



PIMC NEWS

PORTLAND INSIGHT MEDITATION COMMUNITY

www.portlandinsight.org

JANUARY 2003

Bearing the Unbearable

By Robert Beatty

The pain in my legs gradually went from bad to agonizing. Desperate to move, I continued squatting before Venerable Taungpulu Sayadaw in his monastery in Ragoon, Burma. It was January 1979. Twenty monks gathered to ordain me as a Theravadin Buddhist monk surrounded me. The two closest to me crowded together to support my weight with their hips. In moments when my mind was absorbed in the chanting, the pain dropped out of awareness. The surrounding eyes said, "bear it, there is no alternative". I survived. No damage was done to my legs. I learned that I could bear more than I had imagined, and I had a glimpse of how suffering waxes and wanes depending upon how much the mind accepts or fights against pain.

For the next week I kept the very strict Duthanga vows, which some forest monks follow in addition to their other rules. These vows stipulated that at no time would I lie down. Nights were spent in a sling back chair. They were filled with intense desires to lie down and get some sleep. Waves of painful emotions passed through and my mind re-experienced every long and torturous bus and train trip I had taken traveling third class in Asia. When I observed my mind feeling sorry for myself I tried to remember that Taungpulu Sayadaw had spent twenty-eight years in a cave.

I soon found myself on a plane back to India when my one-week visa expired. I had a shaved head and warm memories of the love that had been showered on me by my Burmese hosts. I felt greater confidence that I could bear whatever came my way, and a growing interest in how attachment creates suffering.

Even without Duthanga vows, Mindfulness meditation practice results in a direct encounter with all the realities of being human. Some of are of the pleasant, easy to bear kind: delightful body sensations, desirable moods, getting what one wants, being with those one likes to be with, being healthy, and living in peace. Others are difficult to bear: sickness, old age, death, bodily discomfort, painful emotions and mental states, not getting what one wants, being with those one does not want to be with, and living in conflict and insecurity. The Buddha called these experiences that are difficult to bear, "Dukkha" which is commonly translated as "suffering".

Assuming a comfortable upright posture, the meditator goes beyond the instinctive mammalian conditioning of

seeking pleasure and avoiding discomfort. S/he sits still with the intention of remaining still, conscious, and fully present with every experience that arises. This is in stark contrast to the constant movement, avoidance of discomfort and seeking of pleasure that characterize our unexamined lives. When we meditate, pains that normally would go unnoticed come to the foreground and challenge our capacity to sit and remain conscious. Even if we do manage to sit still, the mind becomes lost in the past, future, doubts, sleepiness, moods and inner dialogue. Painful emotions and thoughts arise spontaneously. As the meditator bears with these experiences it becomes evident that these experiences are quite bearable when they are observed with mindfulness, concentration, compassion and equanimity. Further practice reveals that all experience arises and passes away. One learns that suffering arises through clinging to some experiences and rejecting others.

A superficial glance at these ideas might lead one to determine that Buddhist meditators are masochists, delighting in suffering, sitting in their own misery. Quite to the contrary sitting still to examine ALL the experiences of the human mind/body is the suffering that leads to the end of suffering.

The practice of mindful listening illuminates a particular suffering that the Buddha called attachment to view. Just as we grasp our possessions, body and people to provide a sense of security, we also hold tightly to our ideas and worldview. We create a self with this web of beliefs, perceptions and emotions. A challenge to our views can provoke the fight/flight/freeze response of our mammalian heritage. Sitting with this reactivity in full awareness allows us to see the nature of our attachments to our conditioned ideas and views.

When we take our seat in meditation and surrender to being there for an extended period of time we forgo the habit of chasing pleasure and avoiding discomfort. This sitting becomes a laboratory in which the forces that create suffering are brilliantly illuminated. Just as the inner structure of a crystal is revealed by shining a laser into it and studying how it scatters the light, shining the light of awareness into the human body/mind reveals the structures that create suffering.



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

From The Board

By Jim Dalton

The main business of the Board at the December meeting was the approval of the 2003 Budget. With Karen Havran's assistance, Dick Teutsch gathered the financial details of the organization together and spelled out a month-by-month budget outlining the major activities of the upcoming year. We can look forward to a few "break-even" months, but we still have some financial challenges ahead.

Since Robert's compensation is withdrawn only after all other bills are paid, during the months when we don't meet our budget goals, his compensation is reduced. We take seriously our commitment to compensating our teacher in a fair and supportive manner. And we depend on the increasing generosity of our sangha to sustain that commitment. We are continuing to explore ways to meet our commitment in new and interesting ways.

We briefly reviewed the listserv guidelines and decided to add a few more items when we publish our "Gentle Reminder" next month. We plan to revisit the guidelines periodically as we all need mindfulness reminders as we use the internet to communicate. As our insights concerning this communication tool grow, our list of guidelines will change slightly. The basic approach seems to be working at this point, but further input from the sangha is welcome at any time.

Paul Gerhards has agreed to screen all messages posted to the listserv in order to more effectively remove virus-laden emails. It is possible that something you post to the list will not show up immediately, since Paul can't be expected to monitor all list serve activity at all hours of the day. But he makes several visits to the site each day, and he has some backup help when he can't check in. We hope that

this slight delay will benefit everyone by keeping our lines of communication open and clean of viruses.

The newsletter has been a vital tool of communication during the past few months and the Board wanted Karen to know how much her effort and artistry are appreciated. It takes a lot of work to draw all the activities of the group together into one handy reference tool, and she keeps getting better at it. We have received many subscriptions since our September drive, and we will repeat a new appeal for subscriptions next September. But anyone who feels generous and grateful can express that gratitude with a financial contribution to the newsletter by using the handy form which Karen includes in each edition.

Another communication tool that is sometimes overlooked is the rack of file folders in the back of the dharma hall. It includes fliers introducing Robert and the Sunday evening routine as well as a reading list, Robert's thoughts on Dana (Generosity), etc. We need to display these handouts in a more accessible mode. We have found a display rack that is both easy to read and lightweight (to move it in and out of the closet in the Dharma Hall.) We are posting this display rack to our Wish List in the hopes that one or more members of our community will donate toward its purchase. See the box following this article for details.

The Board will not meet in January while Robert is overseas, but will resume the regular meeting schedule in February. We will announce that meeting as the time approaches.



Jim Dalton is a member of the PIMC Board of Directors and is a participant in the Dharma Leader Training Program led by Robert Beatty. jdalton@easystreet.com 503-641-8336



PIMC

Wish List:

Donations for Display Rack

The cost is approximately \$175 for the rack. This display rack will be used in the dharma hall for better access to handouts and literature.

Please contact Jim Dalton
jdalton@easystreet.com, 503-641-8336 if you wish to contribute toward our Wish List.

Children's Sangha

By Robin Helm

Children's Sangha meets on the first and third Sunday of each month, during the regular Sunday Sangha, from 6:30 - 8:45 p.m. This month we meet January 5th and 19th. The children meet downstairs and keep busy with singing, projects, games, stories and brief meditation experiences. The program is open to children 3 years old through high school. We are always ready to welcome new friends! In January, the children will be learning about the Eight Fold Path.

On December 15th, the Children's Sangha sponsored their First Ever Pizza Party. It was a fun chance to get a break from fixing dinner and we got to know each other better. We were joined by many regular Sangha members and together we worked our way through three large pizzas. Stay tuned for news of our next pizza party and consider joining us.



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

Mommy, I'm Buddha!

By
Genevieve Arnaut

It was early morning, and I was running around the house getting my 3-year-old daughter Zoë and myself ready for the day – lunches made, teeth brushed, hair done. Suddenly I heard: “Mommy! I’m going to be Buddha!”

It is not easy to stop me in my tracks when I am on an early morning mission, but that did it. Suddenly, I was aware again – aware of my daughter as a whole person so separate from me and so connected, and my heart swelled. I looked at her to see if I could discern why such a phrase might have come from out of the blue, but no clues. She was following me, carrying her little doctor kit, as she often did in the mornings. “Yes, honey,” I said, “You can be a Buddha. What a wonderful thing to be.” And I gave her a hug. Mindfulness slipped away moments later when I was in another room, until I heard, “Mommy, I’m Buddha! I’m Buddha!” Mindfulness was back, momentarily, as I called back, “Yes, sweetie, you are. You are a Buddha.” I left with her that morning for Montessori school, feeling deeply moved but still confused about what had prompted such an outburst. Had one evening at the children’s Sangha taught her that? Wow!

The next morning, again Zoë said, “Mommy, I’m Buddha!” But this time I was in the room with her when she said it. I watched her put her little doctor kit down on the floor in front of our altar and carefully climb on top of the kit. She then put her hands together and bowed, saying, “See?” I understood. She had observed the statue of Kwan Yin, a lovely wooden hand-carved statue that we had bought in China when we had adopted Zoë two years earlier. The statue depicts Kwan Yin standing on a platform (carved with a face that I take to be the suffering of the world), with right hand raised, head bowing slightly, and a child next to her. “Yes,” I said to Zoë. “I see.” She had assumed the statue depicted the Buddha. And I took the statue down so Zoë could look at it while I told her about Kwan Yin. Zoë loved this story and frequently tells me of Kwan Yin’s kindness towards children.

In the following weeks, I pondered the significance of this interaction. I thought of how children pick up cues from their environments and what it means to have an altar and other spiritual reminders throughout our home. I thought of the basic goodness and love that seems to spring forth from the little children I meet and how accessible their Buddha nature seems to be. And how this differs from the view I was taught as a child, that we are all full of original sin.

But it was only when I met David Olsson, a new Dharma friend from Eugene, that I felt the most important puzzle piece had slipped into place. We were speaking of practicing Buddhism as householders, the pitfalls and the opportunities. I spoke of a section in the book *What the Buddha Taught*, in which Walpola Rahula indicates that there is tremendous potential for spiritual growth in the lay life. David countered with the following story (which he has kindly written down

for me):

“After having spent several months living at Wat Suan Mokkh, the Thai monastery founded by Ajahn Buddhadasa, I had the opportunity to meet with Tan Ajahn, as one of a small group of lay westerners. One of us asked Ajahn Buddhadasa about the prospect of enlightenment for one leading life as a householder. As I was soon to leave Thailand to return home to my girlfriend, I was not very pleased with his response. For those interested in enlightenment, he explained, one has a choice. The best conditions for awakening can only be found in monastic life. If one has chosen a householder’s path, one’s duty is to provide for one’s children in such a way as to make enlightenment a more likely prospect for them than it is for oneself.”

This perspective struck me deeply and brought back my wonderment about my daughter’s statements. I realized that, not only is it her birthright to realize her own Buddha nature, it is my job to help her get there. I would gladly put off my own enlightenment for the sake of my daughter’s spiritual advancement. And if I can do that for my own child, why then should I not do that for all beings? Perhaps my heart is not yet open enough, but suddenly the importance of my spiritual practice and my connection to other beings became clear. And so, the words we say so frequently took on a new life: May all beings be happy. May all beings be at peace. May all beings be deeply healed. And may we all realize our true nature.



Genevieve Arnaut is a member of the PIMC sangha and a participant in the Dharma Leader Training Program led by Robert Beatty. She may be reached at arnautg@msn.com.



Courtesy of Buddhanet.net

Kwan Yin

Hindrance to Serve

by Bob Nelson

For most of my life I have felt a 'calling' to serve in some way, in day-to-day interactions as well as professionally. It is a calling for an unconditional extending of a hand or heart to those in need; a sounding board to those needing to be heard; to be a giver of information to those wanting a guide, sometimes whether they wanted it or not.

As of late, and occurring over most of my adult years, I've noticed a hesitation, a diversion of my eyes elsewhere, a constriction in my abdomen when asked, "Hey, would you like to help with xyz?" Immediately my mind goes to: what's in it for me? Will I enjoy it? Is it the right thing for me to be doing? Will it be fun? What if I don't like it or the people? How can I get out if I want to? Blah de blah... At times my thoughts remind me of my dad reminding me to mow the lawn and my steadfast rebellion to push it to the last possible day, hour, or moment before he would come home from work. Ahhhhhh, to be a teenager again... or still.

In reflecting on this issue, it seems to be just another form of discipline and practice. I encounter the same struggle that can keep me from sitting, being quiet, turning off the TV and computer, going for a run, doing what needs to be done around the home or work. Maybe it doesn't matter so much what I do, or which agency or population or event I serve. What matters is that I do serve in some way. Ram Dass and Paul Gorman write in How Can I Help? that "the reward, the real grace, of conscious service, then, is the opportunity not only to help and relieve suffering but to grow in wisdom, experience greater unity, and have a good time while we're doing it."

All right!!! I KNEW I could have fun too! They also mention how we can "identify our own obstacles to our expression of our caring instincts . . .

to see how this resistance is affecting our ability to hear people's needs; how this habit is shaping our attitude to social action; how this expectation is contributing to burnout . . . come to see them (obstacles) not only as problems to overcome but as information leading to a deeper understanding of service."

As I write this, a curiosity arises at how this struggle may also be connected to how I allow MYSELF to be served... or NOT. Oh, I've got tons of weeds to be pulled, but asking for 'free' help? The floodgates open. I think I should do it myself, that I will 'owe' something, that asking is a sign of weakness. I feel shame and guilt. Interesting. An experiment may be in order here. I'll be calling Phil soon.

So, I take all this information and add it to the databank of continual reminders I hear and experience. I know that I can't think my way out of this quandary, but I must experience it. I encourage myself, and you if it applies, to experiment, experience and explore whatever obstacles you may be feeling toward the giving or receiving of service. The question... which weed bed to start with?



Bob Nelson is a sangha member and body psychotherapist in private practice. Contact Bob at 503-235-6040, bodywiser@earthlink.net

Service Opportunity in Nicaragua

My name is Dan Hannon, and I am a recent addition to the PIMC sangha. I am semi-retired, and I do some work with a Non-Government Organization near Managua, Nicaragua called the Center for Development in Central America-which goes by the abbreviation

CDCA. How I got connected with the organization is a long enough story for a trip to the Bridgeport Brew Pub, but they are a good organization, founded by two Quaker sisters about eight years ago.

The CDCA has a reputation for doing a lot with a little. They've been building a whole new town for Nicaraguans displaced by Hurricane Mitch in 1996. It is a slow process. They accept donations of money, medical supplies, and anything else they can use. They also accept volunteers, who help with any number of things, from healthcare to carpentry. That is where sangha members may enter the picture.

I will be going down to Nicaragua the last week of August for ten days to do some work. I asked the CDCA people what kinds of skills they needed so I could recruit volunteers to go with me. They always need healthcare people. They need carpenters, masons, people with sophisticated computer skills, and also people who are willing to just fill in doing whatever is needed. I have no technical skills, so I will be in the last category.

This is a pay-as-you-go event. The airfare costs around \$650. The CDCA charges \$25 per day to cover airport transfers and room and board in secure dormitories. That's \$250 for 10 days. If you stay beyond 14 days, the daily charge goes down to \$5.

Ready for an adventure while you help some of the poorest people in the world to better their lives? Contact me for more information. I'm working on rounding up basic healthcare supplies, and I also have a target goal of 150 pairs of off-the-shelf reading glasses of various strengths. This means pounding on the doors of commerce. Got any contacts?

When you arrive in Nicaragua with hundreds of dollars worth of valuable supplies, and much needed skills, you are greeted like a rock music star. When you come home, you have photos and memories for a lifetime.



You may contact sangha member Dan Hannon at hannond@aracnet.com, 503-236-4387. Or catch him at the sangha.

January 2003- PIMC Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5 * Children's Sangha 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC Robert Beatty * 5:30pm Newcomer Orientation & Instruction - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk -PDC	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 Jim Dalton * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 * Children's Sangha 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC Genevieve Arnaut * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 * 5:30 NWEI Discussion Group Introduction - PDC (see page 13 for details) Judy Smith * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	27	28	29	30	31	Feb 1
						*9-5 Day Retreat with Doug Pullin -Friends of the Dhamma (see page 8 for details)
						Sangha Sharing Suppers (see page 9 for details)

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

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

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

* Saturday 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.
Sits Continue:	Wednesdays: January 8 and 22, Feb. 12 and 26, Mar. 12 and 26. From 9am - noon at PDC.

Residential Retreat
with Robert Beatty
February 28 - March 2
Marsh House, Whidbey Island, WA
Registration Contact is:
Patricia Fulnecky 206-789-1784
patriciafulnecky@hotmail.com

One Day Retreat In January
with Doug Pullin
Saturday, January 25th, 9-5. Held in Portland at **Friends of the Dhamma Resource Center.** (See article on page 8 for details)

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

The Generosity of Many Eases the Suffering of one Small Family

By Peggy Baldwin

For the last three years, PIMC Sangha members have created a generous Christmas for a family in need. Every year I am overwhelmed by the generosity of our members. Our community pulls together to provide a Christmas for "our family" in a way that connects us to "our family" and to each other as a community. Its really a measure of how much of a community we have become.

The participation of our Children's Sangha in this practice of generosity is important for our children and for the family that we help. They make wrapping paper, wrap presents, practice loving-kindness meditations for the family, help in the last minute grocery shopping and assist in the delivery. Meeting the family for whom we have been preparing gifts for more than a month is the best part. The children add a joy and enthusiasm to this process that is an inspiration.

This year our family's level of need was particularly great. The mom of the family, Azucena, is from Mexico, having left an abusive relationship. She has three children, 5 year old Ariana, 4 year old Karen, and 8 month old Azucena, who has heart and lung defects, and is currently in the hospital after multiple surgeries. This family clearly needed our support. A visit to the home of our family further emphasized their need, with only mattresses on the floor, their only furniture being 4 plastic garden chairs, and a complete absence of books and toys for the children. Nessa Elila and Nancy Turner spent hours one Sunday afternoon shopping at resale stores, buying clothing and toys for the children. They were able to supply so much more for our family by shopping in resale stores and their willingness to

spend hours doing this is greatly appreciated.

After the kind offering of complementary tickets to the Nutcracker by Chris Tabor on his first visit to our Sunday night sit, Nancy accompanied the excited family to this festive event. The two girls wore new Christmas dresses and new shoes. They must have felt like princesses as you can see in the photos following this article. This was also an important bonding moment for Nancy, who fell in love with our family.

On Saturday, the 21st we delivered the generous offering from the Sangha. Azucena was clearly overwhelmed by the items that about 15 Sangha members (adults and children) numerous trips brought into the apartment, as she alternated between a broad smile and tears welling in her eyes. We delivered food, a TV & VCR, a crib, an entertainment center, a book case, a twin size bed, a vacuum cleaner, a blender, a microwave, dishes, kitchen utensils, Fred Meyer gift certificates, loads of toys and clothing, many gifts to open, children's videos, and books to read in English and in Spanish or both. Soon be delivered are a loveseat and a recliner. Best of all, I think the children would say, we provided them each with a bicycle, complete with training wheels and very colorful safety helmets, which they promptly tried to ride in the living room.

Sangha members went to work setting up the crib, which had to be dismantled to fit into the baby's room, setting up the TV and VCR, and making sure that those bicycle helmets fit. Michael Hall's and Nancy's Spanish speaking abilities came in handy for explaining to Azucena how to lower and raise the sides of the crib and to the children how to pedal a bicycle, with alternating feet. The rest of us communicated with them in whatever way we could.

Beyond these material goods, Sangha members gave generous donations of money. We were able to pay the family's rent and some utilities. It felt good to give our family, whose earnings are very small at the moment, a little breather from their financial worries.

The struggles of poverty can be

such an isolating thing. I don't think we can truly comprehend the value of the connection we have made with our family beyond the materials we provided. As we reach out to our family to ease their suffering, we clearly say to our families that we see the Buddha in them. They are us and we are them. I bow to our beautiful family and to my beautiful Sangha community. What an awesome group of people.



Peggy Baldwin is a sangha member and is the former teacher of the PIMC Children's Sangha.



Binoculars! At the Nutcracker



Karen



Piles of presents



Big bike grins



Ariana



More presents



The delivery gang

Meditation and Reading Group

with Robert Beatty

Book: Living in the Light of Death by Larry Rosenberg

“Living in the Light of Death is an invaluable primer for virtually anyone who has a body and is old enough to read. Larry Rosenberg dives right to the core of what it takes to be truly alive and, with the lightest and kindest of touches, shows us simple ways to wake up to our lives while we have them to live. A true vehicle for exploring the profound question of whether there is life before death.” Jon Kabat-Zinn, from the cover.

Group Description: This groups will provide a caring context in which we will study Living in the Light of Death, and learn how the Buddhist meditations on impermanence and death lead to freedom from suffering and a joyful participation in life. The group will allow participants to explore their own questions and interests, to experience the support of a small meditative community and to receive meditation guidance from Robert. Meetings will begin with 30 minutes of meditation. Limited to 15 participants.

Time/Dates: (Eight Meetings) 7:00 – 9:00 PM Tuesdays, February 18, 25, March 4,11,18, April 1,15, 22.

Suggested Dana: \$160. A \$25 deposit will reserve your place. Balance due at first group. Checks payable to PIMC.
No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Location: 3434 SW Kelly. Directions: request by mail from Theresa Friedline or see: www.robertbeatty.com/main_contact.html

Registration: Please mail to Theresa, 6719 N. McKenna Ave., Portland, 97203. (503) 289-7570. Please include: Name, address, phone and e-address for confirmation.

Questions: Theresa at (503) 289-7570, or tessie769@yahoo.com

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

One-Day Meditation Retreat

With Doug Pullin

Retreat Topic: “Skillful means for working with strong emotional states in practice.”

This retreat will focus on working with strong emotional states with a negative valence to them like anger, fear, grief and sadness. We will explore the two great approaches to working with these states: go into them or note them and let them go.

The cultivation of discriminating wisdom for skillful means in working with these emotional states will be explored.

The day will include guided and silent sitting in Vipassana (insight) meditation along with movement and walking meditations. There will also be opportunities for discussion and questions.

Bring your lunch to practice mindful eating in the silence of supportive community.

Time/Date/Location:

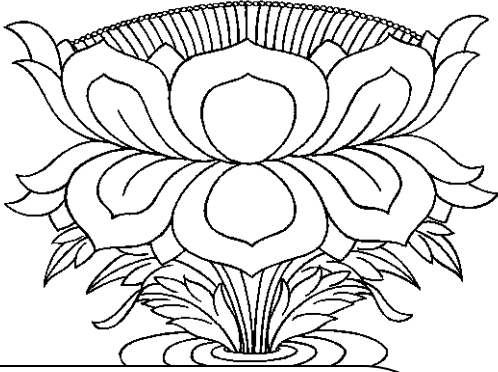
Saturday, January 25th. from 9:00 – 5:00 p.m.
at Friends of the Dhamma Resource Center, 1701 N.W. Thurman (2nd floor), Portland.

Attendance is limited. Pre-register with Theresa Friedline: (503) 289-7570, tessie769@yahoo.com

If you have questions about the content of the retreat or if it would be appropriate for you, please contact Doug at dwpullin@yahoo.com .

All retreats take place through your generosity. Donations accepted at the retreat for PIMC and Friends of Dhamma. Please go to portlandinsight.org for more information on retreats and the practice of Dana (generosity).





Hunt and Gather

By Lyn Doiron

Letting go is never easy once our hands
begin to fold
and since knuckles meant for more
than knocking hinge
us into claws
and fingers willingly oppose the thumb,
it would seem we are shaped just right
for clinging.

Ever hungry, we scan the spread
for something to pluck and possess,
sink our teeth into,
keep us warm at night
and fill holes in the
scrubby lawn of our everyday.

The heart, melancholy scaredy-cat,
fills a warehouse;
the soul's defeat and its alibis.
Ownership of all— is all we trust.
The inventory, fixed like stars,
expands on thick carpets carefully laid
to muffle the grinding sound
of our mortal gears.

Letting go is never easy once our hands
begin to fold
and since knuckles meant for more
than knocking hinge
us into claws
and fingers willingly oppose the thumb,
it would seem we are shaped just right
for clinging.

Already Broken

By Paul Gerhards

This cup
From which I sip
My tea I know
To be already
Broken.

As I bring it
To my lips, secure
In my fingertips, I
Cherish it all
The more, while
It remains whole
In my world.

Already broken,
Shards upon the floor,
By my own unskillful
Act, or another's
Careless move.
Or just time.

Such is the way
Of all I love—
Never with me
Long enough,
Always changing
Breaking
Dieing.

This is truth, high
And noble, a
Thing to sublimate
Sorrow to joy, if
I will accept it. Yet—

Knowing there are
No more cups
In the cupboard
Crushes my heart.
When this my last
Cup breaks, I will have
No more tea.

Graphics Courtesy of Buddhanet.net, Contributed by Ann Faricy



Cambodian Buddha

Garden is Home

By Barbara Blossom Ashmun

Outside my house is my true home,
this parcel of earth where I shape a garden.
Soft dark fragments of soil
to crumble between my fingers,
Leaves to rub, soft as velvet, smooth as satin.
I tread on mint and breathe in the fresh
scent, inhale rose, and lilac, and mock orange.

I give the garden my whole being—
shoulders and legs lean into the shovel,
arms prune and rake,
eyes watch for weeds and slugs,
gaze in search of the best picture.
Imagination blends shades of green,
melds colors, arranges shapes.

Here life unfolds at its own pace—
buds swell slowly, unfurl when they're ready.
No hurry, no pressure, no rushing.
Plants soak in the rain, bask in the sun,
surrender to wind and ice,
weather hardship, embrace ease,
flow with every circumstance.

The garden receives my work with grace,
gives back tenfold in bloom and fruit.
But its best gift is quiet and solitude.
In its companionable presence
my mind stills and my breath eases into
deep steadiness. Worries dissolve into
the green leaves, fears melt into the damp soil,
I relax in the garden's lap.

Here where iridescent beetles lumber
through rotting leaves, where
small segmented ants patter and
caramel-colored slugs slither,
I too crawl on all fours patrolling for
cutworms and morning glory.

Here hummingbirds feast on trumpet vine.
Striped bees plunge into penstemons,
rising slowly like zeppelins, buoyant blimps
laden down with yellow pollen saddlebags.
They drone hymns of gratitude,
fill my ears with baritone buzzing.

I too dally in the day's lazy warmth,
let red raspberries melt slowly on my tongue,
bite a peppery orange nasturtium blossom
and relish the nectar at its throat.
I kiss the honeyed flesh of ripe figs
and savor the sweetness of home.

Being Present

By Paul Campbell

Between in breath
and out breath
out breath and in breath
the world ends.
Then—

a squadron of thoughts
thinking themselves
into existence
bar the entrance
to the eternal now
born of emptiness.



Earth Witnessing Buddha

Eating Mindfully at Cloud Mountain: Winter 2002

By Robin Helm

I have spent about 15 years of my life living in the Central Valley of California and endless hours passing through the fertile and productive valley. It is a place where so much of our food is grown. When Robert gave us guidance for mindful eating at the beginning of the Cloud Mountain Solstice Retreat, one of the things he mentioned was to visualize where the food was grown. This became the central focus of my eating practice for the retreat.

In the morning we had hot cereal, grains grown under the hot sun. Expansive fields of waving grasses, heavy heads bending and bowing to the breezes. Huge thrashing machines collect the grains, running day and night, always silently (or so it would seem as I viewed them from a distance), and magically floating over the fields, especially at night with glowing lights, cutting perfectly straight rows through the fields.

The sliced almonds in the granola brought me to the many country roads I'd traveled past orchards of almonds trees. I hear my husband declare "aaa-mands", as we passed the tall dusty green, narrow leaved trees. I remember the commercials one year with the almond growers and their families wandering waist deep in almonds they needed to sell, "A can or two is all we ask," recited the farmer's wife.

The sweet chewy raisins I scooped onto my cereal, took me back to Fresno and the unbearably hot summers. While in college, I worked at a fabric store for a fireman's wife. They grew grapes for raisins. In August big rolls of black paper would arrive at the store and a worker would come and pick them up in an old truck, drive then to the vineyard, then spread the rolls over the ground and lay the grapes to dry under the sun. I remembered the smiling weather-worn face of the worker as we communicated haltingly using two languages inadequately. His wrinkled brown face reminded me of the raisins he was preparing.

Sweet dark prunes took me to Chico, and fruit stands every mile along the way. My first year living in the Pacific Northwest, we returned to California to for a summer vacation. Passing by an orchard labeled "Prunes", I marveled at the way the deep purple almost disappeared into the shaded leaves of the tree. So many tiny fruits to be picked, dried, seeded and packaged. We stopped at the next stand and I eagerly thrust my head deep into a huge wooden bin of peaches. I stayed there a long time, taking in the incredible fragrance of tree ripened fruit, apparently too long. The farmer tapped me, "You OK, miss?", he inquired, seeing tears streaming down my face. "Perfect." I answered, realizing the toll grocery store produce has taken on my soul. Realizing that there are many who have never had a peach drip sweet juices down off their elbows as they savor the unduplicatable flavor of fruit too ripe and soft to travel very far. I spent a long time there sniffing the cantaloupes, even the cucumbers and corn. The farming family is amused at my performance. They have no idea of the true value of the treasures they sell.

I scoop yogurt onto my cereal and dried fruit. I tried to make yogurt once, adding the packet of "culture" to the milk. It didn't work the way it was supposed to, and I retched as I dumped the sour smelling goo down my sink, deciding to leave that work to the experts. But milk, I knew about milk. As a freshman at Fresno State, my dorm-mate dated the supervisor at the dairy farm on campus. We spent hours helping to prime the cows and hooking them up to the milking machines. The strong pungent smell of feed and manure and fresh milk comes easily to me. As does the smell of the hay when we would sleep on high-piled bales in the barn in our sleeping bags. When a calf was being born, Carlos would call us and we would ride our bikes out to the farm through the midnight quiet campus and watch the miracle unfold. One delivery went poorly and it took the three of us pulling on a chain to get the calf out (now that I have given birth to two children of my own, this scene causes me to shiver and quake). I dried that baby with my own jacket and wrapped myself around it as the other two tended to the needs of the mother. The calf sucked eagerly on my two fingers, disappointed and confused possibly about the unsatisfactoriness of the experience. The milk we drank in the cafeteria came straight from that dairy and was the freshest and best milk I've ever had.

Driving to work from Davis to Sacramento, I would take a frontage road to avoid a few miles of I-5. In the morning, the heavy heads of the sunflowers would face eastward, toward the rising sun, the day still cool, but full of the promise of the sun's great heat. When I returned home, the seed faces would be turned to the west, drooping in a draggy way, as we all were by late afternoon. This daily dance tempted me to imagine these tall flowers to be alive in an animal like way, moving about where they pleased, with root like feet and leaf arms. The seeds somehow extracted from the flower and shelled, would stick when I crushed them with my molars discovering them with delight in my mouthful of lettuce.

I gently lift a fork full of rice into my mouth. Rice fields. Miles of rice fields along I-5. As far as you can see until there are hills. Rice fields. Driving past them at 70 miles per hour for an eternity. Where does all this rice go? Who eats it? Who grows it? I've never seen a single person working the fields, never seen a machine driving through. It's a mystery to me how it gets from there to here. One afternoon I get to the salad in time to score a tomato or two. Tomatoes. In Davis we lived surrounded by fields of tomatoes. When picking time came, lumbering machines drove crews of workers through the fields, backs bent, sorting the ripe fruit. Dusty. Hot. Sweaty. Trucks would line up for hours, engines running to keep the drivers cool, waiting to unload at the Hunts plant across the road from us. The smell of cooking tomatoes floated across the hot summer air into our yard and home. My teeth break through the skin and juice squirts into my mouth, this one was not ripened by the sun's kiss, too bad.



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Newsletter Deadline

Early submissions to the newsletter are appreciated. Preliminary deadline is **Wednesday, January 22nd**.

Final submissions for the February Newsletter are due by **1:00 pm, Friday, January 24th**.

Submit to khavran@hevanet.com

Submit!

You are encouraged, to submit to the newsletter. Some possibilities are Dharma related essays, poetry, art-work and photos of community events.

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

Submit to: khavran@hevanet.com

PIMC Consignment Account at Village Merchants

PIMC receives 40% commission on sold items when you consign using PIMC's account at Village Merchants.

Take in your: In season clothing in good repair, furniture, housewares, children's clothing and toys, etc.

Village Merchants can accept a bag or box a day but you **MUST** call ahead to see if they have room for a drop off. Let them know this is a drop off for PIMC.

Questions about what they will take?
Village Merchants, 3360 SE Division St.,
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Sangha member Lyn Doiron, who dedicated many hours to the July PIMC Rummage Sale, initiated the setup of this commission account to benefit PIMC.