

# Dharma Rag

## Spring Dreaming

Happy Spring to you all. As I write this, the plum blossoms are already fading, and the fields are yellow with mustard flowers. Song birds have returned to my garden, and the new rose bush by my front door, called Manhattan and planted in memory of September 11, has begun to put out glossy young leaves.

Last week I was in Santa Fe at Mountain Cloud Zen Center, where we continued the conversation begun at Benet Pines about dream and story. If there is a dreaming going on underneath everything, a great river of co-creation where our individual dreamings, our individual lives, touch and are touched by the dreamings of others; if the dreams in which we live are made up of events and memories and genetics and our communal dreamings, of the dreaming of landscapes and those dearest to us and of art that moves us and all the pains of the world; then perhaps our personal stories are our attempts to interpret that dreaming to ourselves. And so perhaps it is possible that sometimes the dreaming of our lives is out ahead of the story we tell about it, without our being aware that this has happened. We might be telling a story that no longer fits the dream, and so is constricting something that has already grown larger, already grown past, what we think about it. Sometimes we might be holding onto stories whose time has come and gone; sometimes we might be unaware of the expansiveness, the richness, of our own dreaming, because we are looking with yesterday's eyes.

If this is true for us as individuals, perhaps it is also true of our communal dreaming as well. Lately, despite all the evidence of how bad things are, I feel this glossy young hope that this time in our country's history is so confused and cranky because our stories no longer fit our dreaming, and we're searching for new ones. Things got broken wide open, and suddenly all these voices rarely heard in our national discourse were heard. And now, even though the old stories are trying to reassert themselves-just think axis of evil-many people are saying, Um, I don't think so, not anymore. Yes, I see the selling going on, but I also see that a lot of people aren't buying, and there's something happening that I trust, despite all the evidence of how bad things are.

Sometimes, maybe, we are better than our stories, and sometimes, like when spring is breaking open all around us, it's good to hold a little hope for what might be possible if we are awake to the dream, and a little patient with how hard it is, and how absolutely necessary, for the stories to catch up.

Joan Sutherland

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Dear friends,

We are sure fortunate to be able to be in frequent contact with our holding teacher, Joan Sutherland. She offers us a number of different kinds of support, both obvious (like coming to lead retreats, and giving talks) and less obvious (working with individual students, consulting with the steering committee, developing liturgy).

There's an odd difficulty involved in being a teacher in a lay sangha like this. The teacher offers her support, and yet there's not a monastic or even a long-established lay community to offer her

significant financial support in return. The kind of teaching Joan does is hardly a hobby, and yet there's no significant source of income involved; certainly no benefits, no pension plan, etc....

So we get to figure out how to respond to this situation, both as a sangha and as individuals. Over time, we'll figure out what is going to be workable for us. In the short run, the best we can do is to pass a hat. So, here I am officially passing the hat! If you would like to make donations to support Joan's work, all you need to do is to drop something in the bowl at any regular meeting, or send a check either to Springs Mountain Sangha care of Robert King, marked for Joan, or to Joan directly. This way we can express our enjoyment of the Dharma, help Joan remain active as a teacher, and help carry forward the essential activity of sangha---to wake the many beings.

Thanks,  
Sarah Bender

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## Got Dharma?

Kazuaki Tanahashi, a master of calligraphy, was in town recently providing a public talk and brush workshop. The workshop was an excellent experience and brushwork has great depth as a practice. Taking up a brush and throwing yourself onto the paper seems to be the only way to get a glimpse of those depths. The paper seemed to absorb time as well as ink and soon the day neared an end.

After the workshop a few of us went to dinner with Kaz at a local Thai restaurant. As we ate, the conversation drifted from this to that and at one point we were talking about how Shunryu Suzuki has had such a great influence in many of our lives as well as on Zen itself. Kaz mentioned that in the early years when Suzuki Roshi was just starting out in California there were only a small hand full of people who would attend his lectures. They were usually held in a garage that was converted into a Zendo. It was called the Haiku Zendo because there were only seventeen seats. Suzuki Roshi would spend a lot of time preparing for his lectures (teishos). Seeing this effort, Suzuki Roshi's wife once commented that she wished that more students would come to hear his lectures. He replied that it made no difference whether he gave a talk to one student or one million students.

The talks he gave in the garage zendo were taped and eventually appeared in the book Zen Mind Beginners Mind, which has sold millions of copies. It is amazing how what seemed would reach only a few has reached so many. It shows how much of difference one person can make. Well the story doesn't end here.

The last night of Kaz's visit, he stayed the night at my house and in the morning we sat around eating a breakfast of oatmeal and toast. As we ate we talked a little more about Suzuki Roshi and Kaz brought up another anecdote of how Apple Computer was also started in a garage and changed the world. I mentioned that "you better be careful what you do in your garage." As we talked I glanced at the carton of soy milk on the table and noticed there was a small section of spiritual wisdom printed on the box. I began to read it out loud, and smiled as I realized how familiar it was, "If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything: it is open to everything. In the beginners mind there are many possibilities: in the expert's mind there are few. – Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki".

Randy S. of SMS

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# Walking the Labyrinth

There was a moment in the recent sesshin at Benet Pines that had special meaning for me. It came when we trudged through the snow from the warm confines of our temporary zendo to a labyrinth formed from rocks on the side of the hill a short distance away. It brought to mind my first encounter with a labyrinth three years earlier and my experience “walking the labyrinth” with Elizabeth a year later. I have written about this experience in my book, *Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh: Engaged Spirituality in an Age of Globalization*.

While vacationing in France, Elizabeth and I visited Chartes, the magnificent medieval cathedral located near Paris, not far from Versailles. We went primarily to see the famous stained glass windows, which have survived centuries of war and civil strife; but we discovered while we were there that the cathedral is also the site of the oldest intact labyrinth in Europe. The labyrinth is marked off with stones set into the floor of the nave. You can see it as you walk down the central aisle, although when we were there it was largely covered over with chairs. Circular in shape, it is comprised of a path 16 inches wide and 861.5 feet long that winds its way gradually around the circumference of the circle, sometimes moving towards the center, sometimes away from the center, continuously turning back on itself, until finally it reaches the center.

To walk the labyrinth is to follow this path into the center of the circle and out again. We did not walk the labyrinth at Chartes, though we were certainly intrigued by it. Only later did we learn of an effort begun within the past ten years to revive this ancient practice and to create replicas of the Chartes labyrinth (usually made of canvas) in churches throughout the United States, including the First Congregational Church in Colorado Springs.

When we heard that the labyrinth at First Congregational would be open to the public on Ash Wednesday, we decided to walk it together. I was curious, but I did not expect anything out of the ordinary. “Walking meditation” has always been important to me, even when I would not have known to call it that. I looked forward to walking the labyrinth as I would any kind of walking meditation. Since I was working on a Zen koan at the time, I decided to hold the koan in my awareness as I walked. The walk took about 45 minutes. I did not realize a breakthrough in my koan work, but I did find the walk a satisfying experience.

That night I had a vivid and powerful dream. In the dream I was walking through a park after dark. It was a park I used to walk through on my way to and from grade school over fifty years ago. (The grade school is long gone, and for all I know the park is as well.) I found it somewhat frightening walking through this park after dark, but there was a sense that I was going home. As I walked, I felt myself carried along effortlessly. I also sensed that I was enclosed within an almost invisible container—not quite invisible, because I could just barely make out the outline of the container. This outline was a luminous blue, not unlike the dominant color in the stained glass windows of Chartes Cathedral. On waking I felt an intense excitement coupled with awe. I knew somehow that I was being carried by my two spiritual traditions, Christian and Buddhist, in the same direction—toward home.

On reflection I have come to think that the labyrinth is a good metaphor for what is happening spiritually for many people today. We find ourselves walking a path that we do not fully understand. Sometimes it seems to be moving towards the center and sometimes away from the center. There are others on the path, but we are not always walking together, and we cannot be sure we are always walking in the same direction. When we reach the center, as we inevitably do if we persist, we find that we cannot stay there. We are propelled outward, moved to retrace our steps back into the

world from which we came, knowing we have been transformed, but in ways we cannot explain. It is reassuring to think that there are others walking the path we are walking, even if we are not always walking together. We may hope that when we finally emerge from our respective labyrinths, we will recognize one another as “brothers” and “sisters,” members of the same human family, and will find creative ways of working together for the resolution of the world’s problems.

Robert K. of SMS

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## Ancestral Words: Bodhidharma

If you attain anything at all, it’s conditional, it’s karmic. It results in retribution. It turns the Wheel. As long as you’re subject to birth and death, you’ll never attain enlightenment. To attain enlightenment you have to see your nature. Unless you see your nature all this talk about cause and effect is nonsense. Buddhas don’t practice nonsense. To say he attains anything at all is to slander a buddha. What could he possibly attain? Even focusing on a mind, a power, an understanding, or a view is impossible for a buddha. A buddha isn’t one sided. The nature of his mind is basically empty, neither pure nor impure. He’s free of practice and realization. He’s free of cause and effect.

The mind’s capacity is limitless, and its manifestations are inexhaustible. Seeing forms with your eyes, hearing sounds with your ears, smelling odors with your nose, tasting flavors with your tongue, every movement or state is all your mind. At every moment, where language can’t go, that’s your mind.

Whoever knows that the mind is a fiction and devoid of anything real knows that his own mind neither exists nor doesn’t exist. Mortals keep creating the mind, claiming it exists. And arhats keep negating the mind, claiming it doesn’t exist. But bodhisattvas and buddhas neither create nor negate the mind. This is what’s meant by the mind that neither exists nor doesn’t exist...

The buddha in the mind is like a fragrance in a tree. The buddha comes from a mind free of suffering, just as a fragrance comes from a tree free of decay. There’s no fragrance without a tree and no buddha without the mind. If there’s a fragrance without a tree it’s a different fragrance. If there’s a buddha without your mind, it’s a different Buddha.

Mortals keep creating karma and mistakenly insist there’s no retribution. But can they deny suffering? Can they deny that what the present state of mind sows the next state of mind reaps? How can they escape? But if the present state of mind sows nothing the next state of mind reaps nothing. Don’t misconceive karma.

The Zen Teachings of Bodhidharma, translated by Red Pine

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## Synopsis of March Steering Committee Meeting

At the March meeting, Robert reported a drop in our overall balance during the past few months. Plans for Jukai were discussed, and Joan and David will be contacted to complete arrangements. Joan will open our precepts study group with a conference call.

The following events will take place in April:

- A dinner to thank Bill Zinsmeyer for his work on the website, with date and place to be announced.
- An all-day sit April 20 at the home of Robert and Elizabeth King.
- A pot luck dessert at Sarah Bender's home April 27, with special emphasis on welcoming and getting to know our newcomers.

We decided to extend Rohatsu sesshin, 2002 to six days -- December 2-8

William has asked Benet Pines to pencil us in for sesshins in April and September, 2003. We also plan to consider other possible locations for these sesshins in case Benet Pines is unavailable. Tapes of Joan's Teishos will be available for \$5.00 each, plus a blank tape.

Mary Mich has volunteered to lead a work day at Benet Pines. She also suggested that we publish an ongoing "wish list" in the Dharma Rag. Both ideas received favorable responses. Wendy will send the Dharma Rag address list to David Sligar, who has offered to update the directory.

At our April meeting, we plan to discuss what we might adopt from the Sonoma County Monday night format.

The sangha purchased a calligraphy wall hanging by Kazuaki Tanahashi to use for sesshins. Kaz also donated a large calligraphy. William reported that the Colorado College art department is willing to sponsor another calligraphy workshop with Kazuaki Tanahashi in 2003.

The next steering committee meeting will be April 12.

Elizabeth of S.M.S.

## Precepts Discussion

In preparation for the upcoming Jukai Ceremony during the July sesshin, SMS members will be holding a precept discussion group Saturdays at 10:00 a.m., starting April 13 and continuing until shortly before sesshin. To help kick things off, Joan Sutherland will be joining us via telephone for the first meeting. Everyone is welcome! Exploring the precepts is a great way to go deeper into your practice, and you don't have to be taking your vows in order to participate.

Please Join Us!

Everyone is cordially invited to gather for dessert on Saturday evening, April 27, at 7:00 PM, at the Benders' house: 7528 Jenkin Place.

Please call Sarah (594-0724) for directions, or pick them up at a Monday, Wednesday or Saturday sit.

### **Final Call !**

Sangha Phone & Mailing List!!

We need to review, update & confirm our mailing/phone list information for the Sangha & the dharma

rag. To do this we need your help!! On the back cover, you will find an information box. If you wish to remain on our contact lists, please fill out this form and send it back to us. If you prefer, you may send an email to [jukunami@hotmail.com](mailto:jukunami@hotmail.com). This way we can confirm your address and interest. This is your final opportunity. If we do not hear from you, we'll remove your name from the 2002 mailing/ phone list.

Let us hear from you!!!

**Telephone Interviews with Joan Sutherland**

are available for those with an ongoing relationship with her. Interviews are generally offered 2 afternoons a month; contact Sarah Bender for upcoming dates and to sign up. The dana (donations) of participants help make these regular interviews possible and are much appreciated.