

Springs Mountain Sangha

# *The dharma rag*

Volume 9, Issue 2

April-June, 2006

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Springs Mountain Sangha's  
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Or send an email to  
[Smsdharma@ispwest.com](mailto:Smsdharma@ispwest.com).

Submission deadline is the third  
Friday of each month mostly.

Come visit our website @

[www.smszen.org](http://www.smszen.org)

## **DEAR FRIENDS:**

I write to you on a rainy, blustery day here in the coastal hills of Northern California, where the roads keep falling into the creeks and everyone's watching the rivers again. One day the plum trees bloom against clear skies, the next its grey, drippy, and cold. Life feels a bit like uncertain weather at the moment, too: What passes for good news some days is that a dear friend's emergency surgery went as well as could be hoped. There's a held-breath quality to the times, a sense of the fragility of all our best intentions and grand schemes?

So the first thing I'd like to ask of you is that you take good care of yourselves, and good care of each other. Companions and friends are important to have at such a time. A wintry landscape is much easier on the eyes when it includes someone you love. The second thing I want to ask is that you take the time, no matter what else is going on, to touch in to the vast and sustaining silence just under the surface of things. It helps to remember the biggest of big pictures, the longest of views.

The third thing I'd like to ask is that you find a way to extend your caring and your steadiness into the larger world. It seems to me that we here on this planet have been experiencing some kind of widespread instability for awhile now, and it's getting hard on many of us. Chan, this way of being we love when it helps us feel better, also demands of us that we work to help others feel better, too. The always disarming Great Master Ma, who was there at the birth of this way in a time of great trouble, commented once on the quietist approach to meditation, the idea that the goal is to get lost in emptiness and spend as much time there as possible. "From the point of view of the bodhisattva," Ma said, "this is like suffering the tortures of hell." Let that sink in. For what Lincoln called the better angels of our nature, it actually hurts to withdraw from the

celebrations and the difficulties of our fellow creatures, even if we're withdrawing into eternity."

At times of great instability there is also great promise, something else that Chan understands very well. If we don't turn away, things can open up, and our minds become more flexible, our hearts more responsive. More creative. Braver. *How can I help?* is a simple question to include in your daily practice. A little chanting, a little meditating, a few minutes exploring how to help--individually and together. Make it a regular old boring part of your ritual. What could it hurt? At the end of Shantideva's 'Guide to the Bodhisattva Way', he sums up his aspiration like this:

For as long as space endures,  
for as long as the world lasts,  
may I live,  
dispelling the sufferings of the world.

This is the living heart of the Mahayana. This is its promise, too--that we might live in a world full of beings who are making that promise, too. Will we ever get there? Probably not, but that makes no difference. If peace and freedom are dependent on reaching the goal, we'll never have them. But if peace and freedom are knowing that we're working towards that promise with our whole hearts, they're available right now.

I look forward to talking with and seeing many of you before too long. I've missed you and our work together. In the meantime, I send you much love.



The Open Source  
email ~ [joansutherland@sonic.net](mailto:joansutherland@sonic.net)

## UPCOMING EVENTS!

**Intro to Zen classes** are scheduled regularly throughout the year. If you'd like to be notified of upcoming classes and events, please email [info@smszen.org](mailto:info@smszen.org) to be added to our e-mailing list.

### Spring Retreat with Joan Sutherland

Wednesday April 26<sup>th</sup> to Sunday April 30<sup>th</sup>  
@ Benet Pines. Remember, this year, Joan will be taking **her residency in the Fall**, not the Spring. This is your chance to meet with her and sit with your companions. For more information, please contact Robert King @ [kingrh@adelphia.net](mailto:kingrh@adelphia.net) or 719-684-0130.

### Precepts study group planned for summer:

At least two people have decided that they'd like to take part in a ceremony of Taking Refuge in the Bodhisattva Way during our September retreat. If you are curious about what it is formally to take refuge in the Way, please see Joan Sutherland's website: [www.joansutherland.net](http://www.joansutherland.net). She has written a gorgeous article on the subject.

The bottom line is that always, as we practice, we are taking refuge in our lives, by our very readiness to yield all of our ideas about them and meet each thing just as it is. The Bodhisattva precepts help us focus on the specific ways in which we can strengthen and act on this readiness: ways in which we recognize the obstacles we have set up between ourselves and life and see them for the gates they really are.

So---to help those formally taking refuge prepare and for the benefit of any others wishing to join in, a precepts study group will start at the end of May or beginning of June. If you have a suggestion or request regarding text(s) to study together, or favorite time of week for meeting, please let Sarah Bender know.

The next **Steering Committee Meeting** will be Sunday, Mar. 19 at 4:00 PM, 20 W. Mesa Ave. (just west of the corner of Cascade Ave. and Monument St.). All are welcome. New energy is very helpful to the committee!

## Opportunities to Support our Teachers

As you may know, our teachers in most cases do not solicit or receive a living wage from their efforts in spreading the words of the way. However, they do accrue various costs to which we can help. Specifically, both Joan Sutherland and John Tarant have medical costs right. If you are so moved and would like to send any amount of monetary support, please contact a member of the steering committee for Joan or Pacific Zen Institute [healthdrive@pacificzen.org](mailto:healthdrive@pacificzen.org) for John.

Also please remember the teachers blessed with health: Sarah Bender and David Weinstein. They too can always benefit from the monetary support as you are motivated to share. Thank you for your consideration.

## LATER EVENTS TO CONSIDER

Tentative dates for **Joan's Fall Residency** are September 25 to October 23, with the **Meditation Retreat** September 25 to October 1, and probably a **Koan Retreat** October 20 to 22.

## VOICES

### Dear Readers,

The response to the call for re-subscription was wonderful! So many of you contacted us to let us know you appreciate the newsletter and wanted to keep receiving it. Many of you said that this newsletter keeps you connected with the group and others also said how much you liked the poetry. It is great to serve you and to hear your feedback about its contents. Now onto business again, <smile>.

Many of you attended the book group: **Chan Buddhism: Its history as our tradition, and its application to our lives today**. It would be fantastic to hear from you what you thought, what ideas you shared and what you are thinking now having discussed this together. Please share with the rest of us.

The same goes to you who attended the **Touching the Heart-Mind: Zen Meditation, A Mid-Winter Introductory Retreat**. We would love to hear from you. Help us share in the gifts of the retreat.

Thank you so much for all your submissions to this newsletter. Gratefully, Judith

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## conceived at last December's retreat

shadows rise up  
like blood saturating cloth  
darkening  
slippery  
evoking death

water swells  
infusing the stain  
diluting  
lightening  
life's solution

Judith Lee

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## Just Passing Through

It's like getting a song stuck in your head.  
One of the songs from the unwritten but  
extensive list of songs that you'd rather not  
have in your consciousness.  
But there it is nevertheless, ruthlessly playing  
away.  
You try to get rid of it or replace it with a song  
of your choosing, yet it persists and even  
seems to play louder, gathering momentum.  
Thoughts begin tracing their way through the  
recent past, trying to nail down just how  
and when this seed was planted.  
Did you hear the song in the car this morning?  
Was it playing in the store while you shopped  
for groceries?  
Maybe it was the coworker who had it stuck in  
her head and sang it out loud,  
passing it on to you,  
Or the stranger casually whistling as you passed  
on the sidewalk.  
Ah...that's it!  
You relax and satisfaction settles in for a few  
brief moments  
Until you are struck once again by that nagging  
melody still pulsing within you, relentlessly.  
You found the source but not salvation.  
Frustration replaces satisfaction as it seems  
there will be no release from this  
torturous tune.

So how about this?  
 Step aside and let it play.  
 Listen with fresh attention,  
 as if this is the first time you've ever heard it.  
 Sing along.  
 Dance.  
 Lose yourself in the harmonies, let the tempo  
 carry you where it will.  
 Dive deeply into its rhythms and in turn let  
 them dive deeply into you,  
 Filling the empty spaces, folding into the  
 warmth of your heart.  
 Beating...  
 Breathing...  
 Being...  
 How is it then?

Andrew

\*\*\*\*\*

### Intimacy in Spiritual Life

Late Winter snow falls,  
 cloaking a young aspen tree,  
 robins in branches.

I find that I have been thinking about the subject of intimacy and its role in spiritual life. I am not sure exactly how this topic insinuated itself into my consciousness, but my thoughts regarding it have been occupying me recently.

I think what made me start thinking about the question was that I was attempting to describe the sacred path of bow hunting to non-hunters and anti-hunters. I wanted to express how, through carefully attending to the lives of wild elk, at close proximity, the hunter develops familiarity and begins to have feelings for elk similar to those he would have for other members of his family. I wanted to describe how intimacy develops between the hunter and the elk and how, through practice, this intimacy is extended to all of the natural world and the universe.

The next event that called my attention to the subject of intimacy, came after taking Sarah Bender's one day retreat *Touching the Heart-Mind*. She gave us a set of koans to take home. I had been working with the koan "Yunmen said, Sickness and medicine correspond to each other. The whole world is medicine. What are you?" After working with the koan for some

time, and while chopping vegetables in my kitchen at home, I suddenly felt as if the defensive shield that protects my heart from the world had disappeared. For a brief period, I was exposed to raw existence, There was an intimacy with all beings and with the way things are. This intimacy felt threatening yet exhilarating and even the simple task of chopping vegetables became exciting.

Another experience that solidified my interest in intimacy, as a spiritual subject, came at the *Mid Winter Retreat* with David Weinstein. This retreat was held at Sarah's house. At previous retreats that I had attended with other groups, we ate meals at local restaurants and had access to institutional restrooms. At the Mid Winter retreat we participated in the preparation and serving of meals. We all shared two bathrooms. Sarah offered much welcomed massages, to participants, in the meditation hall. At the end of the retreat we sang "Row Row Row Your Boat" and blessed Sarah's house. I realized that whatever the benefits I had experienced from meditation, what set this retreat apart spiritually, in my mind, was the intimacy shared by the participants.

I do not believe that the subject of intimacy, as such, is of general interest to Christians. I looked for the words "intimate" and "intimacy" in Strong's Concordance and found no references to either word in the Old or New Testament. The word "love" is, of course, used frequently.

I do not know if intimacy is a subject of interest to Buddhists. I have often seen the word "non-dual" used in the religious texts, but I have never fully understood the meaning of that. The subject of "compassion" also seems to be of interest to Buddhists.

Perhaps my perplexity is that I do not fully appreciate the distinctions between love, compassion, intimacy and non-duality. Love and compassion seem to assume a subject and object. Intimacy and non-duality seem to imply "not different not same". Non-duality may be a word of science and intimacy a word of art. Perhaps all four of these words describe somewhat similar types of relationships that are worthy of realization in the spiritual life.

Skip S

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**THE WAY OF THINGS**

THINGS LIVE AND THINGS DIE  
PEOPLE LIVE AND PEOPLE DIE  
THAT IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

I WALK DOWN THE PATH  
I STEP ON AN ANT  
A FUNGUS, A BUG  
ANOTHERS- BROTHER, SISTER, PARENT,  
LOVER.

I DESTROY WITHOUT THINKING  
WITHOUT FEELING OR COMPASSION.

THEN, I LOST A LOVER  
CRUSHED UNDER FOOT  
OF ANOTHER UNFEELING BEING  
A BEING OF NO CARING.

MY EYES WIDE OPEN  
MY HEART BROKEN  
MY LIFE NEVER TO BE THE SAME.

NOW I WALK AND WONDER  
WITH CARE AND COMPASSION  
I HAVE KILLED AND I KNOW  
I WILL KILL AGAIN  
NOW MINDFUL  
IT IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

I PRACTICE  
I OPEN MY HEART-  
IN HOPES OF REDEMPTION.

Nard C.

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**THE ZEN OF THE AMERICAN BACHELOR**

Ok, its time for me to confess. The real reason I forget to do that final bow at the end of Monday night zazen, is because I can't wait to get home to watch the American Bachelor in Paris. You know - that TV show where the guy gets to pick which of a dozen women is to remain in Paris with him. He selects those who remain by giving them a rose. Those who don't get a rose are banished back to the states, maybe back to Duluth or wherever.

One night while watching I was reminded of my own situation - being passed up for promotion. I couldn't believe the similarities between myself and poor women who did not get the rose that night - when she felt she deserved one.

When she said: "he doesn't know what he's doing" - that was me also, they (my employer) don't know what they're doing passing me up.

When she said: "he doesn't know what he passing up" - that was me, my organization doesn't know what they're passing up.

When she said: "I really loved him" - that was me, I really loved my job.

When she said: "I'm the best thing for him" - that was me, I'm the best thing for this organization.

When she said: "how could he not pick me?" - that was me, how could they not pick me?

So there I was - on TV, not getting the rose and being passed over. I was reminded of the koan of Bai Chung's fox. What's wrong with being a fox?

I can't wait for the next episode. Who will get the rose, me or her?

Ed Q.

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**LIFE CALLING**

I stopped by the library at 7:00 one morning to drop off some library books that were due. At Old Colorado City there are drop boxes to drive a vehicle up to to drop books into a slot when the library is closed. I went up to the box and the lid on the slot was not all the way closed. Someone had put two books in the slot and they jammed so the slot would not allow other books to be placed in the slot. I thought I would do a good deed and clear the slot where the books were stuck, I reached my arm into the slot and brought out two items. One was "Getting Unstuck: Breaking Your Habitual Patterns and Encountering Naked Reality by Pema Chodron. Pema is the resident teacher at Gampo Abbey, a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery in Nova Scotia. Well I stuck the other book back into the slot and took Pema home and listened to the Cd set. As it was stuck and waiting for me to come and get it unstuck it seemed like it was waiting to get me unstuck. It was what I needed to hear right then and after listening I did return it to the library. Nice to get a sign of what to do and how to proceed sometimes.

Nard

## SISTER SANGHA TO THE SOUTHLAND

### Words from David Cockrell

It has been eighteen months now since I relinquished my post as editor of the *dharma rag* and embarked on the project of starting a sangha in my hometown of Pueblo. It has been a truly rewarding journey, although I have greatly missed my weekly pilgrimages to the Springs for reconnection with friends and Companions of the Way in Springs Mountain Sangha (SMS).

The **Wet Mountain Sangha** is very much a sister sangha to the south. We are an Open Source affiliate with Joan Sutherland as our holding teacher. The liturgy we follow is the Open Source liturgy, and any SMS visitor would feel right at home with the sequence of activities and ideas expressed at a sitting. The sangha is fortunate to have its own zendo (rented space in a Catholic Church!) and sits on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings. We also hold periodic half-day sits at the yurt at my property in Red Creek Ranch, the location of several half-day sits for SMS in 2003 and 2004. We also hold a monthly dharma study class and conduct periodic **Introduction to Zen** classes.

Joan was gracious enough to visit us twice in 2005, including giving a public talk at the Unitarian Church of Pueblo during her spring stop. Another highlight of the year was a visit and talk from Melissa Robinson, abbot of DKD Shambala Retreat Center in Gardner, just south of Pueblo (<http://www.shambhala.org/centers/dkd>), and we are cultivating a regular interchange with the Center.

As far as we know, **Wet Mountain Sangha** is the only Buddhist sangha in this working class town of 100,000 no-souls. This position challenges us to a worthy experiment. Perhaps a hundred folks have crossed the threshold in our fledgling 18 months of existence. They bring not only backgrounds in Zen, but also Vipassana practice (including several who have spent time in Southeast Asia), Tibetan practice, and all manner of hybrid spiritual orientations. Some, of course, bring no spiritual orientation, but no shortage of Great Suffering. The experiment is in discovering how durable the Open Source is as a vehicle for awakening and compassion when it's the only game in town.

We have become a kind of "Center" for smaller sitting groups in Beulah and La Junta. We helped out with the city's Katrina evacuee assistance efforts, and we are currently partnering in an effort to bring the Maitreya Project's Relic Tour to Pueblo. We keep the door open to those who seek a meditation practice as a part of any spiritual

path, and I think we are committed to staying present for what is really real and needed in our community. It's Bodhisattva work at its best, and it enriches all our practices. We would, of course, welcome anyone from SMS at any of our sittings or events. We keep a funky little website updated at <http://wetmountainsangha.home.comcast.net/>, and all the latest buzz is there, including contact information. Several of our group are attending SMS workshops and retreats regularly, so I'm sure we'll have some great opportunities for cross-fertilization. I look forward to the interchange between our sanghas and to the great journey we are all on with Joan and the Open Source.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

- ❖ **Monday** evenings starting at 6:10 p.m. at Shove Chapel: 1010 North Nevada on the campus of Colorado College.
  - ✓ *First Monday* of the month: 30-minute sutra Service, brief walking meditation, two 25-minute periods of sitting
  - ✓ *Second Monday*: one 25-minute sitting period, including walking meditation, followed by a social gathering
  - ✓ *Third Monday*: one 25-minute sitting period, including walking meditation, followed by a talk or reading
  - ✓ *Fourth Monday*: One 25-minute sitting period and community member shares personal Zen Practice experience: "Way Speaking Mind." If you'd like/willing to take a turn, please call Sarah Bender
  - ✓ *Fifth Monday*: Two 25-minute sitting periods with walking meditation between. .
- ❖ **Wednesday Mornings** from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. at Shove Chapel.
- ❖ **Saturday Mornings** from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., also at Shove Chapel. After the sitting many of us usually walk to a nearby coffee shop for breakfast.
- ❖ **Sunday** we often have steering committee meetings or discussion groups or workshops

PLEASE REMEMBER TO CHECK THE WEBSITE  
IN CASE OF CHANGES AND ADDITIONS!!

**Dana for Springs Mountain Sangha**

Springs Mountain Sangha (now with tax exempt status) engages in three weekly sittings, study groups, retreats, residencies for our holding teachers, the *dharma rag*, website, and other communication media. Contributions from members and friends are the Sangha's sole financial resource. Let's share the dharma assets!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Checks should be made out to Springs Mountain Sangha c/o Robert King, Treasurer.

Springs Mountain Sangha is a member of the Open Source Project, in both the Soto & Rinzai traditions.

To learn more, visit our website, <http://www.smszen.org/> or contact us at [SMSdharma@ispwest.com](mailto:SMSdharma@ispwest.com)

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