

Open Way News & Views



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Open Way: 1989-2009

This is a rewrite and update by long term Open Way members of an article written by Fred Allendorf about ten years ago.

Open Way Sangha is a story of people, inspiration, and persistence. It begins in with Thich Nhat Hanh's 1989 USA tour.

Rolly Meinholtz, Rowan Conrad, Candace Crosby, and Jane Senter attended events during that tour. Rolly attended the retreat for artists and the other three attended the retreat for therapists. All had heard Thay's recurrent request during the tour for people to come together to sit, although he had not yet started to call it Sangha building.

According to Rowan, after the retreats Rolly kept pestering him to start a sitting group. Pestered enough, Rowan helped organize the first meeting in the Group Room offered up for the purpose by fellow therapists Candace Crosby and Anne Ross Harris. Thus in November 1989 a small group began sitting together at the Florence Building on Sunday nights, the only night Rolly didn't have play practice. They spread the word among their friends. In November, Rowan, Rolly, Candace, Anne Ross Harris, Jane Senter, Anita Doyle, and Suzanne Aboulfadl attended that first meeting along with a few others lost to memory. They were soon joined regularly by Fred Allendorf, Michael Colville, Jeannie Chilcote, Barbara Lierson, Bill Tanke, Bill Clarke, Peggy Mallette, Carol Fraissard, Nort Petrovich and others.

"I was involved in other stuff and wouldn't have followed through on it if Rolly hadn't kept after me rather relentlessly," Rowan said. "He was the instigator. The actual founder. I was the initially reluctant follow-through person."

The name emerged a few months into the life of the group. "Open Way" reflects the vision of the group and the first Mindfulness Train-



YOU CAN RING, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE

We call it “inviting” the bell because,
It is said,
We would not strike a beloved friend,
Even mindfully.
But it is the bell that does the inviting,
Inviting us to be
 Open,
 Patient,
 Unequivocal.

Its bowl receives and its voice speaks
Our deepest intention,
Formed in the moment our hand connects.
Every lingering reticence, each shard of impetuosity,
Any glint of awareness, all possible patience,
Sounds with awful clarity.
Though the bell cannot lie, neither can it judge.
Its harmonics invite us
 To relax into them,
 To trust their purity,
 To vibrate sympathetically with their peace,
As they pass through our bodies,
Tuning our hearts to the pitch of
This present moment.

Silent Offering of the Source (Steve Allison-Bunnell)

ing (precept) of the Tiep Hien Order founded by Thich Nhat Hanh as a branch of his root LinChi Chan (JP: Rinzai Zen) school. The group and name just “organically” evolved (a favorite Thich Nhat Hanh method). We knew we wanted it to be “Thich Nhat Hanh’s practice” but not just for Buddhists. Besides meditation we wanted to include reading the Precepts/Mindfulness Trainings, tea meditations, and an occasional mindfulness day.

Three principles guided initial development of the Sangha:

- It will be open to all.
- There will be no guilt trips for not attending events.
- The group will take on no overhead without a way to fund it.

A year and a half later, Open Way organized its first retreat at the Feathered Pipe Ranch led by Eileen (Een) Kiera who subsequently was the Open Way guiding teacher for over 15 years. Without Een it is very likely we would not have made it to this advanced age. The 16 attending that retreat remember Een’s warm teaching and the cold snowy (well over one foot of fluffy stuff) weather. At one point it was not assured that any of us would be leaving on Sunday evening. In just two and a half years this loosely formed group had gained enough momentum to play host to two nuns from Thich Nhat Hanh’s monastery in France for our second retreat, a rare opportunity and honor for such a small group in such a small town. Some 45 people attended the three-day retreat at

the Double Arrow Ranch near Seeley Lake. Kathy Mensing's organizational work and service as event banker were critical to the success of this event. (She was the Newsletter Editor, but we didn't have roles like Retreat Director yet.)

The Sunday night sittings traveled from the Group Room in the Florence Building to Marlene Burke's Yoga Studio, to Gus Adams' and Diane Hughes' meditation zendo behind their house in West Riverside, to the Quaker Meeting House, to Wild Ground, which in 2002 morphed into the Open Way Mindfulness Center. We also moved meeting day from Sunday evening to Thursday evening to Tuesday evening. The past two years, motions have been advanced at the annual meeting to move back to Thursday evenings. While location has stabilized, meeting evening may still be evolving.

Open Way has provided a number of Core Community Members to the Tiep Hien Order (Order of Interbeing or OI). In their order of ordination, they are: Rowan Conrad, Fred Alendorf, Michael Colville, Jeannie Chilcote, Barbara Lierson, HL (Mac) McChesley, AJ Johnston, Greg Grallo, Zan Murray, David Maslanka, Nicole Dunn, Soren Kisel, and Corrie Schilling. Flowing Mountains Sangha was started by Zan Murray, and Flowing Mountains has nurtured current OI Core Community members Stan Voreyer, Kristine Gray, Jan Jahner, Ann Kuntzweiler, Soren Kisel, and Jonathan Matthews. Nicole Dunn is the guiding light for Be Here Now. In 2004 Rowan received Teaching Transmission from Thich Nhat Hanh in Plum Village. Open Way has additionally assisted the nurturing of Core Community Members in Saskatoon, Boulder, and Casper. In



other words, Open Way has been a good OI citizen and supporter.

Open Way operated initially with business accomplished in community meetings and banking done via Carol Fraissard's personal bank account. As we grew, Open Way incorporated and transitioned to a traditional Church/nonprofit structure of board and bylaws in 1995. Open Way was recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization in 2005; a technical nicety since churches don't have to file for IRS approval. In 2002 Open Way began operating the property at 702 Brooks Street (the former Wild Ground) as a Mindfulness Center. Shortly thereafter, Be Here Now affiliated with Open Way. In 2006 Flowing Mountains in Helena officially became part of the Open Way community.

Currently Open Way direct activities include Monday and Tuesday evening Dharma/Meditation practice options, regular meditation classes in conjunction with the Lifelong Learning Center, an irregularly published newsletter, "News and Views," two four-day residential retreats each year with a guest teacher, and a variety of other opportunities for meditation tradition study and practice. Indirectly, through local teachers who reimburse space use costs at the Mindfulness Center, Open Way hosts Yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Dances of Universal Peace, Interplay, Turning the Wheel Dance, and other such mindfulness, environmental, and creative arts related programs. Open Way's Order Members and Dharma Teacher are also available to other Sanghas to assist their development. The Open Gate prison Sangha at Deer Lodge is not directly operated by Open Way, but most of the Open Gate Volunteers are Open Way members.

Fall Retreat Mindfulness Trainings Panel

Each retreat, a retreatant who has previously received the Five Mindfulness Trainings shares a personal experience about one of the Trainings. This sharing brings the trainings alive and emphasizes that using the trainings as a guide in our own practice and living is sometimes a struggle, often a challenge, and always an opportunity for insight. Samuel Singer, Chris Fiore, and Jonathan Matthews share expanded written versions of their personal journeys with the Mindfulness Trainings this fall.

The full text of the Five Mindfulness Trainings is online here: <http://tr.im/5mtdp>

Samuel Singer

Respect for Life

During my first Five Mindfulness Training Panel, I used four letter words. I didn't use the typical four letter words mumbled under the breath of school kids out at recess, but really damaging four letter words like "can't" and "fear." Thinking back to when I first encountered the Five Mindfulness Trainings, I recall that the First Mindfulness Training especially seemed so far out of reach. It was the idea of not eating meat that stuck out for me. The thought of giving up the BBQ pork ribs, T-bone steak, and lamb chops I had grown up on was not very appealing. "I can't do that," I thought. However, there was a part of me that wanted to try. So, I followed the First Mindfulness Training halfheartedly at first. My rationale was that if I couldn't do it perfectly I shouldn't really try hard at all—there was fear. At that point I started referring to myself as a "struggling vegetarian."

While at the 2007 Estes Park Retreat I heard Thay say that we don't have to be perfect at practicing the Five Mindfulness Trainings. "What a relief!" I thought. "You mean I can just practice them?!" It was at that retreat that I accepted the Five Mindfulness Trainings in the presence of the Sangha. I found new hope and encouragement in

Thay's words. Even though I didn't completely take meat out of my diet, I ate much less of it and felt healthy and satisfied. However, I was still the "struggling vegetarian" as I played mind games with myself about how often I should eat meat.

Last year I visited a meditation retreat center in New Zealand. I stayed there as a volunteer caretaker for over a month. The food was fresh, delicious, and all vegetarian. One day, I was speaking with the nun who lived there. She asked me how I felt about not eating meat. I explained to her that it had always been a struggle for me, but that I really wanted to be completely vegetarian. She said, "Why are you being so silly? Why don't you just honor your body and eat meat when you want to eat meat?"

"Wow!" I thought. Thay's words about not being perfect in our practice echoed in my head. That last word, practice, seems to be the key there. That is where transformation occurs. Not from trying to be perfect all the time. "Can't" can easily transform into "can" if we just let the last "t" drop away. "Fear" can transform into "hear" if we just listen to and honor our bodies.

I still eat meat. Sometimes often, sometimes not. However, I'm not a struggling vegetarian anymore. I try to be mindful when I am eating and to be mindful about what I am eating. I can practice the First Mindfulness Training. As I hear and listen to my body I know that I am a practicing vegetarian.

Chris Fiore

True Happiness

I found this mindfulness training overwhelming when I read it in the new, latest version. I had agreed to discuss my relationship with it when Stan asked me to volunteer for the panel, but I hadn't *seen* the new material yet. When I looked closer, I realized that I value all these aspects of mindful living. "OK, I can do this," was my mantra to myself.

I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking and acting, and I am so aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression. Yet as I read this more closely, it brought to mind the challenges of balance in these goals. I recently turned off my land line because of an unending number of phone calls from charities seeking my donations. I returned from a trip to Mozambique and South Africa that tugged at my heart by the immensity of needs and suffering of people in managing daily life and basic existence. I feel at a loss to address the extent of true suffering, and then I return to my true home, and breathe, and realize: I can focus and do my part no matter how small. I realize I live my life committed to sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. Can I do more? Probably. However, I am also only able to do so much and also must recognize my limits and capacity do what I can. My intention is to always hold this awareness and intention close to my heart.

The next section on practicing looking deeply to see that happiness and suffering of others is not separate from my own, and that true happiness comes from understanding and compassion and not external pleasures speaks to my understanding of interbeing, as well as one of my great joys of Buddhist philosophy, that of looking inward at oneself for peace and solutions. In the world we live in where we are bombarded constantly by many external solutions to happiness, I find great solace in returning to the present moment. Multi-million-dollar diet and beauty industries, consumerism, and many more messages are sent to us in a constant pulse of more, more. Recognizing all that we possess within ourselves, and learning to appreciate the capacity or conditions we possess to bring our own happiness is no small gift of living mindfully. In my practice as a psychologist, repeatedly this discovery and uncovering is the means of working with others to find healing and solutions to the challenges of living. It is so essential to rec-

ognize and value ourselves, and meaningful others, in our path toward joy and freedom in living. Yet all of us who are also often faced with the complex ways that our lives unfold can be challenged to remember, find, or harness what we hold within us. This mindfulness training asks that we not forget this essential aspect of who we are as human beings.

The second mindfulness training then ends with being committed to Right Livelihood so that we can reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming. I am again blown away by all that this training encompasses. In some ways, all of the earlier statements have alluded to 'right livelihood' but connecting this to the ultimate idea of thinking how we choose to live can help reduce the suffering of others *and* reverse the process of global warming was a connection not directly made in my mind. I so appreciate the commitment as a Buddhist to addressing global warming. I do think it is imperative to realize the connection between choices we make in living and the ultimate impact on the environment. I do believe I am conscious of this and make decisions regularly with this aspect in mind. But somehow the idea of taking on reversing global warming had not been something, I realize, I had committed my entire self to do. Addressing, being conscious of, and making choices to be sustainable, minimizes the impact that I and my family have on the carbon footprint, sure. Reverse the process of global warming, hmmm. I realize part of me had heard so much of how far the trend was already in motion that I had simply considered doing my part to reduce the impact, and reverse seemed out of reach. Yet I am willing to take on high aspirations that I agree are necessary to counter the warming trend. I appreciate the importance of setting such goals and it is this mindfulness training that has inspired me to consider more deeply what my role can be in Right Livelihood and reduction of human suffering.

Jonathan Matthews (Peaceful Mountain of the Source)

Nourishment & Healing

Having taken the Five Mindfulness Trainings in their original form, in my comments on the panel about the Fifth Training I was interested to notice how the recently revised version is different from the original version and to consider the implications of these changes for my practice.

The first sentence of old and new versions is the same: "I am to avoid the suffering that results from unmindful consumption by practicing mindful consumption." The second sentences are different in an interesting way. In the old version I "pledge to ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy," while in the new version, I pledge to look deeply into how I "consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness." While I can easily see how I consume foods and I can, with just a bit more effort, understand how I consume sense impressions, it is an interesting challenge to me to consider how I might consume volition and consciousness. This reminds me of the initial challenge I felt in being told that I should consider the mind as one of the sense organs, on a par with eyes or ears. Considering the mind a sense organ, rather than the seat of my identity, encourages me to de-center and disperse my sense of personal ego. Considering volition and consciousness as nutriment that I might consume, on a par with grains and vegetables, seems to similarly de-center and lighten my consideration of personal will, intent, and identity. The substantiality of these normally heavy concepts is made more ephemeral when their locus is moved from the center of my being to somewhere external to me. And don't they need to be considered external in this formulation? The root of consume is "to take up," as I take up food external to my body and bring it inside my body. So if the identity-making and action-directing concepts of consciousness and volition can be regarded as something that I select and consume, then I have the sense that these important things might be

positively changed with each present moment: "Now I will consume this sort of volition; now I will embody this sort of consciousness." Of course, the act of consuming implies, for me, an identity (consciousness) making a choice (volition); so I apparently need to already have volition in order to choose and consume volition, as I also already seem to need to have consciousness in order to consider or select it in each moment. But then I need not be reminded that Zen is no hater of paradox. The point of this is how it might influence my practice in a way that relieves suffering and provides helpful insight into the nature of reality. I think a sentence that encourages me to de-center the sense of self and to take up the idea that will and identity can be consciously chosen in each moment is helpful and insightful. So I've got to say I like this change to sentence two of the Fifth Mindfulness Training.

The next sentence of this Training deals with the things we are to avoid consuming. Added to the revised version are gambling and toxin-containing websites and electronic games. These additions to the best-avoided list are undoubtedly due to the Sangha's awareness of repeated instances of suffering resulting from individuals' associations with gambling and certain websites and electronic games. It occurred to me and to others on retreat that once you start enumerating particular items on such a list, it is bound to grow over time, as our culture appears to be adept at multiplying unskillful means.

In the old version of this Training, the final three sentences refer to the damage caused by consuming items on the best-avoided list, a pledge to transform these damaging effects, and a closing emphasis on the importance of a proper diet. The final three sentences of the revised training emphasize cultivating positive practices in the present moment, understanding that deep insight into the nature of reality naturally leads to mindful and more enlightened practices of consumption, and the determination to save ourselves and all beings

by engaging the present moment with the mindfulness that leads to these insights and habits of consumption.

What's not to like in such a revision? Although I am partial to my old, familiar Five Mindfulness Trainings, after careful consideration I have to admit that I very much appreciate the revision of this Fifth Mindfulness Training. It is deeper, wider, wiser, and more rewarding of contemplation than the original version. In this revised training I see nearly all of the Buddha's teaching. I see deep ideas about the nature of reality and I see practical plans for avoiding and healing suffering. Dear Thay, dear Sangha: thank you!

Estes Park Retreat: One Buddha Is Not Enough

The August 2009 Estes Park retreat was affectionately called the "Thich Not Here" retreat because upon arrival we learned that Thich Nhat Hanh was to be treated for a chronic pneumonia infection in Boston and could not be present during the retreat. The term "Thich" is the "family" name for all Vietnamese monks, and so while Thay was absent, "Thich" was actually there in the family of monks and nuns who took over. We were continually amazed at the quality of teaching that came from those placed on stage including Cheri Maples and our own Rowan Conrad (Q & A) and Greg Grallo (Mindfulness Trainings Panel). Thay's presence was felt in the transmission of his teachings through his students, making the retreat a wonderfully memorable experience.

Peggy Mallette



Paul Richards

Practicing Community In Thay's Absence

I've been asked to report about the "One Buddha is Not Enough" Mindfulness Retreat held August 21 to August 26, 2009, at the YMCA of the Rockies near Estes Park, Colorado.

As you may have heard, Thich Nhat Hanh was "Thich Nhat Gone" at this retreat.

During an earlier retreat at Stonehill College outside of Boston, Thay had a flare-up of chronic pneumonia. Thay checked into a Boston-area hospital for medical testing, and doctors recommended that Thay stay in the hospital to receive a full course of intravenous antibiotics.

Some of 900 participants were sad and disappointed that Thay did not physically make it to the Estes Park retreat. I wasn't. The theme that Thay chose ahead of time for our gathering was "One Buddha is Not Enough." Well, Thay called our bluff! Our Buddha was in the Boston General Hospital, so we all had to deepen our practice and become Buddhas ourselves.

In this light, Thay's absence turned out to be a bountiful gift. Our monastic community didn't miss a beat, with monks and nuns alike delivering inspirational and educational Dharma talks.

Corresponding energy from the lay community was also very strong. Members of our Sangha applied themselves in a diligent, constructive, and loving fashion, throughout the entire retreat.

A sizable delegation from Montana attended. Our regional Dharma sharing group was ably co-facilitated by Sister Hoc Nghiem and Brother Phap Nang. Being from such a geographically large state, we seldom get chances to spend time together, sharing and listening. I think every Dharma sharing participant appreciated this chance to get to know others in our far-flung Sangha.

Thus, our Colorado experience offered us a wonderful chance to come together to practice the art of awakening, of mindfulness, not as an isolated self, but as a community of brothers and sisters.

As Brother Phap Nang wrote in retrospect, “I really enjoyed the senior Dharma teachers’ talks. It is very nourishing to get to listen to our elder brothers and sisters share. Everyone in this retreat, monastic and lay alike, really stepped up in our practice. We practice wholeheartedly with each breath, step, and smile. Everyone had something to offer in this retreat, and that is our whole being and the togetherness. At the last Dharma sharing, everyone shared that this was one of the best retreats yet.”

Much to his credit, our friend and teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, has never promoted any type of personality-based following. He has always stressed the importance of the Sangha. I believe Thay would have been quite proud of how we conducted ourselves in his physical absence. And, I hope he felt strength and support from our Colorado assembly, as he wisely took time off from his sometimes-grueling schedule to properly heal.

Toward the end of our gathering, all 900 participants signed giant “Get Well!” cards for Thay. I wrote:

*One Buddha is Not Enough?
We are Here.
You are There.
You have a GREAT sense of humor!*

Soren Kiesel, True Land of Serenity
In the Eyes of the Sangha

“Thay...will not be coming to Colorado.” My friend’s words were carefully chosen. Neutral, to lessen the blow.

Volunteering at the OI sign-in table, I heard those words before most people. Some of the Dharma Teachers had been informed, and I found myself privy to their whispered conversations.

My first thought was for Thay’s health. But once it had been explained to me that he was in good hands, and didn’t seem to be in danger, disappointment came to me in such a rush that my head swam. I thought of my wife’s efforts single-parenting for a week so I could be there, and of the

money I’d spent to get there. I would be ordaining at this retreat. But without Thay? What, I thought, would that even mean? Could one ordain without Thay?

A line was forming at my registration table. “If you can’t practice non-attachment here,” I whispered to myself, “where can you?” I took a few breaths, found a smile, and continued signing people in.

*the morning sun
brightens the mountainsides
whether my heart is light or not*

Thay’s letter was read to us, and the monastics forged ahead with the retreat. This retreat would be all about my practice, I’d decided. My disappointment began to lift: I could make the best of the opportunity by practicing fervently. I was here. I could at least work hard.

But as the monastics began to share with us, in Dharma Talks and private hellos, something happened: there was our teacher! There was Thay!

Right before our eyes. His teaching, his understanding, his gentleness, so carefully transmitted to our monastic brothers and sisters. We became dazzled with how diligently they’d learned, and I was filled with gratitude for their efforts. In return we all sat a little straighter, worked a little harder. More people practiced mindful walking leaving that first Dharma Talk than I’d see at any other retreat.

And within a day or so, once we’d become used to seeing Thay in each monk and nun, we began to look for him in every one of us. And there he was. In each person’s eye, in each smile, in each gentle step, there was Thay. His presence permeated the retreat. It was tangible, and unmistakable. He was felt everywhere. We discussed this in our dharma groups. We all felt it.

Something very precious was taking place. Here was Interbeing, displayed for us, right before our eyes. Thay and the Sangha were one and the

same. We and the Sangha were one and the same. And so there was Thay, present with each of us, in each of us.

Suddenly I felt lucky to be at this retreat. The Sangha was crystallizing into a glittering diamond. It was developing confidence in itself, in its strength and ability to support and to carry on. And to be there for that—to be a part of that—was so fortunate, a magical and precious teaching.

I talked about my feelings with brother Phap Hai. “Oh great,” he joked, “when Thay calls tonight I’ll tell him you’re glad he’s not here.”

*my brother
is listening
I can see myself in his eyes*

When I first came to the practice eighteen years ago, I was living on my own in Sri Lanka, and the practice for me became wrapped in a sort of lonely romance. It wasn’t something I wanted to share with others, it was my own pursuit, meaningful, intimate, and private. I practiced alone.

After more than a decade of this, I found Thay’s teaching, and it turned my practice on its head.

Thay stresses Sangha, community, to such a degree that I found startling. My mentor for ordainment, Rowan Conrad, tells a story of first arriving at Plum Village in the late 1980s.

“You are here to see Thay and you think that Thay is the most important thing,” he reports Thay saying, “But that is a misperception. The most important thing about Plum Village is the Sangha.”

And once that seed was planted, Sangha became key to my practice as well, its support taking me to depths I’d hadn’t imagined possible, teaching me that compassion was every bit as important as wisdom. My practice began to bloom, but as one blossom in a wide field of flowers.

*without a sound
a dewdrop
has fallen into the lake*

So as my ordainment into the OI approached, to my surprise I found myself feeling that Thay’s absence made a sort of sense. I missed Thay that morning, and wished he were there to be a part of it. I sat on a bench on my way to the Dharma Hall to quietly thank Thay for all I’m learning. In my heart, I sent my ordination to Thay, as a get-well gift. But as I took this step into the community, the only individual that had to be there was me. Me, and the Sangha.

“You think you are here to ordain with Thay,” I said to myself, “But that is a misperception. You are here to ordain with the Sangha.”

The “Be-In” Celebration that evening was flooded with light and love and joy. We had seen something in each other, and in ourselves. The energy of our smiles filled the room to bursting. The bears in the hills, I’m quite certain, could hear our laughter.

*dragonflies
dazzled with one another
—late summer in the Rockies*

After ordination, the first time I wore my brown jacket at the retreat, a woman stopped me and asked me to instruct her in walking meditation. I was thrilled at the opportunity to share.

After some initial guidance, we walked together. “Picture lotuses blooming in each footstep,” I told her quietly, paraphrasing Thay, “You are leaving a path of lotuses behind you.”

She breathed deeply at the image and smiled, eyes wet. I could tell in that moment she saw Thay in me. And, in that moment, I could too. Gratitude flooded through me, deep and strong, and my eyes, too, filled with tears.

Sangha News

Thank You's

Dear Sangha,

I would like to publicly thank those who did their core OI Ordination this summer, both for their dedication to service via the ordination, and more personally for the lovely "Go as a River" calligraphy by Thay given to me as a mentoring "Thank You." It was an incredibly lovely and totally unexpected gift. One of my ego-stuck vanity places is that it is hard to surprise me.

I see things coming. I absolutely did not see this one. And Zan did such a lovely job of embarrassing me with an adaptation of ChiSing's "You are so Beautiful" song when she did the presentation. And she was the one who did all the real work with most of the group being from Helena! Hopefully, someone will sing to her one of these days.

It was clear to me, as soon as I came out of shock, that this needed to be enjoyed by all. So it has found a home over the side (Ancestor's) altar at the Center. With the addition of the calligraphy, and now the new piano (courtesy of Barbara Lier-son), assembled and accented by Nicole's artistic



eye which blends things so beautifully, that side of the Meditation Hall is downright attractive. I hope the out-of-towners can have a chance to see it.

So thanks Ann, Beth, Bruce, Corrie, Jan, Jonathan, Kristine, and Stan. It was a pleasure to work with you, be the rubber stamp for your own hard work and that of your respective local OI and Sanghas, and see you join the "Brown Jacket Brigade."

Rowan (Chan Phap Luc)

Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh Sangha in the Flathead Valley

There is now a Thich Nhat Hanh Sangha in the Flathead Valley. Following a Mindfulness Day in December, a group is to continue with meetings in 2010 on Wednesday evening in Kalispell. For details of where and when, and/or to get on the email schedule list, call Gina Garle at (406) 541-8191.

Peggy Mallette

Cheri Maples Spring Retreat Teacher At Lubrecht Forest

We are excited that Cheri Maples, True Jewel, has accepted our invitation to come to Montana to be our guest teacher for Open Way Sangha's Spring Retreat. This spring we will retreat at UM's Lubrecht Forest Camp and the dates are set for April 29 - May 2, Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon. The topic of our spring retreat will be "Transforming Barriers With an Open Heart." Peggy Mallette will be retreat director and can be reached at:

(406) 541-8191 or info@openway.org.

Cheri Maples lives in Wisconsin and has worked as a professional in the criminal justice system for 25 years, as well as being a criminal attorney and a clinical social worker. She is a co-



founder of the Center for Mindfulness and Justice where she is helping to develop an alternative youth justice program and other support and community networking programs. She received the Lamp Transmission from Thich Nhat Hanh in January, 2009. You can read more about her in two magazines: *Tricycle*, Winter 2009, "She's Got the Beat," and *The Mindfulness Bell*, Autumn, 2009, "Fierce Compassion."

Those of us that attended the Thich Nhat Hanh retreat at Estes Park in August 2009 enjoyed Cheri's participation on a panel where she, Rowan, Huong Nghiem, and Phap Tri took the stage for Thay at the Question and Answer session. The Open Way board decided it would be great to hear more from her perspective and get to know her better.

Steve Zellmer & Rowan Conrad

2010 Annual Meeting Report

The Open Way 2010 Annual Meeting was held January 9, 2010. 2009 was reviewed and some groundwork laid for Open Way's 2010. Fifteen people participated during the day, with some morning/afternoon rotation of people. In addition to sitting and walking, the morning found us successfully electing officers for the coming year, amending the bylaws to accommodate sharing offices, reviewing the positive financial report in our packets, which showed a healthy carryover for 2010, and hearing a report from Flowing Mountains about a very successful year there. Possible change of main sitting night was deferred to the afternoon's Review and Visioning discussion. The formal minutes, the full Flowing Mountains report, and the financial report are all available for review in the "Board Minutes Notebook" at the Center.

Officers for 2010 will be:

Board Offices

Elder: David Maslanka

Director: Greg Grallo, with Nicole assisting

Program Director: Rowan Conrad, Assistant to be recruited by Board

Secretary: Steve Zellmer and Jody Pavilack

Financial Director: Bill Elison

Two at large positions can be filled at the discretion of the Board. At their first meeting, the new board is expected to fill only one and that will be Nicole Dunn as Be Here Now representative. Be Here Now is an integral Open Way group, not an affiliate Sangha, so does not automatically have an ex officio seat on the board.

Ex Officio Officers

Affiliate Sanghas: Stan Voreyer,

Director, Flowing Mountains

Chairs/Standing Committees

Retreat Director: Peggy Mallette,

Alison Matthews assisting, Mark Fryberger to be invited to assist also.

Membership Director: Sandra Johnson

Publications: Steve Allison-Bunnell (newsletter and Andy Laken (electronic publications)

InterSangha: Ellen Knight

The meeting recommended that all appointed offices continue. A new corresponding secretary will be sought as those sharing that office are not able to continue. The Director and/or Board will formally make these appointments as soon as possible.

Appointed Positions

Corresponding Secretary: Open

Mindfulness Center Directors: Rowan Conrad,

Linda Lightfoot, Nicole Dunn

Children's Program Director: Open

After a fine Chinese lunch compatible with vegetarians and vegans, the meeting moved to the "Review and Visioning for 2010" phase. In this phase, we do not so much make decisions as give broad input to the Board to inform decisions which are made in a smaller more manageable setting.

The afternoon began with walking and sitting and a "Sangha check-in." Deep gratitude was expressed by all for the Sangha, the practice, and the opportunities provided. There was clearly satisfaction with the Sangha and its program among those

attending. (One always wonders about those not attending.)

The seasonal themes used to focus practice the past two years were explored in contrast with the previous approach of using a book as focus for the year. As might be expected there were a wide range of views. In the end, the message to the Board seemed to be something like: 1) Keep seasonal themes as a background, but have something more concrete, like a book, in the foreground. 2) Don't require homework or pre-reading in the book in order to be able to fully participate in the discussions. Rather, read or summarize information that informs the evening's discussion. 3) Allow practice leaders latitude within the topic or book. Don't require them to go straight through the book. Rather, allow them to adapt to current Sangha flow and needs, seasonal theme, and the like.

There was a clear consensus that there is a need for more weekend full- and half-day practice opportunities. Some wanted the longer practice and others have difficulty attending weeknight evenings and want this as their primary practice. "Piggybacking" on Flowing Mountains Mindfulness Days as we've done the past two years is not enough as the distance prevents many from attending. The full-day practices also allow for Monday and Tuesday groups to practice together more as most find it impractical to sit on two separate weeknights.

There are an increasing number of people with activity conflicts on Tuesday evenings but who prefer that format. The board will explore moving the main Tuesday practice evening to Wednesday or Thursday. If such a decision is reached it could not be implemented until late spring or summer due to existing commitments.

The Center is in extensive use. It is increasingly difficult for members to drop in for practice. Scheduled users increasingly find difficulty with persons running over or being in "off schedule." Previously, the library room was usually available, but Lizzi's Turning the Wheel has been administering the dance company from that space about half-

time and it is no longer a regular option. The Library now has to be scheduled also via the calendar on the door of the library (which was always there but not consistently used). The Center Managers are working on these difficulties. One solution might be if Lizzi would decide to build the dance studio (for which she has had architectural plans for over a decade) adjacent to the current building. This would allow extra space; maybe even allow a parallel children's program if we could use such a studio one night a week.

We departed the meeting shortly after 4:30 p.m. tired but happy after a productive day of quiet practice and work practice with Sangha.

Greg Grallo

Director's Report

Dear Friends,

Open Way Sangha continues to be a place of refuge through difficulties, a place of celebration for accomplishments and insights, and a place of support and inspiration from where we engage with our lives. I say "place," but in reality it is the presence of each individual that creates the Sangha and provides a collective presence for us to relax into.

Some of the celebrations this year included the Sangha's twentieth birthday and the ordination into the Order of Interbeing of Open Way and Flowing Mountains members at the Colorado and California retreats. For 20 years, Open Way has provided a steady practice though the location and evening have changed. Sangha members and practitioners often remark that although they may not be able to attend Sangha regularly (sometimes for months or years!), the idea of Sangha and of the continuous practice is encouraging and comforting. Additionally, whenever people return after an absence, they often comment that it's like they never left. These observations are a testament to the consistency over these twenty years as well as to the sincerity of the practitioners.

The retreats in Colorado and California held with the monastics of the Unified Buddhist Church

were deeply enriching. Thich Nhat Hanh was ill and unable to attend the retreat in Colorado, but the nuns and monks held the space for a powerful and profound retreat. In Colorado, a number of Flowing Mountains and Open Way members were formally ordained into the Order of Interbeing, as well as attendees from Bozeman, Boulder, Colorado, and Cheyenne, Wyoming. A group from Open Way Sanghas traveled together to Deer Park Monastery in California where another Flowing Mountains member was ordained. Because of the generosity of anonymous donations and the Sangha, a number of scholarships were provided to offset the expense of the retreat for those new needed that assistance.

The Open Way Annual Meeting was held on 9 January 2010 and was well attended. Stan Voreyer, the Director of Flowing Mountains, and Nicole Dunn, the founder and leader of Be Here Now, shared their reports. I would like to thank outgoing board members and officers, Cynthia Wood, Steve Seninger, Nancy Seldin, Sandi Simons, Ellen-Knight, and Corrie Schilling for their efforts helping to provide the ground for our practice and retreats. Welcome to the new board members and officers listed in the meeting report above.

I look forward to practicing with you in 2010!

Big Sky Dharma

Paul Richards

Resources for Maintaining a Rural Practice

At the August “One Buddha is Not Enough” Retreat in Colorado, several people asked me how I maintain a rural Zen practice, in the absence of frequent in-person visits to a Sangha gathering.

It’s easy! I’ve got a dog, Karma (right), who takes me for walks. A mile down the road is a river I can listen to. I watch the clouds and the sunsets. I love wildlife viewing. And, gradually, I am learning how to occasionally do nothing.

There is much support available to rural people like me. It really helps to have an Internet connection. Here is a summary of some of my favorite sources. You can access a more detailed version of this article with even more links within these sites at <http://openway.org/ruralpractice>

Tricycle

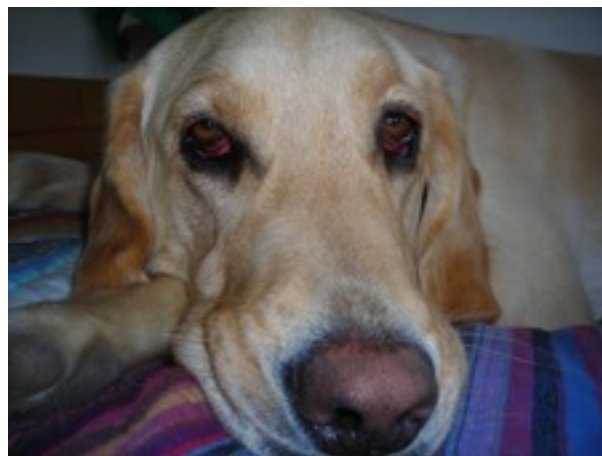
Every day, I look forward to the “Daily Dharma,” concise and cogent quotes about Zen and Buddhism from the fine folks at *Tricycle* Magazine. Here is one of my favorites:

Watermelons and Zen Students
grow pretty much the same way.
Long periods of sitting
‘til they ripen and grow
all juicy inside, but
when you knock them on the head
to see if they’re ready—
sounds like nothing’s going on.

—Peter Levitt, from *Essential Zen* (Harper Collins)

Tricycle Magazine bills itself as “the independent voice of Buddhism.” The home page of its Web site, located at <http://www.tricycle.com>, is full of incredibly compelling and educational articles, audios, videos, and on-line discussions.

A subscription to this excellent magazine is \$24 a year. For \$30 a year, you can become a “Sustaining Member” and receive the print edition of *Tricycle*, *Tricycle’s* digital edition, unlimited access to the *Tricycle* archives (two decades of Buddhist



wisdom), and free access to paid on-line programs and teachings.

Those who lack Internet access, can contact *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* at 92 Vandam Street, New York, NY, 10013. For subscriptions, call: 800-873-9871. For other inquiries, call: 212-645-1143.

Why “Tricycle?” Buddhism itself is often referred to as the “vehicle to enlightenment,” and the tricycle’s three wheels allude to the three treasures: The Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; or the enlightened teacher, the teachings, and the community. The wheels also relate to the turning of the wheel of Dharma, or skillfully using the teachings of the Buddha to face the challenges that the circle of life presents.

Shambhala Sun

Another amazing resource is the *Shambhala Sun* (<http://www.shambhalasun.com>). It, too, is very rich with incredible articles, audios, videos, and on-line discussions.

Subscribing to this exceptional publication costs \$19.95 for one year or \$34.00 for two years.

If want to save money and/or trees, the entire current issue is available online, along with a searchable archive of back issues.

Audio and video clips featuring teachers and practitioners from around the world are also available. These clips are usually from five to ten minutes long. If you have a sense of humor about your practice, check out Arj Barker’s Buddhist rap video, about what it means to be the “sickest” Buddhist, kicking Buddha-Butt.

There is a special “Spotlight Section” on Thich Nhat Hanh, along with the latest Buddhist news.

Those without Internet access can subscribe by calling the *Shambhala Sun*, toll-free, at: 877-786-1950. For general inquires, call: 902-422-8404. The Editorial and Business Offices of the *Shambhala Sun* are located at: 1660 Hollis Street, Suite 701, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 1V7. The U.S. subscriptions mailing address is: P.O. Box 469095 Escondido, CA 92046-9095 USA.

The Mindfulness Bell

Another outstanding magazine is *The Mindfulness Bell* (<http://www.mindfulnessbell.org>). *The Mindfulness Bell* is an inspiration and teaching resource for those practicing mindfulness in daily life. Each issue features a recent teaching by our teacher, Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

The Mindfulness Bell Web site has easy access to The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings.

Subscriptions to *The Mindfulness Bell* can be ordered on-line. It costs \$24 for one year, \$45 for two years, \$63 for three years, or \$18 for a one-year low income subscription.

If you lack Internet access, you can subscribe by contacting *The Mindfulness Bell*, c/o David Percival, 745 Cagua SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108-3717, or by calling: 505-266-9042.

Parallax Press

Parallax Press (<http://www.parallax.org>) publishes the many books written by Thich Nhat Hanh. You can browse and buy books, audio recordings, and videos. There is a free email newsletter and catalogue.

Those lacking Internet access can order the Parallax Press catalogue or order books by calling, toll-free: 800-863-5290, or by writing: Parallax Press, P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707. For inquiries, call: 510-525-0101.

Mindful Kids

Kids and parents are encouraged to visit <http://mindfulkids.wordpress.com>. “This is a place for us to share resources and ideas about practicing mindfulness with kids,” says the site. It is hosted by the nuns and monks of Plum Village. From the site’s mission:

Plum Village monastics are currently posting up the principle practices we share with children in the Plum Village tradition

We will also include ideas on how to set up a children’s program or children’s activities for a retreat, day of mindfulness, or a children’s Sangha. We will post ideas for cooperative games and nature activities, as well

as practitioners' experience of sharing mindfulness with children as parents, teachers, children's program staff, etc.

Please share with us your experience, your stories, your joy, your difficulties— share how and what you are learning from children. We encourage children to share their experiences with the practice.

Wake Up

Wake Up (<http://www.wkup.org>), is a Web site for young Buddhists and non-Buddhists in a worldwide network of young people practicing the living art of mindfulness. There are plenty of links to writings, audio, and videos.

"Write!" implores this site. "We're always very happy to receive articles. Just write about your experience of waking up and living deeply your daily life – being a twenty-first century countercultural revolutionary!"

Young people can send their articles, poems, stories, and photos to: wkupnow@gmail.com.

Wake Up currently has nearly 500 members.

Other Sites

The home page of Thich Nhat Hanh's Sangha in France is: <http://www.plumvillage.org>.

For the latest on the Bat Nha Monastery situation in Vietnam's Lam Dong Province, see: <http://helpbatnha.org>.

To support religious freedom in Vietnam, you can sign the petition located at: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/6/religious-freedom-in-viet-nam>.

The home page of Deer Park Monastery in Escondido, California, is <http://www.deerparkmonastery.org>.

The home page of the Blue Cliff Monastery in Pine Bush, New York, is: <http://www.bluecliffmonastery.org>.

The home page of the European Institute of Applied Buddhism in Waldbröl, Germany: http://eiab-maincampus.org/EIAB_Germany/Home.html.

For more Thich Nhat Hanh books, Kindle books, audio books, calendars, CDs, DVDs, and MP3s, you can always search <http://amazon.com>. Those lacking Internet access, can use Amazon's toll-free automated customer service system by calling: 866-216-1072.

If you prefer to shop online at an independent bookstore, Powell's Books in Portland, Oregon has an enormous inventory of new and used books. You can easily search for Thay's books at <http://powells.com>. Those without Internet access can call Powell's, toll-free, at: 800-878-7323.

Would you like another 7,000 sources?

If you just can't get enough information about Zen and Buddhism, you may meet your match at <http://buddhistlinks.org>. This Web site has more than 7,000 links!

Conclusion

These are just some of the resources available to rural practitioners. I offer them in hopes that you city people might also find them of interest.

If you've got information sources you love to tap into, I hope you'll share them with me and the Sangha. I'll be happy to put together more resources for future editions of the Open Way newsletter and our Resources Web page. Just e-mail me at newsletter@openway.org. Thank you!





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About Open Way

Open Way Sangha formed in Missoula in 1989 to practice mindfulness and meditation in the tradition of Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and the Order of Interbeing. In addition to the Tuesday Open Way Sittings at the Mindfulness Center, Open Way's "relaxed format" sitting group, "Be Here Now" meets on Monday. A sister Open Way Sangha, Flowing Mountains, meets weekly in Helena. These practice groups come together regularly for fall and spring retreats, days of

mindfulness, and other events including discussion groups and seasonal celebrations.

The Center is at 702 Brooks Avenue in Missoula, tucked into the corner of Rose Park. For further information and a full calendar of current events, visit www.openway.org. To contact the center, call (406) 541-8191 or email info@openway.org.

Send newsletter feedback and submissions to newsletter@openway.org.



OPEN WAY MINDFULNESS CENTER

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