

Springs Mountain Sangha

The dharma rag

Volume 8, Issue 1

January, 2005

Inside this Issue:

- ❖ *Joan's New Year Welcome*
- ❖ *Steering Committee Notes*
- ❖ *Voices: Your Submissions*
- ❖ *Coming Home: Retreat Review*
- ❖ *Community Call*
- ❖ *Calendar*



Happy New Year! Honest.
Joan Sutherland

A lot of people are saying that this turn of the wheel into the New Year couldn't have come soon enough—that last year was a hard and grinding time, with the daily mayhem in Iraq, the brutality of Darfur, the swagger and disappointment of our politics, and then the tsunami. Over the last few months, every daily newspaper carried the obituaries of well-known people, almost as though there was a mass exodus of souls who just couldn't bear to hang out any longer.

And we know so much more, in so much more detail and so much more quickly, about events all around the world than humans ever have. We're barraged with more information than our nervous systems and our hearts have evolved to handle.

If we don't want to turn away from life, if we want to stay open to the world as it actually is, how do we deal with the anxiety and despair and exhaustion that staying open in such a time can bring? Perhaps the first thing is to accept that at times we are going to feel pained and overwhelmed. "I am sick because the whole world is sick," Vimalakirti said.

This is difficult, but it doesn't have to be a problem. It only becomes a problem if we don't want to feel it, if we feel imposed upon by the state of things. Such a deep complaint at life for being life is a hard way to live. In the old zen image it's like adding a head on top of your head—there are the genuine difficulties of the world right now, and then we add a whole new head-full of problems by insisting that our happiness or our equanimity are dependent on things being different than they are.

Sometimes, when the times are feeling relentlessness, we can think of events as happening to us, as though we're helplessly watching a depressing TV show. So it's good to remember that we're happening, too -you and likeminded people and the painful events are all happening at the same time, together, as one whole thing.

Springs Mountain Sangha's
Monthly Newsletter

The dharma rag

Editor: Judith Steed

Published the third week of
each month, mostly.

Submissions of articles related
to Buddhism are encouraged
from all readers and may be
sent to the editor at:

P.O. Box 60904

Colorado Springs, CO 80960
or at dharmarag@smszen.org.

Submission deadline is the
second Friday of each month.

Come visit our website @

www.smszen.org

Whatever you do matters, because it's as much a part of the whole as everything else.

Well, yeah, but our efforts can feel inconsequential in the face of so much difficulty. Then it's helpful to inquire into our beliefs. Are we, maybe without realizing it, taking an all-or-nothing view? Do we think that if we lose an election, we've failed? The ancient Chinese understood that sometimes we can't make big moves or enjoy sweeping successes, because the times aren't right for it. If we accept that this is how it is right now, then, as the *I Ching* says, we can put our energy and our love into the Taming Power of the Small. Maybe what we can do is influence, by being part of an outpouring of help for the tsunami victims, say, or impede, as with joining protests against a government's reckless acts. If we can stay with an understanding of how things are, rather than jumping to how we think they should be, then these gestures become exactly the truest and most meaningful thing to do, rather than the booby prize.

Whatever you're looking at, consider asking "What is my original face before the election?" "Before the tsunami?" When we're trying to figure out what to do, or how to hold a great sorrow or fear, it's tremendously helpful to return to that vast and eternal stratum of reality, and let the peace and strength we find there infuse our understanding, and what we decide to do.

When the middle distance is difficult, as it surely is now, be sure to turn your attention often to what is closer in. Make dinners for your friends. Cultivate an eccentric and satisfying hobby. Some nights, play music instead of the news, and dance with someone who thinks you're beautiful. During the Soviet era, the people of Eastern Europe and Russia showed us how sustaining a loved and loving private life could be, and how it protected something so human and so precious, until the times were right for it to bloom in the commons again.

Look too to bigger perspectives, out beyond that painful middle distance. This terrible year was also the year that we got our first glimpses of the Ultra

Deep Field, taking us to the edges of the universe and back almost to the beginning of time. A small and impossibly delicate craft flew through the rings of Saturn, and two robot rovers sent us pictures of the Martian landscape. The moment we're hoping to be present in is getting wider all the time.

Feel sorrow, feel rage, get intimate once again with the utter impossibility of being human. But don't despair. It's a long, long arc, this experiment of life in the universe, and one thing we know for sure is that nothing lasts forever, and one year will eventually turn into another.

aaaaaaaaaaaa

Steering Committee Meeting Notes:

The steering committee met Sunday afternoon **January 9th** and talked briefly by phone with Joan. The main business was to set dates for Joan's residency. You will want to include these dates in the next issue of the Dharma Rag:

March 31st Joan arrives.

April 2nd Leader meeting following the Saturday morning sit.

April 3rd Half-day koan seminar for those doing advanced koan work with Joan and David.

April. 4-10th Six-day retreat at Benet Pines.

April. 16th One-day Intro to Zen retreat at the Woman's Club.

April. 17th Half-day koan seminar (continuation of previous seminar for Joan and David's students)

April. 18th Dharma talk at the Monday night sit.

April. 19th Work-in-the-room

April. 20th Work-in the-room

April. 22-24th Koan retreat at the Woman's Club.

April. 25th Dharma talk at the Monday night sit.

April. 27th Social event.

On **January 23, 2005** there will be a watercolor meditation workshop from 1:00pm till 3:00 pm at either Shove Chapel or the CC Art Building. Call Nard Claar at 520-5409 for details. Cost is \$10.00 for Supplies. The intent of the workshop will be to explore the interaction of water and paint as a form

of meditative practice. No prior experience with watercolors is required.

There will be half-day sits on **February 19th** and **March 19th** at Shove.

The next meeting of the steering committee is scheduled for February 13th from 5-8 p.m. at the Woman's Club. The first part of the meeting will be devoted to a continuation of discussion of by-laws with a view to eventual incorporation for the sangha. Anyone is welcome to attend.

Fourth Monday of the Month Sits at Shove

Clay Taylor, who moved to Colorado Springs from the San Francisco Bay area this past year, recently suggested an addition to our monthly schedule. The idea met with enthusiasm in the steering committee, so here we go: on the fourth Monday of each month, we will sit for one period as usual, and then, following walking meditation, a member of the sangha will speak to the group about his or her own experience of Zen practice. This should not only help us get to know each other better, but offer another kind of ongoing encouragement for our individual practice lives. Clay will start us off this month, speaking on January 24. From then on, we'll be inviting folks to volunteer each month. If you'd like to take a turn, please call Sarah Bender at 594-0724, or email sbender@corb.com. Thank you!

Community Concerns Committee:

Inviting applications for the Community Concerns Committee: This committee was established to deal with any concerns that might come up within the sangha that cannot be dealt with in a more informal way. The Steering Committee plans to appoint three SMS members to the committee at its next meeting on February 13. Anyone who would like to be considered should speak with Sarah or William prior to that time.

Bring Me the Rhinoceros: Book Discussion

"To connect, to help, to be of use in this world, you have to walk with people. You have to let them act upon you also, and you won't remain unchanged." John Tarrant wrote this in his new book, *Bring Me*

the Rhinoceros, and other Zen Koans to Bring you Joy. Let's take his wise words as an invitation to get together and work with *Bring Me the Rhinoceros* on four Sunday evenings. We've reserved the Woman's Club, 20 W. Mesa Rd., for the evenings of **January 30th**, **February 6th**, **February 27th**, **March 6th**, 6:30 to 8:30pm. Anyone is welcome to attend one or all of the sessions, and there is no fee. For more information, please contact Sarah Bender, 594-0724 or sbender@corb.com.

The book is in hardback, and the list cost is \$16.00. ISBN 1-4000-4764-1.

VOICES

Poem: A Purpose In Life

A Purpose In Life

Bees flutter from place to place

Rarely do they leave a trace

Like the nomad who has no home

They just move about and continue to roam

People who have not found a purpose to be

Continue to flounder and may be too blind to see

My personal belief is that we all have something to give

Hopefully it will provide the next generation a better place to live

We can not all be Einsteins or Madame Curie

However we all can serve a purpose like that bumble bee

Nuturing, loving and compassion are gifts that we share

It is a gift that benefits people everywhere

Your self worth is a gift that you can give to yourself

Remember you are important you should not be placed on a shelf

Never let anyone demean or control

Your most important possession is within your soul

The next time you wonder why you are here

Think about those people you hold so dear

Each time you say I love you or tell them you care

Then this is your legacy that you are able to share

Jinny L.

aaaaaaaaaaaa

Dharma Walk

The alarm goes off at 5:40 am. I give myself just enough time to get dressed in the dark, drink a glass of water and begin my walk. The majority of the time, I'm still blinking and rubbing my eyes as I go. Slowly moving through the quiet, empty streets.

Each time, it begins the same. I move, stiff like a machine, going through the motions I know by heart. Sit up. Reach to the foot of the bed and turn off the alarm. Put both feet on the floor. Stand up and find the cloths I laid out the night before. Routinely, I am eluded by that missing shoe or the fact I have no clean socks. Today is no different.

Once the crisis is abated, with both shoes located, I begin to layer up for the brisk morning air that awaits me. Nine out of ten times I wear a plain black hooded sweatshirt. The same kind I wore endlessly as a kid and pretended to be a Jedi in. Somehow the hooded sweatshirt never went out of style for me and there is a comfort in having the hood shield my shaved head from the cold. I slide out of my room and down the hall with the lights out, doing my best not to wake my roommates. I put my hood up and head outside.

I open the door to my apartment and am surrounded by the cool shades of predawn. Descending the stairs to the street, the brisk air engulfs me, searching for any gap in my clothing, for any bare skin. The morning air seeks to numb the tip of my nose and cheeks but it's only a matter of time before I get walking, the blood starts flowing and the cold isn't that bad. As my feet hit the sidewalk, my pace speeds up, knowing I gave myself maximum time to sleep and the bare minimum for walking.

I pass under streetlights looking around at the slumbering neighborhood still battling sleep myself. My mind whispers, "Be here now." Houses, yards, and bushes buffeting the property line are all cloaked in charcoal, casting even darker shadows. The ground is uneven. The roots of trees push their way to the surface bending and breaking the sidewalk. In my early morning daze my feet run into the uneven edges.

Looking down at my feet and the sidewalk, my mind is four steps behind me. A low hanging branch, nature's way of telling me to pay attention, brushes my head and I can't help but smile. The words come back to me again, "Be here now." I breathe in, straighten my posture and just enjoy the moment.

I look at my watch and try to figure out if I will make it to the zendo by 6. When my gaze returns forward my face is painted red. The glow of the traffic light projects into the ever-fading darkness, on to the abandoned road and me. Although there are no cars in sight, I look both directions and make my way one-step closer to my destination.

The lush grass of the college lines the path now. I walk forward thinking about the Sangha, zazen and why I get up this early. Images of watching the sun slowly bring to life the images of stained glass windows of the church fills me with a type of satisfaction I've known nowhere else. As the massive stonewalls of the church come into view I am filled with what can only be called tranquility of purpose.

The empty streets aren't lonely this time of day, but gratifying. There is something sacred in the stillness, something special about the solitude. They are the spoils of those who seek to wake. And as I reach out for the handle of the great wooden doors, I realize, I'm home. *Seth Y.*

aaaaaaaaaaaa

The Big Picture

You are one of more than 6 billion living humans on this planet.

In terms of number of individuals, homo sapiens is one of the least significant species of the many millions of life forms estimated to exist on earth. (It appears we have discovered and catalogued few of the life forms of the planet. Undiscovered species in the rainforests alone may amount to several millions if trends of discovery continue as expected. Many species that existed in the past are now extinct due to changes in the environment caused by nature and human intervention).

Earth is one of the largest of the uncountable satellites that orbit our medium-sized star called the sun or Sol. (Remember to consider not just the major

planets, but also the planetary moons, asteroids and comets). Recent evidence (2004) supports the theory that simple life forms once evolved on Mars, and perhaps on other solar planets and/or their moons.

There are a few hundred million other stars in our galaxy.

There are a few billion galaxies like ours in the known universe.

New cosmological theories (2004) predict that there may be an infinite number of "universes" similar to the one we know. If they exist, we can never see the other "universes" because light from outside our universe, and even from the far reaches of our own universe, cannot get to us.

Estimated number of stars in the "known universe": 70,000,000,000,000,000,000—that's ten times as many known stars as grains of sand on all the world's beaches and deserts. The number is an estimate because it is impossible, with present technology, to actually count them. Instead, we count a typical section of sky and extrapolate.

The most complex device in the known universe is the human brain. There are more synapses in our brains than there are stars in the galaxy. All total, the amount of synapses in the 6 billion living humans exceeds the number of stars in the known universe. And that's a lot.

"Coming Home" Retreat December 2004

We held our winter bare-bones retreat again at the King's home from December 1-5th, 2004. The theme this year was "Coming Home" and here are some thoughts from those who attended.

aaaaaaaaaaaa

"This was the third year that we have held the December retreat at our home in Green Mountain Falls, and it seemed to me very much like a "homecoming," in the sense of a traditional family gathering. We had more participants for this retreat than any previous one at our house—about as many as could fit into our downstairs family room/zendo--and that also added to the feeling of intimacy. If I were looking for a word to characterize this retreat it

would be "bonding." There was a deep sense of bonding arising out of our time together, and for that I am grateful." *Robert K.*

aaaaaaaaaaaa

"Coming Home. I have thought a lot about that. You can never go home again, because it changes, your memories change, it is never the same. So what is it where can you find peace? It is what is inside, it is the warmth of your heart and soul. Home is what you carry with you or maybe carries you on the path. Life is a journey of an ever changing landscape and none of us can stay in one spot, we must keep moving down the path and accept the change. So it seems the logic and the spirit is what is inside. Each person has their home and you can invite in what and who you want and you can also keep out what and who you want. There is a joy and freedom to all of that. The attachment is what we do with the power that is inside that others see."

LET US SIT CLOSE
LET US HOLD HANDS
LET US HONOR ONE OTHER.

LIFE IS A MOMENT
TASTING SO SWEET
PRESENCE MAKES IT

A GIFT

TIME IS SHORT
LIFE IS SO SWEET
LET US BE PRESENT FOR ONE ANOTHER.

THERE IS NO GIFT
SWEETER

Nard C.

aaaaaaaaaaaa

"When it comes to thoughts about home and coming home, the operative words during the winter retreat for me were and still are "SHOWING UP!!". Showing up to me, to the moment, to my life, to others----prepared/not prepared, knowing/not knowing, accepting/not accepting, confused/not confused---just as I am, just as it is, wherever I am. "SHOWING UP!!" *Donnella B.*

aaaaaaaaaaaa

Coming home: "Coming Home" seems like less effort than "Going Home". Coming Home is like

floating in on the tide, letting the water carry me in, rejoicing in the ride. Going Home seems like packing all my stuff into the back of my car and driving day and night to a place I've been to and have been trying to get away from.

This was my second retreat at the King's home. As it was the week after Thanksgiving with Christmas around the corner, it felt good to settle in a warm inviting place and just rejoice in the ride.

When I feel "at home", it's usually when I'm at rest, not worrying about the lawn that needs mowing or the dishes that need to be put away, but able to just take it all in and bask.

Since, the "Coming Home" retreat, my practice is more relaxed, less thinking of having to do this or that, so I can become ... Oh, whatever.

What if I just don't worry about this or that?

What if I I just take notice?

What if I...

What if...

What ?

?

Frank A

aaaaaaaaaaaa

Our Rohatsu retreat continues to resonate loudly with me. Its theme of "coming home" touches me at my core.

The image of a large, bright prism comes closest to describing "home" for me. Deep inside my prism is where "home" originates in my relationship with God & myself. Emanating from that center are numerous relationships & experiences that are shaped by that "home" - - reflected in the myriads of faces of the prism.

Most notably this holiday season, my relationships with my grown children have radiated with a light from that prism center. We continue to discover newness & joy in each encounter.

Thanks be to the spiritual practice of blended zen mediation & Christian prayer. It continues to bring me "home" to the center. *Phyllis K.*

aaaaaaaaaaaa

I could not really think of any one quote, until I read someone else's!

Here is what Macrina Wiederkehr wrote, and it feels just right when I

remember the retreat:

"Do you want to go home?"

There's a road that runs straight through your heart.

Walk on it."

Karin H.

Community Call

Request for transportation support:

Priya who lives in the Skyway Blvd area of Colorado Springs needs to connect with someone willing to drive her to and from the Monday night sits. Please contact her at 635 4618 -thank you.

Sangha Calendar

Weekly Sitting Schedule

- ❖ **Monday** evenings starting at 6:10 p.m. at Shove Chapel located at 1010 North Nevada on the campus of Colorado College.
 - ✓ First Monday of the month: 30-minute sutra Service, brief walking meditation (kinhin), two 25-minute periods of sitting
 - ✓ Second Monday: two 25-minute sitting periods, including walking meditation, followed by a social gathering
 - ✓ Third Monday: two 25-minute sitting periods, including walking meditation, followed by a talk or reading
 - ✓ Fourth Monday: Two 25-minute sitting periods and discussion
- ❖ **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.

January, 2005

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1 Half day sit 9:00 am -noon Zazen/potluck
2	3 6:15 pm Sutra Service	4	5 6:00-7:00 am Zazen	6	7	8 6:30-8:30 am Zazen
9 4:00-7:00 pm Steering Committee Mtg.	10 6:15 pm Social Night	11	12 6:00-7:00 am Zazen	13	14	15 6:30-8:30 am Zazen
16 1 - 4 p.m. Intro to Zen workshop	17 6:15 pm Talk Night	18	19 6:00-7:00 am Zazen	20	21	22 6:30-8:30 am Zazen
23 Watercolor workshop	24 6:15 pm Zazen Zen Practice	25	26 6:00-7:00 am Zazen	27	28	29 6:30-8:30 am Zazen
30 Book Discussion	31 6:15pm Zazen					

February, 2005

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5 6:30-8:30 am Zazen
6 Book Discussion	7 6:15 pm Sutra Service	8	9 6:00-7:00 am Zazen	10	11	12 6:30-8:30 am Zazen
13 Steering Committee Mtg	14 6:15 pm Social Night	15	16 6:00-7:00 am Zazen	17	18	19 half day Zazen
20	21 6:15 pm Talk Night	22	23 6:00-7:00 am Zazen	24	25	26 6:30-8:30 am Zazen
27 Book Discussion	28 6:15 pm Two Periods Zazen					

Dana for Springs Mountain Sangha

Springs Mountain Sangha engages in three weekly sittings, study groups, retreats, residencies for our holding teachers, the *dharmarag*, 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: _____ (required for e-distribution)

Contribution Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

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://www.smszen.org/> or contact us at Dharmarag@smszen.org .

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

The dharmarag

c/o Editor: Judith Steed

P. O. Box 60904

Colorado Springs, CO 80960

www.smszen.org,