



PIMC NEWS

PORTLAND INSIGHT MEDITATION COMMUNITY

www.portlandinsight.org

FEBRUARY 2003

Living Buddhism: Honoring Ajahn Chah

By Robert Beatty

Nancy and I are in Thailand leading a group of 14 people on pilgrimage. We have been visiting monasteries and practice centers, meditating, and having profound Dharma conversation with monks and nuns.

At three p.m. on the afternoon of January 16th we visited Wat Ba Pong in Ubon Ratchatane. We joined seven hundred and fifty monks, several hundred nuns and eight thousand lay people to honor the life and inspiration of the great Thai Dharma teacher Ajahn Chah who passed away about ten years ago. Several thousand people had spent the prior six days in silent meditation.

We waited beside the road for the monks to lead us in the annual circumambulation of the golden chedi (monument) which houses the relics of Ajahn Chah. We sat cross-legged on the ground in hushed silence. Our hands, in reverential prayer position, held a few flowers, a candle and two incense sticks. From the loudspeakers a single male voice intoned the familiar chanting of the homage to the Buddha, and refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. A few minutes later the first monks emerged from the stone gate that led from the great meditation hall where they had been chanting. The senior monks came first, carrying large bouquets of young lotus blossoms, candles and incense sticks. A river of brown robed forest monks that flowed through the gate for many minutes followed them. Among them were ancient monks who limped along and young novices, short Thai monks with dark brown skin, and a few tall and gangly western monks. All walked with dignity, reverence and mindfulness, with downcast eyes.

Nuns with their white robes and shaved heads followed the monks. They too carried bouquets and walked in meditative silence. We found ourselves among hundreds of women walking down the tree-arched road toward the chedi. We stood at least a head taller than the tallest of the Thai women.

Thousands of humans who follow the Eightfold Path of the Buddha walked together in silent ease. I found myself reflecting, "This is truly a peace march: a march of profound inner and outer peace."

The procession took about an hour to circle the chedi three times. Each circuit, filled with people, was more than a kilometer long. Ahead of me I could see countless black-

haired heads and white clothing proceeding beneath a canopy of branches.

At the end of the third circuit, the monks walked up to a platform surrounding the chedi and circled it three times. Then they passed through the interior, performed the traditional three deep prostrations, placed their bouquets and left by another door. When we came to the end of our final tour we added our flower offerings to the thousands piled on tables surrounding the chedi.

At six p.m. we sat again by the roadside and listened to rhythmic chanting in Pali coming over the loudspeakers. Throngs of people were walking through the gate that led to the great meditation hall. We rose and followed them. The road, twenty feet wide and a hundred yards long, was lined on both sides with white-clad women four or five deep, all chanting. A small path wound down the center. Every fifty feet there was a pool of light from an overhead lamp. In the woods on either side were hundreds of tents and mosquito nets in which these women had been camping and practicing meditation for six days. It felt like a great honor to be able to walk among them.

We made our way to the front and sat near the meditation hall steps. All around were thousands of women in white, sitting on the ground, hands in prayer position, chanting. The male voice over the loudspeaker led the chants. From all directions the voices of the women kept perfect pace. Occasionally the monks would pause for breath and the voices of the women would surge forward in their higher key. At times the women would fall silent and the deeper voices of hundreds of monks at the front of the hall would fill the night. Crickets sang out into the brief moments of silence between chants. A gentle breeze came from the Southwest and rustled the leaves overhead.

A few hundred feet from the chanting were dozens of tents and stalls where food was prepared and offered freely to over eight thousand people. There was hot spicy noodle soup, piles of vegetables, mountains of rice and great cauldrons of the delicious sweet sticky rice. There was no charge

Continued on page 6

Thanks to the Service Committee Gang



Phil Harris



Ann Faricy



Barbara Ashmun

Living Buddhism *continued from page 1*

for anything. Everything was provided as dana, a manifestation of the Thai understanding of the practice of generosity. I was remarkably at ease among these thousands of people. Their friendliness was palpable. Countless times we pressed our hands together and bowed, saying, "Sawadee Kap" (hello) and being greeted similarly. Smiles were everywhere. During the many hours we were there, we met two policemen, both of whom greeted us warmly. There were children of all ages helping their parents with cooking and washing pots. They greeted us playfully.

This was living Buddhism. Thousands of people gathered together to practice, to honor a great master of the Dharma, and to be inspired by chanting the teachings that lead to liberation. In a world increasingly consumed by greed, hatred and delusion this day filled with peaceful walking, devotion, generosity and chanting the teachings of the Buddha was miraculous. Thousands of people came together to rededicate their lives to generosity, devotion and awakening. It was a great privilege to be among them.



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

Editors Note: This is from an email Robert Beatty sent to the PIMC listserv on Saturday, November 30, 2002.

Nancy and I had the great pleasure of having a PIMC Service Committee gathering here at our house today. What a treat it is to rub shoulders and work with Sangha members!

As we walk around the house the changes are striking: Millions of leaves have moved to a new compost pile in the back yard; the gravel pile that has been in the driveway since the front yard magic done by the Sangha in the summer has become a path by the deck in the back yard; the pile of horse manure compost that has graced the front door of our garage since last spring now resides back out of sight; all the gutters have been cleaned; almost all of the wood left over from the demolition of our old deck has been transported next door to our neighbor Dave to use for firewood; and...Nancy provided a delicious lunch.

She made the Acorn Squash soup from the Moosewood Cookbook. The idea was hatched to have recipes from the Sharing Suppers included in the newsletter.

I always really appreciate the informal conversation that happens around the table at times like these. It is great to meet outside the silence of the Dharma hall.

Many bows and thanks to Phil, Karen, Paul, Barbara, Tom, Theresa, and Ann. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

As Phil points out on Sunday evenings: It is a gift to the Sangha to ask for help. Every time we get together it deepens our roots in community. If you can put us to work... offer the gift of asking!



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

Linoleum Lamentations

By Robin Helm

There is a different feel
To dukkha,
Late at night,
Sitting in the dark,
On my kitchen floor.
Listening from my cushion
On a Sunday night,
I can smile a wry smile,
Dukkha, eh?
Part of the human experience,
OK.

But here, tonight,
It's jagged texture
Expands oppressively
Filling the space
With suffocating presence.
My breath comes and leaves
In ragged heaves,
As I wait silently
For the return of hope.

PIMC

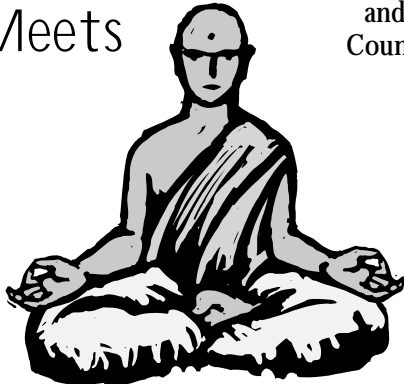
Wish List:

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.

HeartSong Sangha Meets Thursday Evenings



In addition to his background and training in Buddhist meditation, Doug is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Licensed Professional Counselor in private practice.

For more information you may contact Doug at (503) 293-4177.



HeartSong Sangha, led by Doug Pullin, meets every Thursday evening from 7 - 9 p.m at 2311 East Burnside Street, 3rd Floor, in Portland. Weekend retreats are also offered on a periodic basis.

Doug's approach to teaching is based on a deep experiential understanding of the mind/body process that comes from over twenty years of mindfulness meditation practice under the guidance of Robert Beatty and Ruth Dennison.

Doug incorporates traditional sitting and walking practice with other forms of mindful movement, dance and discussion. Doug received Dharma transmission and permission to teach from Robert Beatty in 1993.

The Thursday evening dharma group includes guided and silent sitting in the practice that leads to insight or Vipassana mind. This is the mindfulness meditation practice that was taught by the Buddha over 2500 years ago.

The focus of Doug's teaching is on the cultivation of compassion, loving-kindness and wisdom through the practice of being fully present for the ever changing joys and sorrows of life. In addition to traditional mindfulness meditation, there is also an opportunity for informal discussion and for questions related to practice. The Dharma discussion is in a small group setting. Open to beginning and advanced students alike.

In keeping with tradition, instruction is offered freely and supported by donations.

About This Newsletter

Thank you for donating to this newsletter. 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.

Unexpected Happiness

Birds Bring Joy on a Saturday in November

By Barbara Blossom Ashmun

November afternoon, nearing four,
and the quiet is pierced by a huge choir of birds.

Up in the willows and poplar tops
they sing all at once, loud and certain,
perched and still for a long time.

Suddenly, as one great flock,
they fling themselves through the air like bullets,
they whistle and scream and cry.

Flying through the apple trees,
fluttering through the grape arbor,
stirring the air and the leaves and the fruit.

Loud as a great rain storm, grapes and apples
fall to the ground, hundreds of bird wings beat.

Standing still with my rake, I watch the great commotion,
and reach for a cluster of grapes.

Sweet juice bursts upon my tongue while music fills the air.

Suddenly, as if someone had shot a pistol,
the whole flock rises up and flies off together
like Christmas carolers moving on.

I hear them start over again from the
neighbor's pine trees, taking their song
to the next audience.

February 2003- PIMC Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Sangha Sharing Suppers
2 * Children's Sangha 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC Doug Pullin * 5:30pm Newcomer Orientation & Instruction - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk -PDC	3	4 * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	5	6 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	7	8
9 Robert Beatty * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	10	11 * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	12 * 9am-12pm Meditation - PDC	13 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	14	15
16 * Children's Sangha 6:30-8:45 pm - PDC Robert Beatty * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	17	18 7-9 pm Meditation and Reading Group. See page.3 for details and location. * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	19	20 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	21 1 pm Newsletter Deadline	22
23 Robert Beatty * 6pm Tea & Meditation Instruction - Basement - PDC * 6:30-8:45pm Meditation and Dharma Talk - PDC	24	25 * 7-9pm Beaverton Sit - Dalton Home	26 * 9am-12pm Meditation - PDC	27 * 7-9pm HeartSong Sangha - 2311 E. Burnside	28	

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

* Tuesday Evening - Dalton Home: 11965 SW Foothill Drive, Beaverton. Call Jim at 503-641-8336 if you need directions.

* Thursday Evening - HeartSong Sangha led by Doug Pullin: 2311 E. Burnside on the 3rd floor, Portland. Reach Doug at 503-293-6823.

Half Day

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

Sits Continue:

Wednesdays: Feb. 12 and 26, Mar. 12 and 26. From 9am - noon at PDC.

Children's Sangha

The Children's Sangha meets on the first and third Sunday of each month during the school year. The program is held downstairs during the regular Sunday Sangha practice, from 6:30-8:45. The program is for children 3 years old

through 12th grade. The program introduces the Dharma in a gentle and fun program that includes singing, projects, stories, meditation and games. We are always looking for new friends to join us! In February, the children will explore loving kindness and the six paramitas (generosity, morality, patience, perseverance, meditation and wisdom).

Dharma Lessons from a Dog's Life

Part One of a Two-Part Series
by Genevieve Arnaut

Like any good dharma teacher, my dog found me when I was ready. Our life together was full of seemingly humdrum everyday experiences, interspersed with miracles. In both I learned that humans are not necessarily more spiritually evolved than other species. I also learned a lot about the dharma.

It began in Fall 1994, when a skinny, filthy Siberian Husky pup ran into a hunting camp in the Coast Range of Oregon. She had burn marks around her neck, as if she had been tied up and had pulled away. The men fed her sandwiches and took her to the Humane Society, where the workers cleaned her up and called Siberian Husky rescue. My friend was the rescue person, and she called the pup "Maggie." Cleaned up, Maggie looked to be about 7 or 8 months old. It soon became clear that, although Maggie was exquisite on the outside, something was seriously wrong on the inside – she was incontinent and had urinary tract infections. My friend is a miracle worker, and she talked to a wonderful veterinarian friend of hers in San Francisco who offered to treat Maggie for free! So my friend flew Maggie down there, and this generous man worked on Maggie for 6 weeks – he bought a new X-ray machine and did surgery and pumped her full of antibiotics. He was cautious about Maggie's prognosis after seeing how malformed her urinary system was, and he put her on lifelong antibiotics to control infections. (She took her last pill one day before she died.)

And thus my lessons began. This was the first miracle of Maggie – her ability to inspire people to touch a place of deep love and courage residing within them. Over her life I saw people reach out and take care of her when she was in need, for no reward or reason other than out of kindness and compassion. I began to learn about metta and karuna by watching how others responded to this beautiful dog. We became connected with wonderful new people. And I felt the incredible power of gratitude.

Before Maggie left for San Francisco, my friend tried to find her a home. She brought Maggie to a workshop my husband Larry and I were attending. I took one look at this beautiful animal with one blue and one brown eye, and I felt an immediate bond. In fact, I had three dreams about her in the subsequent week, even though she had been promised to another workshop participant by the time I had seen her. As luck would have it, the first placement was a failure after one day – Maggie tried to eat not only their sofa but also their cat. So, my friend called us, and we agreed to take Maggie if she was not too sick. We fenced our yard in anticipation. When Maggie got off the plane, she climbed into our car, climbed into my lap, and howled all the way home.

We should have known what we were in for when Maggie escaped within 45 minutes of being released into the backyard, expertly digging a hole under the new fence. I spent months going to "Heeling Free" classes, practicing with Maggie every day, trying desperately to teach her to

come when called. Maggie never showed any interest in that activity, nor in heeling, nor, if truth be told, in listening to me at all. Dharma Lesson #2: Ignorance was my birth-right. Oh my goodness, I was ignorant. I didn't have a clue about this Siberian Husky and all her mysterious ways. I had to move out of my abstract idea of "dog" and start paying attention to the reality of this wild creature or we would all be in trouble.

So I paid attention and grew to love her deeply. She leaked like a sieve due to the kidney problems, but as far as she and I were concerned, she was perfect. I learned a lot about being whole from watching her. In 1996, we moved to Portland to a house in the Hawthorne district. Our house in Corvallis had a lovely, grassy yard with trees, while here in Portland we had a postage-stamp-sized yard filled to bursting with kennel, gravel, and deck. Maggie welcomed the new sights. I loved her ability to accept impermanence and remain unattached to external, conditioned realities, reveling in new sights and smells, while I was frustrated with the noise and traffic. We moved 9 months later into a bigger home and yard, but we always remained loyal to a wonderful groomer at Portland Pampered Pets on Hawthorne, who many times lovingly and carefully groomed our dirty Maggie and shaved her bottom so the constant urine would not burn her. Maggie always left Pampered Pets looking like a princess. More gratitude.

The years passed with many happy times. We ran and hiked and camped and walked on the beach. We went skijoring (where our dogs pulled us on cross-country skis). Maggie remained the bad-luck dog in terms of health. She once got a big grass seed in her eye and had to have her eyelid twice sewn shut (of course, sporting a big plastic collar around her neck) before a dog ophthalmologist figured out that she was not producing enough tears. More meds for Maggie. But Maggie was not a complainer, no matter what happened. In fact, she was always ready to give kisses to the vets and assistants as they poked needles and pills and ointments in her. Yet another dharma lesson – Maggie never, not once in her life, turned pain into suffering.

What I loved beyond measure was that Maggie was a true presence. Her piercing eyes could drill through glass to get our attention. She retained her wild spirit, and her agile body leapt like a fox and ran like the wind. Maggie had a great sense of humor and loved to play tricks on our Malamute, Ben, who never quite knew what had happened to him. For example, she would let Ben run in the house first. While he was thinking he was the alpha dog, she was stealing his food. She loved to do "360's" – she had several styles of circles and leaps that she used to express her boundless joy. She was always especially pleased to be the recipient of spaghetti or a fresh blanket. I would think, "If only I could capture that incredible ability she has – what a

Paying Attention in the Garden

By
Barbara Blossom Ashmun

“This year I’m gonna train you up this fence and you’re not gonna like it, but you’re gonna do it anyhow, and you’ll look beautiful!”

These are a gardener’s firm words to her clematis in the winter. You have to build up to these things and prepare yourself and your plants for the journey ahead. It’s not even that important that they listen to you, although there is always that hope. It’s more like talking to yourself in the car— the garden is also a good place to mull things over in order to get clear. Plants are great listeners. They never interrupt, change the subject or disagree. They might give a little rustle once in a while, but that’s it.

If they hear me talking to them, they pay me no mind. “Up, up, up!” I holler at a grape vine as I throw it over the metal grid that forms the ceiling of my arbor. It stays up for a minute and then slyly pops back down. I get the twine. Sometimes it takes more than words. I tie these woody canes to the wire with firm double knots. There’s plenty of leeway for them to sway, but they can only go so far. Plants may not have legs but they’ve learned to travel, flinging branches here and there and creeping underground by roots and rhizomes.

Vines may not shout “No!” out loud but they certainly act very contrary. All my roses climb over to the neighbor’s side of the fence— I have to sneak over there at night to send them home. My clematis tangles around itself in a big knot instead of traveling up the trellis in a calm, orderly fashion. I spend hours unraveling tendrils and weaving them carefully through the lattice. If I rush, or yank too

hard I pay the price of broken stems and ruined flowers.

Whether I like it or not, the plants slow me down. I must pay careful attention, training them, pruning them, mulching them, and fertilizing them or they won’t bloom well, and they’ll end up twisted around themselves. We are in this together, the plants and I. The better I tend them, the more they flourish.

Can I be this patient with myself? When the shoot of an idea sprouts can I quietly watch and see how it unfolds? Can I slow down enough to undo the knots of my sadness, the same way I slow down to untwist a vine? Can I snip away destructive thoughts before I make myself unhappy? Can I feed myself enough quiet and solitude to bloom? Can I spend time with a friend just carefully listening as their thoughts and feelings blossom? Attention is the greatest gift to give, the most satisfying gift to receive.

The plants are great teachers, and their lessons are way beyond horticulture. By connecting with the garden I learn about relating to myself, and to the people I love. After all, the garden is teeming with all forms of life— plants, bugs, birds, frogs, moles— going through their unique growth patterns. It’s only natural then that as gardeners, we stop every now and then to reflect on our own unfolding.



Barbara Blossom Ashmun is a sangha member, a garden designer and the author of five books on gardening. This essay will be published in her forthcoming book "Married to My Garden".

Dharma Lessons from a Dog’s Life *continued from page 6*

joy to be in the present moment, not worried about the future or the past, to be fully here.” No matter how many hours I meditated, her ability to be fully present far surpassed my own, as did her capacity to fully enjoy her life.

In September 2000, just after I finished graduate school, on the day I started my first job as a “real” psychologist, and just weeks before we were to go to China to adopt our daughter Zoë, we found out that Maggie had cancer – a mast cell tumor on her neck. We had the good fortune to meet another wonderful veterinarian and staff who treated Maggie with lots of love while she went through weeks of radiation and chemotherapy. Larry’s son, Zachary, stayed at our home while we were in China, and he transported Maggie for her treatments. Maggie put up with the not-so-fun treatments and was eventually cancer-free, and she was there to greet Zoë when we got home. Maggie was a true pack animal and was not the least bit jealous of Zoë, instead nesting next to the portable crib, licking this adorable child with all her new smells and tastes, and vacuuming up the

food that now seemed ever-present on the floor. And I learned more lessons – there is room in our hearts for everyone, there is love enough to go around. The most important people are those who are right here with us, and the most important time is now.

It all sounds like light and joy, I suppose. And mostly it was, except for some difficult moments. Like when Maggie and Ben killed our neighbor’s cat. Or when we had to decide whether to have Maggie go through radiation and chemotherapy treatments. But she made it easy for us by being so loving and free and joyful. Until she made it hard.

Next month: Dharma Lessons from a Dog’s Death, Part Two of this series.



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.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Newsletter Deadline

appreciated

Final submissions for the March Newsletter
are due by **1:00 pm, Friday, February 21st.**

Submit to [Removed by request]

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: [Removed by request]

A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

-Albert Einstein