committee will just arrange the administrative details. In addition, you may make a credit card contribution to PIMC. Just go to the PIMC website www.portlandinsight.org and click the donation button. A short time later your contribution will be complete.

Now for some budget matters. Below is our budget for the second half of 2002. It is in somewhat condensed form, but allows you to see the main sources of cash flowing into and out of our bank account. Karen and I are currently working on next year's budget and our goal is to complete the 2003 budget by early December. If you are responsible for any sangha committees or activities which will be incurring expenses or generating revenue, please contact Karen or me with the details to include in the 2003 budget.



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

Portland Insight Meditation Community							
2002 Budget							
July 1 to December 31, 2002							
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Revenue:							
Sunday Dana	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	8,400
Rummage Sale	1,900						1,900
Reading Group				1,800			1,800
Beginners Group				1,000			1,000
Newsletter Dana		1,100					1,100
Total Revenue	3,300	2,500	1,400	4,200	1,400	1,400	14,200
Expenses:							
Teacher	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	15,000
Accounting fees	200	200	200	200	200	200	1,200
Rent	250	250	250	250	250	250	1,500
Other	830	330	330	330	330	330	2,480
Newsletter	572	100	100	100	100	100	1,072
Total Expenses	4,352	3,380	3,380	3,380	3,380	3,380	21,252
Net income *	(1,052)	(880)	(1,980)	820	(1,980)	(1,980)	(7,052)

*Negative numbers indicated by () represent a budget shortfall

Giving and Receiving, Two Sides of the Same Coin

By
Barbara Blossom Ashmun

One of the seeds that Robert Beatty planted some time ago has put down roots, leafed out, and is in full bloom. The service committee, headed up by Phil Harris, has coordinated many Dana projects within the sangha and some in the larger community. Garden cleanup, garden design, planting, installing a brick patio, painting a deck and a garage, and packing and moving to a new home were just a few of the jobs accomplished with the help of old and new friends.

As one of those who both gave and received through these gatherings, I noticed an abundance of benefits that went way beyond the relief that comes from sharing chores that are overwhelming when you tackle them alone. I was curious to know how other sangha members experienced these projects and asked a few of the participants to share their thoughts and feelings.

One common thread that wove itself through the stories that sangha members shared with me was that whether they were givers or receivers, it didn't make much difference... everyone loved sharing the process of working together side by side.

Nessa Elila used the word "exchange of support" and "circle of giving" to describe her experience, words that encompass both the act of giving and the act of receiving. Like breathing in and breathing out, you could say that the breath has two parts, or you could simply say "breathing." Everyone enjoyed getting to know other sangha members better, in the informal settings of their homes and gardens. "Support exchanges allow for various kinds of lively interaction, that do not have as much opportunity to come out on Sunday nights, due to the structure of the evening," Nessa explained.

Getting to know each other is a very natural outcome of working together on a hands-on project. Nancy Turner observed that when sangha members helped clear and plant the garden that she and Robert share, and dig the circle for the new brick patio, everyone discussed how to go about the tasks and then worked cooperatively to accomplish the work. "People were enjoying the camaraderie," Nancy said. One child needed a break and Nancy took him out to get an ice cream. She added: "I enjoyed having people at my home and I liked going to other people's and seeing their terrain...it gives me a more three-dimensional sense of them, just like meeting their family."

Jim Dalton commented on the pleasure of working side by side with a group who helped him paint his deck. "It felt good working in an easy rhythm with familiar faces, getting to know people I had sat with at the Dharma hall, but never worked with before," he said. "When we were done, it was delicious to sit under an oak tree with new and old friends,

munching on pizza. Instead of fretting about how long this chore might extend into the summer, I realized I had the entire summer ahead of me to help other folks with their projects."

This connection between receiving and giving was a frequent theme. Once you've received, it seems natural to give...and once you give it seems easier to ask for help. Many found it hard to ask for help, and some found it easier to ask after they had contributed help. Another aspect of giving and receiving from such a large community was the absence of pressure. Nessa felt that it was easier to make a request of a group than of an individual friend, in that it didn't put anyone "on the spot," and that there were also many opportunities to give, "without feeling pressured to meet any one request whose nature or timing is not a good fit." Nancy commented on the lack of pressure too. "It's all free choice, she said. "There's no obligation...it's given freely."

Building community was actually Phil's intention as Service Coordinator from the very beginning. "While the sangha is a wonderful refuge, it felt a little sparse as communities go, outside of Sunday night gatherings," Phil said. "To me, community is all about companionship on this path, and shared experience."

The chance to give time and energy was a great way to practice generosity. Many participants felt good about being able to give. "The first thing that Buddha taught was generosity," reflects Nancy. "It's a recognition that we're all in the same soup...if my well being is improved, yours is too."

And speaking of soup, refreshments were a frequent component of the work parties, another way to give. "People are so grateful, and so generous, feeding the workers, making them drink cold drinks and rest," commented Phil. Nessa summed up the benefit of these gatherings well: "It allows a simple, accessible way to both practice generosity and gratitude, and to keep our need for each others' kindness and care and the importance of what we can offer others very present in our awareness."

So don't be afraid to ask for or offer help...without receivers, givers would be out of business, and without givers receivers would be empty handed.



Barbara Blossom Ashmun is a sangha member, a garden designer and the author of five books on gardening. Her greatest satisfaction is in kindling a spirit of excitement in new gardeners, so that they may experience the joy that keeps veteran gardeners hooked.

November 2002 - PIMC Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 * Children's Sangha 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC * 5:30pm Newcomer Orientation & Instruction - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk -PDC	4	5 * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	6	7 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	8	9 6:30pm Service Committee: Matela Home
10 * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk -PDC	11 6:30 pm Board Meeting	12 * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	13 9am-12pm Meditation & Meditation Interviews - PDC	14 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	15	16 Sangha Sharing Suppers
17 * Children's Sangha 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	18	19 * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	20 5 pm Preliminary Newsletter Deadline	21 Service Event 6-7:30 pm Details on page 9 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	22 5 pm Final Newsletter Deadline	23
24 * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	25	26 * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	27 9am-12pm Meditation & Meditation Interviews - PDC	28 THANKSGIVING	29	30

* 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

Half Day

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

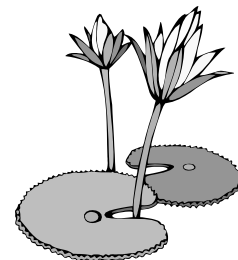
Sits Continue:

Wednesdays: November 13 and 27, Dec. 11, and Jan. 8 and 22. From 9am - noon at PDC.

Residential Retreats With Robert Beatty

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

January 3-5th
Breitenbush Hot Springs
Breitenbush, OR
www.breitenbush.com
503-854-3314



Further registration information at www.portlandinsight.org

Gr8ful 4 Ted's

TOTD

By Robin Helm

(Editor's note: PIMC has a listserv where members connect online. Ted Viramonte sends the Thought of the Day (TOTD) to this listserv. See the next article if you are interested in joining the online dharma conversation.)

The other night, before switching off my computer, I hit the Send/Receive button one last time, looking for the next day's TOTD from Ted. It popped up, and I hungrily read it, realizing once again how much I look forward to receiving those few wise words which come my way seemingly without fail.

It got me wondering if there was anything I did on such a dependably regular basis. I had to rule out the things my body pretty much does for itself. And then I found a pretty blatant void. Yes, even the basics, like brushing teeth, I've been known to hedge on. And that's stuff for myself. I am incredibly irregular when it comes to service to others, including my immediate family members. I became quite impressed. Not only does TOTD come every day, but at about the same time.

It suddenly felt like much more than an act of service, but something that must be done with a great deal of loving. How else could it be maintained? Then there are the serendipitous times when the particular days message fits my life so well, I have wondered if Ted was in possession of a crystal ball. Surprisingly, I have seen

few references to TOTD on the listserv. It seems like a perfect opportunity for us to interact about the Dharma.

So my purpose here is two fold. First to give great thanks to Ted for his Herculean daily gift, and second to invite some shared reflection on what a lot of us read every day.

Ted, my life is richer because of what you do. Thanks. Bowing for us all.



Connecting Online

The PIMC listserv is our community's online means of staying connected. We post timely information about Sangha events, and share our many diverse opinions about topics related to the Dharma.

To join the listserv, send a blank email to **PIMC-forum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com**. When you receive a confirmation message, respond to it.

It's just as easy to get off the list. Send a blank email to **PIMC-forum-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com**.

For additional information, contact Paul Gerhards, paulg@arcenet.com.



Anicca *continued from page 1*

root system spreads into the air like a giant fan twenty feet high. The snapping roots overturned a large white propane tank, leaving the gas pipe pointing out to sea. A neighbor stands nearby with a cell phone, trying to notify the owner of the house.

We walk silently through the abandoned village. Streets that hours before had been relatively tidy, are strewn with the rubble of brick walls, roof tiles and palm fronds. It is eerie to walk through streets where typically families sit in doorways, groups of men chat, and children play. Now there are only small groups of police in pickup trucks and shuttered homes.



The Buddha taught that all conditioned phenomena are anicca: impermanent, unpredictable, unstable, unreliable, transient and subject to change. A journey to Mexico to perform a beach wedding became one of surviving Hurricane Kenna. We found out after the storm that the evacuation order was intended to include us as well. A few miles to the south a 30-foot storm surge of seawater lifted chunks of concrete and multi-ton bronze statues from the cement sea wall and smashed them through the waterfront buildings of Puerto Vallarta. To the north, the village of San Blas was devastated. Houses and commercial buildings were demolished by 160 mile an hour winds. We suffered no damage or injury. Had the storm turned and come upon us from the North, rather than over the protective mountain of Punta de Mita, the outcome could have been radically different. Our soft, sensitive, vulnerable bodies offer no guarantees that we will be alive from one day to the next. One way or another, before long, our lease upon them will expire. Everyone and everything is on loan. Once again we are reminded of this truth: All component things are impermanent.

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

Buddhism in Oregon

"Except for Hawaii, Oregon may be the only U.S. state in which Buddhism is the second-largest organized religion after Christianity."

According to Adherents.com, a statistical source on the internet, approximately 0.5% of Oregonians identify themselves as Buddhists. In contrast, in Thailand 93-95% of the population identify themselves as Buddhists.

Contributed by Sangha member Gerry Zirin. Website address: www.adherents.com

Reflections on Potluck in the Park

By Frank Pittelli

My wife and I recently had the opportunity to join several other PIMC members and volunteer at the Potluck in the Park. The weekly giving of food to Portland's homeless provided me with many impressions. The feeling of giving and compassion to those in need was electric. A diverse group of volunteers was directed by organizers who seemed to have done this many times.

The event had both a grassroots feel and a strong sense of purpose. Most of the food is donated by local restaurants and cooking schools, prepared, when needed, by local churches. And there's lots of it. For this one day the participants ate quite well. From entree to dessert. Over 400 people enjoy the selection on a weekly basis.

I was struck by the ability of giving and compassion to eliminate pre-conceived barriers I may have had towards the homeless. It put more of a human face to the issue of homelessness and really drove home the fact that at the end of day we are all the same, just in different places.

So, every Sunday, a bunch of strangers get together to help feed a bunch of strangers. It dawned on me that with all of problems in the world, every Sunday, in a small park in Portland, a little light shines though the clouds.

For those of you interested in donating your time to this issue, I recommend a Sunday afternoon with Potluck in the Park. (This Sunday meal happens every Sunday of the year at 3:00 pm in O'Bryant Square at SW 9th and Washington in downtown Portland.)

And I thank the Portland Insight Community, especially Martha

Gaeddert, for bringing this event to my attention. I hope to see this type of charity promoted further within the Sangha.



Frank and Kristi Pittelli are two of the eleven Sangha members who helped with Potluck in the Park on Sunday, September 8th. Frank and Kristi have recently moved to Portland from New Jersey and are enjoying the experiences Oregon has to offer.

Submit!

We'd all love to see your contribution to the newsletter. Dharma related

submissions of news items, essays, poetry, artwork, and etc. are welcome.

What have you been moved by in your practice? Have you surfed the net and found an interesting Dharma site to share with the group? Is there any of your reproducible artwork you'd like to share? Do you have any non-copyrighted humor related to the Dharma? The possibilities are endless. Photos of community events are also appreciated.

All items may be edited for length and style (even the editors get edited!).

Submit to: khavran@hevanet.com



วชิระกลาง
Buddhist
วิฑลเฑนด

JANUARY 2003
Teachers, Temples,
Practice Centers

Robert Beatty
Nancy Turner

www.RobertBeatty.com 503.241.4519

"Are You a Buddhist?"

By Nancy Turner

As a girl I wished I could call myself a Catholic because I could not label my spiritual path in a way that made sense to my friends.

One day on the playground at Lake Grove Elementary, wearing white ankle socks and a gingham dress, I squatted down to fix the buckle on my brown shoes and became fascinated watching a worm wiggling in a puddle. At that moment another fourth grader, Kathy, walked up to me and wanted to know if I went to Sunday school, and if I did, where? I stared at her ankles. I froze inside. This was not the first time I'd been questioned.

"Yes," I said, as I pushed the metal prong through the worn leather strap of my shoe.

"Well, where?" She wouldn't let the subject drop.

"The Unitarian Church." I said, standing and turning toward the nearby tetherball pole.

"The what?" She glared at me and then slapped the white ball.

I shrugged and hit the dangling ball till it swung high and twisted around the top of the pole.

By the time I reached the eighth grade, defining my religious identity hadn't gotten any easier. The questions merely became more complex and provocative.

One Saturday night nine girls and I were squealing and screaming at my friend Pam's slumber party. We flopped sleeping bags and pillows on the floor while the TV danced black and white shadows of Route 66 across our faces. We munched chocolate chip cookies, slurped Coca Colas and worried about being ugly from zits. At 12 o'clock a rusty rendition of the Star Spangled Banner blasted over our chatter; the test pattern came on, and someone finally flicked off the TV. Our conversation meandered from topic to topic but we never discussed our personal or family life. We talked about boys, clothing, hair, school, Fabian, and rock and rolls stars. By the wee hours yawning replaced speaking; some of the girls lay like sleeping overgrown babies. Someone, maybe it was Janet, I wasn't certain in the dark, complained about having to get up the next morning to go to church with her parents. Suddenly those in half slumber stirred awake and started comparing who goes where, and how often. I lay silent in my blue flannel nightgown, hoping my stillness made me invisible. Someone across the middle of sleeping bags, I think it was Janet again, looked right at me and asked, "What church do you go to?"

"Unitarian," I said.

"Are Unitarians Christians? Are you a Christian?"

My dire need to belong directed everything. I said, "Yes, but I don't believe in Jesus like you do." "Well, if you don't, then you can't be a Christian," declared Janet. "And you have to be a Christian or you won't go to heaven."

It wasn't heaven I worried about. I just wanted them to like me and not probe too deeply into my identity. I felt ashamed and lonely. I decided once and for all, to drop the

'but I don't believe in Jesus' part.

In high school my friends became so preoccupied trying to keep their urges under control they weren't much interested in my beliefs. Sometimes, when I sat alone in an oak forest below the house where I lived, I experienced being completely connected to everything - no separation between myself and anything else. I couldn't talk to anybody about this, but I felt less concerned about being isolated than I used to.

It was during my activities with LRY, the Unitarian Liberal Religious Youth program, that I met Frank, a senior at Lincoln High. He wore reddish-pink rimmed glasses, had an oversized nose, and after shaving his head for unknown reasons, he had the appearance of a fledgling eagle. After LRY meetings on Thursday evenings and Sunday church services, when everyone emptied the main sanctuary, Frank and I discovered the last row of the upper balcony to be the most dark and secluded place in the world. I went to church every chance I got those days.

I look back on my first years after high school with a sense of longing. I went to college and lived an adventurous life full of travel to South America, the leisure of friendships, and the rewards of a counseling career. I married and took up the joys, the struggles and the clamor of daily living. When I think about it, I wonder how I did it, after a divorce, raising three children as a single parent. "Come on girls, you'll be late for school. Angela, go get you jacket," was my morning mantra. I remember thinking that life was very full, sometimes to the point of overflowing. Sundays we did not go to church. We stayed home and caught up on laundry. Two of my children became sick, really sick, and I remember wondering how anybody ever had the time to think about spirituality. I certainly didn't.

I am more reflective now and I carry a suitcase of sorrows I've filled over the years. As a middle-aged adult, I turn inward for solace and security. The teachings of the Buddha steady my heart and mind, and I love to visit Buddhist temples around the world. I am especially fascinated by Tibetan Buddhism and intrigued by the artistically drawn images, like Avilokateshvarra, the bodhisattva with a thousand eyes to see the suffering in the world, and a thousand arms of compassion to relieve that suffering. Occasionally I meditate, but mostly I work on being aware of my actions. I try to be as generous and kind as I can. It's not easy, but it seems like the right way to live.

This evening Robert and I are enjoying conversations with several PIMC board members who joined us for dinner after their monthly meeting. Empty cartons of take-out Thai food clutter our dining room table. Outside it is still daylight, warm enough for me to wear sandals, though intermittent clouds block the sun and chilly moments

Continued on page 9



Portland Insight Meditation Community
3434 SW Kelly Avenue
Portland, OR 97239
www.portlandinsight.org
503-223-2214

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



The Line

By Robin Helm

I find myself
Sitting on a line.
A white stripe that stretches
Beyond me as far as I can see,
Heading in opposite directions.
A part of me rests
On either side of the line,
Divided pretty equally.
As I sit, my mind begins to explore
First one side,
Then the other.
Under examination
Each side has its merits, risks, promises, flaws.
I see no integration.
Soon the line becomes unbearable,
I am tugged this way,
Then that way.

I feel off balance,
As if I must move,
Choose a side
Following one side on beyond the horizon,
I find its clarity
Becomes vague and hard to follow.
Then suddenly, surprisingly, I am
Back at the line, but on the opposing side.
Full Circle.
Oh.
I look at the line,
which begins and ends with
Me,
Knowing
I need to sit
A little longer.