

Springs Mountain Sangha

# Dharma Rag

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## **At Home in the World** Joan Sutherland

As I write this, the news from Iraq continues to be grim, a devastating crisis is developing in Sudan, and the Democratic Convention is in full swing, emphasizing, if any more emphasis were needed, the importance of the coming election. My thoughts are also turning toward our meditation retreat in September, which will include a Refuge Ceremony. It seems an important time to continue to explore together how we can make a home in, how we can find refuge in, this troubled world. How do the steadiness of meditation and the warm curiosity of inquiry support us in such times? Where are the gaps in that support, when anger or despair or worry threaten to overwhelm us? How does one person respond when the scale of difficulties seems so vast?

How can we bridge the gap between our personal concerns and the concerns of the world? We spend a lot of time in our practice focusing on the very local neighborhood—our own heart-minds, our intimate relations. Often this feels like plenty to do, an infinitely rich \*!%!\* field of material to bring to our practice. True enough, and it also seems important to

remember that when we sit, we sit in and with the whole world. The whole world just as it is, not as we would wish it to be or are afraid it is. What is that like? What is it like to be at home in the world just as it is, to have that ease, and that fierce caring?

Right here is the heart of the Mahayana: That we don't practice just to get free ourselves, but that we and the world are moving towards freedom together. Even if we wanted to, we couldn't do it alone. What would a retreat be without birdsong and the vanilla scent of Ponderosa pine and the thing about that other person that drives you crazy? Diminished, even sad somehow. Missing the essential point, somehow. What is it like when we sit in a circle that also includes the refugees from Darfur and our children who are off to Iraq? To welcome them as we do our own thoughts and feelings? To listen and to ask, Who hears? Perhaps we begin to feel the great body of which we are each a part. Perhaps that is as important as anything else we do in our practice.

It's so easy to get armored, to 'accept' that everything is a mess and close off. Which, of course, isn't acceptance in any real

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sense, because acceptance isn't a final, static position we reach, but the much riskier and more difficult *process* of feeling the world in all its complexity, its confounding tendency to open us up and break our hearts in quick succession. Part of that kind of acceptance is to let what seems hopeful or refreshing touch us, too. This week I'm encouraged by Teresa Heinz Kerry's convention speech. I admit that anybody who protested against apartheid in 1950's South Africa *and* makes a plug for the Hubble Telescope for extending our reach to the edges of the universe wins me over. But I was also struck by how she represents the best of what America can be, and at a time when the worst is so vividly on display, I'm grateful.

Immigrants like Heinz Kerry can often show us to ourselves in a fresh way. She spoke of what others see as good about us, like our can-do spirit and our curiosity, and she reminded us of how precious our right to be outspoken is, not something to take for granted. She spoke to a yearning in many of us for America to re-enter the community of nations, to regain the home in the world we seem to have lost in recent years. How exciting it would be to imagine what we could contribute, rather than to fear what we impose!

May our September retreat be an opportunity for us to take refuge together, in each other and in the world.

## From the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee met July 23 at the Woman's Club, with Sarah Bender, William Jeavons, David Cockrell, Robert and Elizabeth King in attendance. Joan's visit with the sangha in September was discussed. Several ideas for workshops and talks prior to or after the sesshin are under consideration, and the final schedule will be announced soon. The sesshin will begin on Wednesday, September 29 and continue until Sunday, October 3.

The structure of the proposed Community Concerns Committee is close to its final form, as proposed by the Steering Committee. The following introduction to the policy describes the purpose of the committee: "Most of the inevitable tangles that occur in community life can be resolved by treating each other with kindness and respect, and by turning to our practice with our difficulties. In a voluntary and volunteer organization, it is particularly important that we encourage rather than dishearten each other. The Community Concerns Committee (Committee) is intended for those situations in which we cannot accomplish this. When such concerns arise, we are committed to their resolution as compassionately and fairly as possible. It is important for Springs Mountain Sangha (SMS) members to know that their legitimate concerns will be addressed. To this end, the SMS

Steering Committee (SC) adopts the following procedures for concerns that arise within our community, including member concerns about sangha policy, leadership, and practice structure; intra-sangha relationship issues; as well as requests for assistance in enhancing the quality of sangha life and for referrals for assistance with emotional and spiritual needs." The recommended composition and procedures of the committee are quite simple, and these will be presented to the sangha for discussion in September.

In other SC news, the all-day sitting previously announced for August 28 or 29 has been cancelled. An Introduction to Zen Workshop will be held September 9, with Sarah Bender leading and Elizabeth King assisting.

## COMMUNITY FORUM

### Home Fires Burning By Sarah Bender



In mid-summer, as I travel up the East Coast (yesterday, New Jersey; today, Boston; tomorrow, Maine...) visiting loved ones, I think of you, my friends, my Dharma family, keeping the home fires burning. The feeling of this is real and important to me. So I ask, what are our home fires? What's our hearth, as a sangha, a Dharma family, and how do we tend it?

I'd like to suggest that you carry this question with you a

bit. If it interests you, and you'd like to share your response, write it down and submit it to the Dharma Rag.

Here's a little kindling. Some of us played with the following at the leaders' workshop last weekend and found it very rich. It seems to apply to our lives singly and as a sangha on many levels.

From Case 22 of the Book of Serenity, "Yantou's Katsu and Bow": Yantou came to Deshan. As he crossed the threshold of the gate he asked, "Is this ordinary?" "Is this holy?" Deshan shouted. Yantou bowed. The koan goes on from there, but I propose playing with this part in this context.

Here are some thoughts to kick off the discussion. It's tempting to stop at "It's all holy, it's all ordinary." But for me, that's not the interesting part.

We all recognize some moments as holy: A birth, a death, first love, for example. Cultures all around the world make ceremonies for those moments. But do they need ceremonies? What is it in us that rises up, wanting to affirm, wanting to name that moment---or speak to it---or do we need to give it its ordinariness, to welcome it into our human realm, the place where we live? I remember when my first child was born, Joe. It was a very quiet moment, in a little rural hospital in Kahuku, Hawaii, after more than 30 hours of labor. The baby emerged and was laid on my belly. I said, "Hello." He made some little talky noises. The Doctor Branch gave me one kiss on the top of my head. Fred smiled, tears in his eyes. That

was ceremony enough, all made of the most ordinary gestures.

I think also of Yehuda Amichai's poem about the death of his friend, in battle, ending "my friend, red-breasted." Tragically, such ordinary words.

And I think of Richard Baker Roshi's little daughter, noticing about the death of an animal, "It got hard." Later she asked, "Daddy, when are you going to get hard?" The freshness of the question wakes like a slap.

So, what about our practice in community? How might these questions be helpful to us? For sure, if we try to fix our gestures in one category or the other (a bow is holy, conversation is ordinary) the hearth is cold. And is this to say that one is better than the other? Surely not. And yet, I know the importance of creating a place in which we honor the holy---and the holiness of the ordinary. We make gestures, we speak and sing words, we set places. We sit still....and in these very ordinary ways, we welcome the holy explicitly. This is something that continues to move me: that we, choosing our simple arrangement and gestures, wish to keep welcoming the holy nature and the ordinary nature of each thing, and practice allowing each thing to show, now this face, now that face---and practice the discipline of not trying to force the events or thing of any moment to stay put in one category or another.

Perhaps this is a way that we "wake the many beings." Any thoughts on this? I look forward to conversation with you about these questions, and in the

meantime, hope that you are well and enjoying the long summer days.



## Rocky Mountain Insight

Theravadin Sangha

All-day Sittings, second Saturday of each month.

October 8-10: Vipassana Retreat (The Five Faculties) led by Dr. Lucinda Green, Dharma Teacher. Contact Pat Tegler for more information (719) 578-8093.

### **WANTED**

#### Newsletter Editor

Yes, David Cockrell is moving on to fry new fish, so there's an opportunity for YOU to explore this rich and rewarding practice. The chance to interact with teachers and authors, and the challenge of enriching the sangha's practice life are the principal rewards. Proficiency with word processing software and web literacy required. Familiarity with computer graphics and desktop publishing desirable. Call David at 719 546-3409 if you are interested!

## *The Ancestors:* Hakuun Yasutani and His Relationship to Our Lineage David Cockrell



Joan Sutherland's teacher is John Tarrant Roshi, director of the Pacific

Zen Institute. Tarrant Roshi received dharma transmission from Robert Aitken Roshi of Diamond Sangha in Hawaii. Aitken Roshi, in turn, studied with Yasutani Roshi until Yasutani's death in 1973, and then subsequently with his dharma heir Yamada Koun Roshi from whom he received transmission.

According to a 1979 Masters thesis by Paul Jaffe, Hakuun Yasutani Roshi established the Sambo Kyodan (The Fellowship of the Three Treasures) as an independent school of Zen in 1954, some ten years after his dharma transmission from Daiun Harada Roshi. The group broke with the Soto school in which Yasutani was ordained, asserting a position of direct connection with Dogen and no longer recognizing the authority of Soto's ecclesiastical leaders. Such an action had been strongly advocated by Yasutani's teacher, Harada, and reflected Yasutani's outspoken synthesis of elements of Soto and Rinzai. Yasutani was apparently outspoken and controversial on many issues, with his emphasis on the kensho experience and its deepening through koan practice serving as a focal point for a devoted and

single-minded life-long practice commitment.

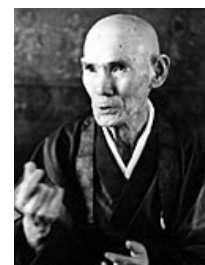
Earlier in his life, Yasutani left the priesthood to embark on a ten-year career as an elementary school teacher and principal. He was married with five children, and this strong lay life perhaps influenced his sustained commitment to training lay practitioners.

Yasutani Roshi strongly influenced several of the founders of western zen, including Phillip Kapleau, Eido Shimano, Maezumi Taizan, and of course Robert Aitken, even though Aitken ultimately received transmission from Yasutani's dharma heir, Yamada Roshi. Many elements of Diamond Sangha traditions reflect Yasutani's iconoclastic and independent reinvention of zen. These include an even more radical emphasis on lay practice, criticizing the formal symbols of monasticism, and (among other things) presenting the precepts at an early stage of practice rather than at the end of formal studies (Tworkov, 1994). The synthesis between Soto and Rinzai is also continued.

But perhaps Yasutani's greatest influence is the discipline to rethink zen forms within the cultural contexts in which they are practiced. Of course, Aitken Roshi's own focal point for a devoted and single-minded life-long practice commitment (similar to Yasutani's emphasis on kensho), has been on the bodhisattva work of effecting social change through political, community, and social action.

The synthesis between Soto and Rinzai approaches is also fundamental to the Pacific Zen School's bedrock. So is the cultivation of a truly American Zen, embodied through the Pacific Zen School's liturgy project, the removal of Japanese terminology and other initiatives. Clearly the emphasis on lay practice and teachers with lay careers is still present. David Weinstein's and James Ford's eclectic backgrounds echo these influences.

John Tarrant's book, *The Light Inside the Dark* reflects the integration of psychological theory with zen concepts, especially the works of Jung and James Hillman, as well as an openness to synergy with ideas from Vipassana and Tibetan teachings. The book seems to me to make its most radical zen statement in its willingness to look straight at the idea of soul, building on the writings of Hakuin Ekaku.



Beyond the import of Yasutani in our own lineage, the extensive influence of Yasutani Roshi on American

zen is documented in detail in Philip Kapleau's (1965) classic book *The Three Pillars of Zen*, important reading for those who wish to better understand the traditions within which we practice.

## August, 2004

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2 6:15 Sutra Service	3	4	5	6	7 6:30-8:30 Zazen
8 6-8 PM Precept Study Group Woman's Club	9 6:15 Social Night	10	11 6:00-7:00 Zazen	12	13	14 6:30-8:30 Zazen
15 6-8 PM Precept Study Group Woman's Club	16 6:15 Teisho Night	17	18 6:00-7:00 Zazen	19	20	21 6:30-8:30 Zazen
22 6-8 PM Precept Study Group Woman's Club	23 6:15 Two Periods Zazen	24	25 6:00-7:00 Zazen	26	27	28 6:30-8:30 Zazen
29 6-8 PM Precept Study Group Woman's Club	30 6:15 Two Periods Zazen	31				

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26 6-8 PM Precept Study Group Woman's Club	27 6:15 Two Periods Zazen	28	29 5:00 PM FALL SESSHIN 9/29-10/3	30		Mt. Cloud Zen Center Retreat Oct. 28-31

## 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!

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Checks should be made out to 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://home.pcisys.net/~sms.zen/> or contact us at [Dharmarag@comcast.net](mailto:Dharmarag@comcast.net).

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

### Dharma Rag

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