

Dharma Rag

Volume 7, Issue 2

February, 2004

Inside this Issue:

The Intimate Joys of Winter

Joan Sutherland

Journey Home

Robert King

The Zen Path Through Depression

Book Review by Kathryn McWilliams

Steve Doyle's Field Awareness Collection

Compassion

Nard Claar

Current Affairs



The Intimate Joys of Winter

Joan Sutherland

It's the middle of winter, the rain is falling, the fire crackling, and a not-so-young nerd's thoughts turn towards a comfy chair and a good book. Fortunately there's a lot to choose from—at least in books; there's just one comfy chair by the fire in this living room. Anyway...after decades of making-do and wondering how much we could trust what we're reading, in the last few years there's been a flowering of really good translation and scholarship in the fields of Chan and Zen.

There used to be an enormous gap between most scholars and practitioners—so much so that it was hard to imagine we were talking about the same thing. But now it is scholarship that is interrupting our practitioner routines, habits of thought, and ingrained prejudices...with facts—juicy, subversive facts that enliven our practice and shake up what we think we know.

Here are a few suggestions for anyone looking for a good winter's read and a bit of shaking up. Two of the liveliest and most thoughtful writers on the movement of the Dharma from Asia to the West are Stephen S.

Batchelor and Donald Lopez, Jr. Anything they've written is worth a look, but a place to start would be Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (University of Chicago Press), which is wonderful on the western gaze and the Dharma, and Batchelor's recent interviews and articles, which can be found with a little patient Googling.

Looking for some first books on Zen and Buddhism to recommend to someone who's expressed an interest, or maybe you never quite got around to that foundational reading yourself? There's Martine Batchelor's *The Way of Zen* (also published as *Principles of Zen*, Thorsons) for a slim yet generous introduction to everything from basic postures to basic doctrines. I'd couple that with Kazuaki Tanahashi and David Schneider, *Essential Zen* (Harper San Francisco), a collection of original texts that shows the power and poetry of the tradition. If you're looking for Dharma 101, try Donald Lopez's *The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to its History and Teachings* (Harper San Francisco).

Interested in the Taoist roots of Chan? Take a look at Stephen Mitchell's *The Tao Te Ching* (Harper and Row) and David Hinton's *Chuang Tzu: The Inner*

Chapters (Counterpoint) for graceful translations of the original sources, or Ray Grigg's *The Tao of Zen* (Charles E. Tuttle, Co.) for how Chan flowered from a Taoist root.

Want to sink your teeth into some wonderful translations or scholarship on koans? For sheer delight, even if you don't think you're a koan person, check out *The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu* by James Green (Shambhala) and Urs App's *Master Yunmen* (Kodansha International). If you do really love koans, take a look at the work of Steven Heine, whose scholarship requires some elbow grease but will reward you; his books include *The Koan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism* and *Opening a Mountain: Koans of the Zen Masters* (Oxford University Press). And what about the ladies? In the koan tradition, look out especially for Miriam Levering's articles on Chan (another Google search) and for Trevor Leggett's *Warrior Koans: Early Zen in Japan* (Arkana), a treasure trove on how our women ancestors made koan study their own.

Feeling iconoclastic? Love the tradition for what it actually is, rather than for its self-mythologizing? Consider this assortment of recent books, whose provocative subjects are obvious from their titles: Bernard Faure's *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity and Gender* (Princeton University Press), *Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* by John R. McRae

(University of California Press) and *Brian Victoria's Zen at War* (Weatherhill Press). You won't see things in quite the same way anymore, which is a good thing, right?

And finally, after you've done all this virtuous study, don't forget that a winter evening is a perfect time to read poetry with the one(s) you love. It happens that the last and present poets laureate are wonderful to read aloud. Billy Collins is as congenial a poet as you could find; start with *Sailing Alone Around the Room* if you're unfamiliar with his work. Louise Gluck is a shockingly good writer, with a temperament as different from Collins as sunset from high noon. She has quite a few collections out; most recently I've been reading *Vita Nova* and *The Seven Ages*.

As Victor Hori, another fine contemporary scholar/practitioner, says, "Zen is free in language, not free from language." Enjoy a little freedom this season. Better hurry...the nights are getting shorter every day.

Journey Home

Robert King

In late February of last year, I received word that my Uncle Howard had died. Within a week of being 99 years old, he was the last surviving male member of my parents' generation. It was sad to know that he would not be around to pass along stories from the family history or share with us his dry wit and optimistic view of life. But I was not prepared

for my intense reaction to his death.

On reflection I came to see that a significant shift had occurred: there was no longer an older generation for me to look up to. I had joined the ranks of the Elders in my family. This realization, together with a number of dreams over the next several months, led me to conclude that I needed to do something to mark this important transition in my life.

In the midst of our fall sesshin, I got the idea for a trip to Kansas to visit some of the places where I'd lived with my parents when I was growing up—many of them places I hadn't seen in over 50 years. Elizabeth agreed to accompany me on this journey and help me process the experience. Joan suggested I burn incense at each of the places I visited.

The trip proved to be a true "journey home," the expression of a deep longing I didn't know I had. It enabled me to reconnect not only with my family of origin, but with myself at different stages in my life. It was a way of honoring my parents and at the same time acknowledging their departure. Burning incense added to the experience by giving it a ritual quality and evoking a sense of the sweetness and transience of life.

In my autumn years,
a longed for journey
home.

The scent of incense.

-- R. King

The Zen Path Through Depression

by Philip Martin
Book Review by Kathryn McWilliams



My own depression brought me to this book through a friend. Philip Martin wrote it

because of his own startling depression at 37. Even though he had been practicing Zen meditation for numerous years, when he came face to face, heart to heart, mind to mind with his depression, he realized that his practice to this point was of no help. He needed to dive to much deeper depths in his meditation, because the depression demanded that of him. I completely relate. It is a true leap of faith into the practice, for depression has already pulled you into depths you were not aware existed in your being.

It is an incredible gift of exploration, and the practice of meditation centers body, heart, mind so the gift can be unwrapped and seen clearly. With the encouragement of his teacher, Dainin Katagiri Roshi, this book came to life.

Each chapter is only two or three pages long. They each begin with a profound quote that in and of itself can become a contemplation, and end with "further exploration" possibilities. The chapters focus on ideas such as Effort, Faith, Selflessness, Death, Anger, Escape, Desire, and Community,

as they come in contact with your own personal depression. The writing draws you in with clear focus. You do not have to have depression in order to gain the wisdom from this book, all you have to be is alive and open to your life.

Current Affairs

Joan's Residency

The excitement is rising daily about Joan Sutherland Roshi's 2004 Residency with Springs Mountain Sangha. Events will begin boldly, with a six-day sesshin April 12-18. Registration for sesshin is beginning now, and a form for your use is included below. Evening talks at the retreat will be open for those not attending full-time, including a blessing of Andrew & Wendy Palmer's baby boy, Ian, on the evening of April 16.

Our regular Monday night sittings will include teishos (dharma talks) by Joan on the following three Mondays, April 19 & 26, and May 3. Joan will give a public lecture on Friday, April 23. This will be followed by an Introductory class on Saturday, April 24, co-taught by Sarah Bender. Work-in-the-Room will be held for Joan's regular students on Tuesdays and Wednesdays April 27 & 28, and May 4 & 5. In addition, there will be one individual interview period scheduled for non-students.

There will also be events based on classes and faculty gatherings at Colorado College and UCCS, with a full schedule to be announced in the March Rag. The residency will be culminated

with an Integrative Retreat, May 7-9.

Introduction to Zen

Meditation leader Sarah Bender will be leading an introductory Class for all interested on Friday, Feb. 27 6:30-8:30 pm. & continuing Saturday Feb. 28, 9-12 am., at Shove Chapel. The class includes an orientation to Zen Buddhist practice, instruction for sitting and walking meditation, discussion and readings. Contact Sarah at 594-0724 or sbender@corb.net for more information.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Thursdays 6 to 7:30 pm at Shove Chapel, Sarah is also leading a six-week study group on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Sarah says: "When I think of the year as a plant, this part definitely feels like the root. So I'm drawn to what I think of as "root teachings", and here's what I want to do with that impulse. The Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness is one of the core texts of Buddhism, but that isn't so much why I want to take it up. It's that mindfulness is so clearly our practice, and it is so simple and slippery at the same time. What is it? How do we build our power of intention so that we can practice it with increasing strength?"

The first week (Feb. 5) was focused on mindfulness, placing the sutra in context, and taking up a practice together. weeks two and three: body week four: feelings week five: mind week six: phenomena ("objects of mind")

Half-Day & All-Day Sittings in February & March!

If you have been contemplating a longer meditation time for yourself but don't feel comfortable yet with the idea of a six-day sesshin, consider the upcoming half-day sitting Saturday, Feb. 21, 6:00-11:40 am. (breakfast provided), or a full-day sitting Saturday, March 13, 6:00 am-5:00 pm., both to be held at the CC Women's Club, west of Cascade on Mesa.

Mountain Cloud Retreat, Santa Fe

Mountain Cloud Zen Center in Santa Fe will be holding a summer retreat with Joan Sutherland July 14-18. (These dates are a change from dates previously announced.) For more information and registration, contact Ann Hunkins at ann@earthear.com.

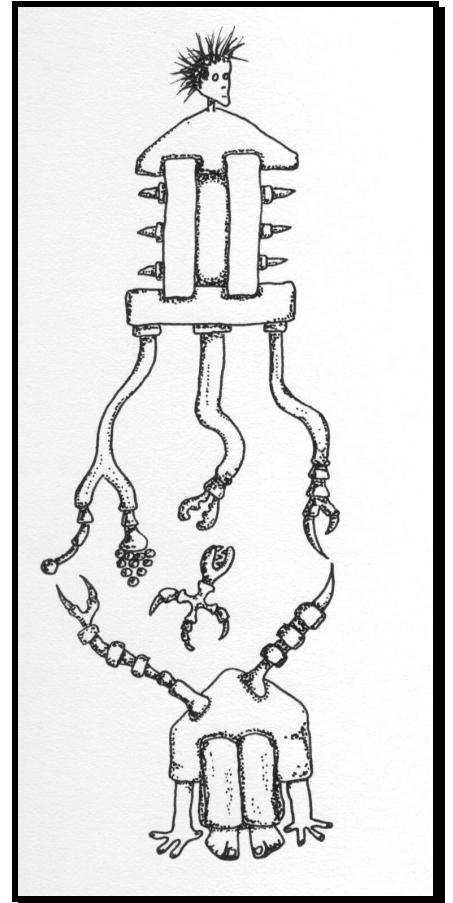
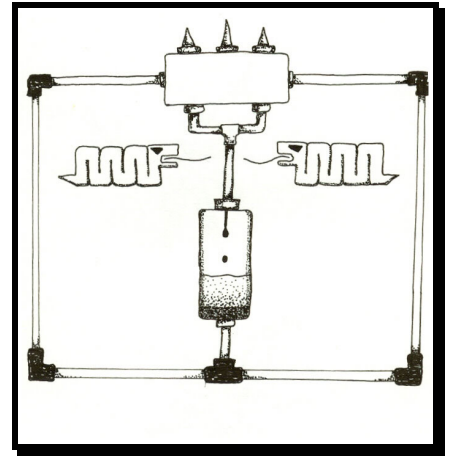
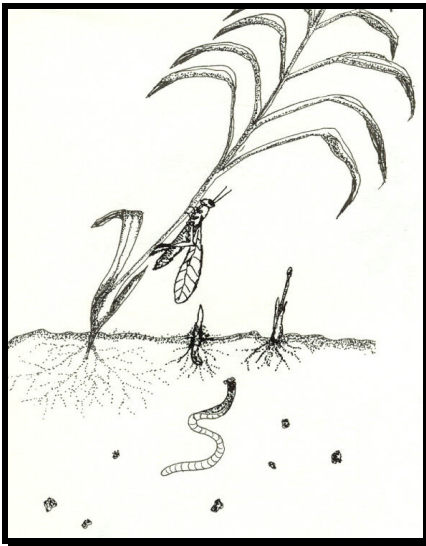
Desert Lotus Zen Information Group

Another of our extended family of Pacific Zen Institute affiliate organizations, Desert Lotus Group in Phoenix, has started a new web information group. You can see their discussions or join at

<http://groups.msn.com/DesertLotusZenInformation>.

Steve Doyle's *Field Awareness Collection*

The drawings selected to be published in the Dharma Rag through the next year were the product of my seven-month stay in Oakland, CA. I spent many hours at Gaylord's Café on Piedmont Avenue during this period of unbounded creativity, allowing ideas and images to surface in a very free and non-judgmental way. None of them were intended for publication or display but were simply an expression of the experimental phase my life was going through. A few of the drawings follow the model of an "Exquisite Corpse" while others flow from a single, random shape. I'd like to thank David Cockrell for suggesting the idea of an "ongoing exhibition" of these bits of Dharma. I hope you enjoy them.



Compassion

By Nard Claar

Compassion such a virtue
A blessing to bestow
The greatest of gifts

Kindness and caring
All wrapped into one
A present NOW

February, 2004

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2 6:15 Sutra Service	3	4 6:00-7:00 Zazen	5 6-7:30 pm Foundations of Mindfulness	6	7 6:30-8:30 Zazen
8	9 6:15 Social Night	10	11 6:00-7:00 Zazen	12 6-7:30 pm Foundations of Mindfulness	13 6:00 pm Steering Committee (Art Shop)	14 6:30-8:30 Zazen
15	16 6:15 Teisho Night	17	18 6:00-7:00 Zazen	19 6-7:30 pm Foundations of Mindfulness	20	21 6:00-11:40 am Half-day Sitting, CC Women's Club
22	23 6:15 Two Periods Zazen	24	25 6:00-7:00 Zazen	26 6-7:30 pm Foundations of Mindfulness	27 6:30- 8:30 pm Introduction to Zen with Sarah	28 6:30-8:30 Zazen 9-12 am Intro Workshop, cont.
29						

March, 2004

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1 6:15 Sutra Service	2	3 6:00-7:00 Zazen	4 6-7:30 pm Foundations of Mindfulness	5	6 6:30-8:30 Zazen
7	8 6:15 Social Night	9	10 6:00-7:00 Zazen	11 6-7:30 pm Foundations of Mindfulness	12 6:00 Steering Committee	13 6:00am- 5:00 pm Full- day Sitting CC Women's Club
14	15 6:15 Teisho Night	16	17 6:00-7:00 Zazen	18	19	20 6:30-8:30 Zazen
21	22 29 6:15 Two Periods Zazen	123	24 6:00-7:00 Zazen	25	26	27 6:30-8:30 Zazen
28	29 6:15 Two Periods Zazen	30	31 6:00-7:00 Zazen	April 12-May 10 Joan Sutherland's Residency	Apr 12-18 Spring Sesshin	May 7-9 Integrative Retreat

Dana for Springs Mountain Sangha

Springs Mountain Sangha 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: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (h) _____ (other) _____

Email: _____

Contribution Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Checks should be made out to Robert King, Treasurer.

Springs Mountain Sangha is an affiliate of Pacific Zen Institute, in both the Soto & Rinzai traditions. To learn more, visit our website, <http://www.zencorner.org> or contact us at Dharmarag@comcast.net.

- Please check if you prefer to receive the newsletter by email, saving resources & expenses.

Dharma Rag

c/o David Cockrell

One Goldsmith

Pueblo, CO 81008

www.zencorner.org