

Open Way News & Views



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*Dharma Practice in the Tradition of
Thich Nhat Hanh & The Order of Interbeing*

Celebrating the Practice: Watering Seeds of Joy

Josh Farmer

Thinkadoo

Upon a tree sat a Thinkadoo,
Thinking incessantly 'bout things old and new.
He thought about clouds and why they were there,
He thought about bugs and women's underwear.
He thought about thoughts he'd had once before,
He'd sometimes have thoughts he didn't like anymore.
He took pride in his thinking and thought himself to be best,
Above flowers and bees and all of the rest.
He was happy to think day in and day out,
'til one thought he had just wouldn't get out.
It kept growing and growing inside of his mind.
Soon he grew frightened and wanted to find
Relief from his thoughts that kept coming in time.
He'd wished he could silence his runaway mind,
He tried thinking of ways to stop all the thoughts.
As hard as he tried his mind wouldn't stop.
And soon our Thinkadoo grew very scared,
searching for someone to help him who cared.
He cried out in anguish, "They won't let me be!
I'm tired of thinking, I want to be free!"
All of sudden, with no thought of his own,
a voice echoed loudly, "As Above So Below!"
Silence crept into his mind with a flash,
lighting his world with a peace that will last.
His eyes were reopened to beauty somehow,
he was a witness to everything Now.
The stillness he felt brought about such a bliss,
his eyes could now see all they had missed.
He felt no longer worthy of praise,
he felt only gratitude the rest of his days.

Sandra Johnson

THE WASP

A wasp flew in for a little rest.
The October light, so thin that day,
I relented and let it stay,
treated it as my honored guest.

I offered it honey and water from a plate.
It drank a little, refused the food,
then dragged itself to solitude
waiting for some unknown power to decide its fate.

I tried to touch its tired wings,
but it raised its legs in weak protest,
and I, letting it do what it thought best,
went on to other things.

One day I found it—mortified.
Was it something I said, or didn't say?
Did I violate some waspish rule of etiquette?

Kurie, I murmured, be sanctified.



Photo: Steve Allison-Bunnell

Karen J. Cooper

Right Now

Right Now she and I look down, find a heart
rock and place it in my pocket.

Right Now he and I gaze up between lodgepole
pines and discover a hot air balloon.

Right Now someone and I walk side by side at
dusk in silence. His coat is blue, mine is purple.

Right Now we all step together on pine cones,
needles, kinnikinnik and dried weeds.

Right Now they sit together as friends and only
eat.

Right Now smiles, a song and the soft feet of
two monks, moving forward.

Right Now we are separate among the aspens
and we are all together.

Right Now I steal the words from the song: "I
am remembering WHO I AM."

Treva Voreyer

This Forest

This forest sustains much life,
the ancient rocks, the trees,
the flora, the fauna.

My heart opens.

Yes! Yes!

I have enough conditions
to be happy.

Thank you! Thank You!

I thank you all.



Bill Elison

Blue Mountain

A Pine forest above
 Tree limbs stretching
 Whispering in the wind

A cloud grows up behind the mountain
 A white pillar on a blue vault

All day the wind dries the garden
 The white clouds flow overhead
 Their shadows stream across the parched yard

They slow
 They become smaller
 And fewer

No rain today
 Bad for plants but good for seeing stars

The day finally fades
 Blue Mountain hides the sun
 Slowly, so slowly

Piece by piece
 The telescope is carried out
 To be assembled with love
 To sit there waiting and waiting
 Far from the nearest tree

I go into the house for a coat and a stocking hat
 Montana summer nights can be cold
 And I quickly go back out again
 For the telescope is jealous

Then checking, checking the
 Round window in the telescope eyepiece
 No stars yet

A lone white cloud returns
 Luminous under a crescent moon
 And I'm pulled into an Ansel Adams moment
 Blue Mountain becomes New Mexico

Or an impossibly high cliff on an alien world
 I'm alone, but not quite
 I'm with companions, familiar, yet barely
 remembered

From another time long, long ago, or a time yet
 to come
 Which is it?

A breeze brings me suddenly back to the
 present moment

And the first few faded stars begin to appear
 Far away a dog barks
 It's a clear sound
 But empty



Ellen Knight

Silence

The waves of mind
demand so much of Silence.
But She does not talk back
does not give answers nor arguments.
She is the hidden author of every thought
every feeling
every moment.

Silence.

She speaks only one word.
And that word is this very existence.
No name you give Her
touches Her
captures Her.

Mind throws itself at Silence
demanding to be let in.
But no mind can enter into
Her radiant darkness
Her pure and smiling nothingness.

The mind hurls itself
into sacred questions.
But Silence remains
unmoved by the tantrums.
She asks only for nothing.

Nothing.

But you won't give it to her
because it is the last coin
in your pocket.
And you would rather
give her your demands than
your sacred and empty hands.

Cris Mulvey

Sitting

Alone on my cushion,
light splashing the windowsills,
sifting in veils through the doorway.

Outside, the river murmuring its ravishment
swoons beneath the wide, blue arc of the
raven's wing,
the satin sheen of its waters darkening.

Inside, I am shaving the layers of thought
with the thin sharp steel of
silence,

sitting, while the world springs up
around me over and over
Again.

I am doing nothing.

Now I arise like fire,
flashing its hair in the sunshine.
Now I appear like water,
pouring over the earth.
Now I am empty. Now full. Now longing only
to know how to love,

simply,

as clouds empty themselves
into rain, holding nothing back,
working magic,

turning stone to scent and
soil to stem green
brightness,

just by opening.



Amy Kalil

Fall Fell

Fall fell
and, I am grateful
where the Blackfoot River turns right...

I am grateful
when the night turns into day
and the day turns into night

I am grateful
each moment is now
and each moment is right

I am grateful
for my partner
who loves me so tenderly
for the children of my heart
who connect with me so sincerely
for my friends and family
who cradle me so dearly

Each morning with the sunrise,
I open up the gift,
the gift of you...

It's wild, real wild
like finding a snake in a garden
when you are a kid...

The only thing
that is crazy
is how natural it feels...

Fall fell
and, I am grateful
where the Blackfoot River turns right...



A Year of Retreat Reflections

In January, Jack Kuehn went on retreat at Camp Indianola on Puget Sound near Seattle with Eileen Kiera of Mountain Lamp Community.

Jack Kuehn

January: Puget Sound

I am at my first real meditation retreat. It is long and boring. Very Buddhist. We have sat and sat and sat now for what seems like days and days, and there are still more days ahead. I have tried everything: standing beside myself during this meditation with these feelings, allowing them and feeling them and wishing them well, and stepping on, to the next minute, the next walking meditation, coming back again and again. Then finally giving up and wandering in my fantasies and my thoughts. Coming back to the breath, the moment, bears no rewards now, and feels like falling under the weight of a terrible dense cloud of cold rawness. It does not feel like a refuge right now. I am beyond bored. The apparent refuge lies in dreams of places and things residing only in my mind—in thinking of doing things that are bright and exciting and engaging, mechanical things free of ambiguity, clean sharp activities and thoughts that carry me along freely and with no resistance. But, coming into this retreat, I have taken on the intention of looking into depths, where shame lies. I hate the idea that the soft hand of shame has the power to lead me along to a diminished and powerless version of myself. I feel terrible now, this intention coming in to upset things, throwing ice on my days just like the winter snows outside the window, looming over me like some terrible force. In this moment I do not believe in transformation. It is full-on winter, and I feel cold and alone.

Once or twice during the whole week, usually right after sitting begins, I experience a few moments of knowing in my body the sacredness of this being conscious as a human being. A sublime

moment or two of this, then the distractions move in like rain and static, interceding. Yes, I get that this is our nature. The main tool available to me as a human is my mind, and the main disability as a human being is, guess what, my mind.

Five of us are committing to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and the Sangha sits in meditation waiting for the ceremony to begin. A terrible image comes to my mind and body: a swirling unspeakable beast, a seething angry thing covered with slime and excrement. Its heat and aggression send feelings of utter disdain and loathsome fear through me. I sweat, and I am in the grip of this thing, hair on the back of my neck standing up.

He has come from that darkest chamber of my heart, locked away in there many years ago when I had no idea where else to put him. He has remained there, festering, rotting, simmering while I avoided anything that might crack the door, allow the light of day to reveal him. He came out for the very first time two years ago in spite of my best efforts to contain him, and today perhaps he thinks that since the front yard is quiet, he can come out and see what kind of a mess he might instigate.

Out it comes, ready to breathe fire and fear and shame, only to find me on my knees right in the middle of the Sangha, being offered an authentic invitation to reverse all life, to be truly happy, to fall in love every moment, to listen from the heart always, even to horror, and to cultivate seeds of healing joy. I am given a name: Fierce Compassion of the Source. And by the time the strong men and women of the Sangha welcome me with shining eyes and warm hugs, the slime and excrement are drying up and flaking away, revealing new skin, the knot in my gut softening and fading, the rage somehow fueling a passion, a human warmth.

The beasts tendrils still wind their way into my heart, but the door of that chamber is cracked open for good, propped open by a Sangha, the practice, and the shared intention of a roomful of humans, each of us with awful tragedy and perfect potential within.

Peggy Rowe and her husband, Larry Ward, shared the Dharma with us at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp. Here is memory of her visit to Montana.

Peggy Rowe

May: Spring Open Way Retreat

There is something special with a first love
Something soft and tender and vulnerable
I was twenty when I met my first mountains
Mighty moments captured in memory
My first moose, seeing a grizzly bear,
shopping for amazing licorice,
delighting in bear grass and the Northern lights

Lying on the lawn at Lake McDonald Lodge
We oohed and ahhed like kids on the 4th of July
As colors moved and danced
A natural Etch-a-Sketch
in soft hues of pink and blue
Startling surprises with pastels
woven on the night sky

How would it be to return after forty years?
Sometimes memories are shattered
in the light of the present moment
The contents can spill
like a broken string of pearls
dropped on a tile floor
Landing in Missoula and seeing her again
I realized that some fine part of me
had never left Montana mountains and
Glacier Park.
Bear grass and Northern lights
had traveled with me



Steve Fletcher

Supporting me and carrying me all these years

My recollections around our retreat are of
 being held by the Sangha
 and the mountains
 Nestled in the arms of the ancient teachers
 Nourished by beauty and care
 The joy of practicing with friends
 that love to practice
 I felt and still feel so lucky

New memory capsules include
 Rowan's generosity, Peggy's kindness and care,
 Nicole and Mike's sweetness,
 wisdom and light,
 Beth's songs, wonderful music and
 resting in the arms of the Sangha.
 And of course, the mountains.
 It was a joy to be together.
 Thank you so much
 for the invitation to come home.

Nicole Dunn

June: Celebrating in Plum Village

I wrote every day at Plum Village. To read my journal entries & dharma talk notes go to:
www.goingoutwordsandinwords.wordpress.com

With the great support of Open Way, a successful spring yard sale fundraiser at the center and support from friends and family my husband Mike and I had the great fortune of attending the 21-day retreat in Plum Village this past June. After a lot of hard work we set off on our first venture overseas to the south of France where we sat with practitioners from all over the world. Thay (Thich Nhat Hanh) gave 5 dharma talks a week for three-weeks that tied into the retreat's theme, "The Science of the Buddha." For me, being able to attend a 21-day retreat in Plum Village with Thay and the monks and nuns was a great way to celebrate this practice that has so deeply and fully touched my life. I

hesitate to say this, because it's so cliché, but going to Plum Village was a dream come true.

We had the opportunity to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Plum Village not once but twice! Two days were devoted to celebration with elaborate costumes, skits, delicious artisan cupcakes,



music, gallery exhibits of Thay's calligraphy and glass cases filled with memorabilia.

I'd like to share a treasured moment I had during one of the celebrations. After circling the lotus pond at New Hamlet and staring in amazement at the first of the lotus flowers in bloom (and like a typical tourist wildly snapping photos) we all took to the grass to become an audience for a lovely poem of Thay's being acted out in a sweet performance by some of the nuns in adorned robes. I wound up with a very good seat by some stone buddha statues with my newly made good friend, and one of my roommates, Clara. As the sisters delicately acted out the poem there was music being played over some speakers and every once in a while there was a bird call that would float in at seemingly displaced times. After a short while Clara whispered to me that Thay was responsible for making the bird noise. I was skeptical. Our seats were in great view of not only the performance but also of Thay and Sister Chang Kong, which was an unexpected treat. So I turned my

attention to Thay to see what Clara was talking about. And sure enough I eventually spotted a little toy bird sitting next to him in the grass. Every once in a while Thay would turn to the bird and press it and the bird call would float in over the speakers, his face alight with a smile as if he were playing a little game. The bird must've been next to a microphone. When I saw Thay I saw a young child playing freely and joyfully in the golden sun. It was a beautiful sight to see and it warms my heart to think about it even now, months later. It reminds me that this practice is about solidity and freedom at the same time, together like the in-breath and the out-breath.

I hold this practice very dear to me. I hold Thay and the greater world-wide sangha of the Order of Interbeing he has built and inspired dear to me. I hold Be Here Now, my home sangha, who celebrated our 10 year anniversary in September dear to me. And I hold Open Way and all of my fellow friends on the path of mindfulness and understanding dear to me.

Brothers Phap Hai and Phap Nat of Deer Park Monastery shared the Dharma with us at Lubrecht Experimental Forest.

Brother Phap Hai

September: Fall Open Way Retreat

In Montana I developed a painful neck. There was so much beauty—the mountains, plains, the wide-open blue sky—that I noticed that it was difficult to not turn my head constantly! I was touched by the beauty, as well as the sincerity of the practice that I discovered as I traveled around. It was a beautiful ten days and I am filled with gratitude for the experience of being together with all of you. I learned so much.

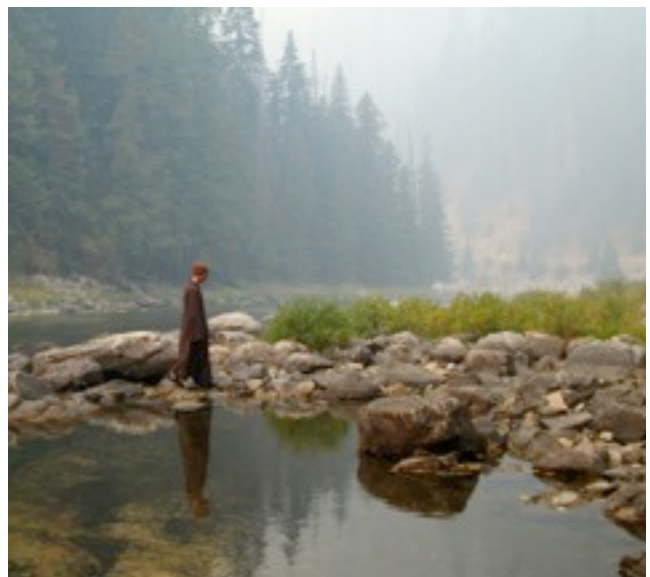
In the texts we are told that a happy person is a person who has gratitude, or *kataanuta*, literally means “a person who knows what has been done for him/her.”

When we receive ordination, whether the 5 or the 14 mindfulness trainings, a central part of the

transmission ceremony revolves around the recognition of the Four Gratuities: our parents, our teachers, our kind spiritual friends and all beings. We have not reached this moment through our own efforts alone, but through the kindness and support of so many living beings from beginning-less time. We pause, and touch the earth in recognition of the fact that thanks to the great efforts of so many others, as well as ourselves, we have reached this moment. Parents, teachers, friends, and all beings. “All beings” here is our beloved, the person behind the coffee bar preparing your latte, the person blocking your way in the supermarket, that person in the sangha who does everything “the wrong way” and the trees that breathe out as you breathe in. All of these beings are described as treasures.

I think it may be helpful for us, as Sangha builders to concretely reflect on our Sangha as both a source and an object of gratitude within the context of the third gratitude of “kind spiritual friends.” Let us take time to reflect on the myriad of ways that our Sanghas have been places of refuge for us and have challenged us to go a little deeper, to look a little more clearly.

There is a practice of rejoicing described in the Flower Garland Discourse. We rejoice in every



Nicole Dunn

condition of happiness that we enjoy (and there are so many) as well as every good quality and beneficial action performed by ourself and others. In the beginning, it may be helpful to spend a few minutes at the end of each day reflecting on all of the ways that we have reached out of our “comfort zone” and connected with others, and also reflecting on the myriad of ways that others have supported us. Taking time each day to rejoice in our good seeds is delightful, and powerful medicine for our own sense of isolation! Sometimes people say that Buddhism is all about suffering. I beg to differ. Buddhism is about awakening our innate good heart, of developing confidence in our capacity to awaken and to be a support for other beings.

Recently I have been studying Shantideva’s “Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life.” It is a profound and rich text. There is one section in which we are guided through the development of the Mind of Love – a few verses of which I find particularly relevant here:

*May I be a guard for those who are
protectorless
A guide for those along the way
And for those who wish to cross the water
May I become a boat, a raft, a bridge
For all those ailing in the world
Until their every sickness has been healed
May I myself become for them
The doctor, the nurse, the medicine itself.*

We can direct this intention towards other living beings, but also to ourself.

On a deep level, a practitioner is described as someone who is becoming responsible for our own happiness and also responsible for the happiness of others.

In the beginning, many of us come to the practice with the idea of getting some benefit for ourselves: peace, freedom and so on. This can be a good starting point. As our practice begins to deepen we start to realize “just like me.” Our heart softens and opens when we see our interconnectivity, our interbeing, with all others. We’re not

so isolated after all, and we begin to reach out. We begin to practice “with” all others. We begin to see others whether “friends” or “enemies” as our kind spiritual friends since they provide the support for our practice.

When we open our heart in this way away from taking things or other people for granted and towards a sense of giftedness, we begin to understand just how blessed we are. Happiness and joy become ever more present in our mind.

Days of Mindfulness

August 12th, An Outdoor Day of Mindfulness

Thomas

Up the Creek with a Baaarr and No Paddle

Baaarr joined us at the trailhead parking lot. Rasty old straw hat and a big, nice smile. We were a walking sangha on our way up Rattlesnake Creek. Beautiful day, delightful people, wonderful moments. Walking in silence very consciously. Be here now, be now here, now be here. I wondered if his name was really Bear.

Lunch on the creekside rocks, the murmur of soft conversation, the murmur of the creek, the glistening sun on the colorful wet rocks. Ah, so pretty. But he did pronounce it “Bar”.

The sangha was a youngster, an oldster and a bunch in between. It was a hot summer day with only a transient breeze. Nice, nice, nice to be in the shade. Peaceful, mindful, mind empty. Someone asked him, “Did you say ‘Baaarr’?” And he smiled and said, “You could say it like that.”

After a pleasant lunch we backtracked the trail just a short ways up to a shady meadow with some big pines. A session of mindful *zazen* with the smell of hot summer pine, listening to the creek; anticipation was high. But wait, as we were arranging ourselves in a circle we noticed he wasn’t there yet. Where’s Bar? Oh well, he probably stopped to... you know, we’ll give him a couple

more minutes. So, in a couple of minutes he was still a no-show and one of us jumped up and went to check back along the trail to the lunch site which was, you know, just right over there down behind that tree and those bushes. Coulda thrown a rock. Right away our friend returned and said, "No Bar, no where." Well huh!? Did a bar get Bar? No way could he vanish like that! A questioning anxiety rippled through the group. Bear, lion, crocodile? Where's that *kyosaku* when you need it?

Well, me, I think he was a celestial escort (from Buddha of course) sheltering us on our walk to the safety of the creek. Not sure the nature of the problem; I'm betting meteorite though. Right there on the path on the Path. And he was great! It worked! No meteorites!

So I'm pretty sure he'd be glad to hear that we had such a wonderful sitting and a safe walk back to our cars. And, Buddha if you're reading this, oh yeah, you're cool you're cool, oh yeah!

Open Sky Family Day of Mindfulness at Deep Bay

Mary Hemming-Omary

Delicious Joy High on a Boulder

The way I envision family fun and delicious joy has memorably changed since attending the Open Sky Family Day of Mindfulness. I cherished seeing my 9 year-old son, Bridger, drink up and savor the treasures in this Family Day of Mindfulness, treasures I thought only I was going to receive.

When I walked from the adult session over to the children's session, I happily spotted my wildly gregarious son proudly perched (semi-precariously, by choice) at the top of a pile of boulders, sitting in meditation pose, eyes closed, gentle grin gracing his lips, my heart smiled. He gleefully commanded, "Look at me, Mom! The teachers only wanted us to meditate for 1 minute to start with, but I wanted to do more. At least 10 minutes. And I suggested outside, up here on the rocks. And they said, 'OK, let's do it!'" Then he paused, savoring the sweet plum he picked from a nearby tree, its juice glistening from his fingertips. I received exponen-

tial peace knowing the impact this day had on both of us.

After the closing circle, Bridger told me he couldn't wait to go back next Sunday. I explained it was a special one-time family day. Bridger matter-of-factly said we should do it more often, like every Sunday, like how often people go to Church. The effects from this family day still lingered into the next week. Several days later, Bridger confessed something to me. "Mom, I have a secret to tell you. At school, when I raise my hand to go to the bathroom, I actually walk down this hidden hallway and meditate for like, twenty seconds. And then I go back to class." Do priceless applications in the real world get any finer?

Thank you for this opportunity to share a sacred part of myself with my family. Bridger sang praises for the engaging instructors and their artistic activities. I sang praises for these feelings of peace and mindfulness that I can now share with my family. And we called it delicious joy together.

Barbara L. Thomas

Coming Home, Back Home

Monday, the day after the retreat, I planned a swim, as usual followed by a walk at the Kalispell Fitness Center. A young man asked me if he could share my lane. He moved as awkwardly as a walrus, floundering up and down the lane, threatening my death by drowning. Unaccountably, I found his gawky presence, elbows and all, funny.

Later, showered and changed, I seemed to moving around the track at a snail's pace, I was so relaxed and calm. To my surprise, I accomplished the mile in the same time as usual. Cheered, I tried the walking meditation practice we shared at Deep Bay, this time counting my steps between in-breath and out-breath: in-breath, seven steps; out-breath seven steps.

The day of retreat couldn't have been lovelier: fine weather, a beautiful view of the bay, evergreens seeming to breathe in and out along with

the gathering of novices, those of more advanced skills, children, parents, even a grandmother or two. Cavorting squirrels provided an addition focus on the wildness of the site.

How lovely in this atmosphere to hear, and be invited to respond with gestures, to a story for children of all ages, one derived from Tolstoy's "Three Questions." The central presentation of the day was one layered with anecdotes to provoke thoughtful consideration of parenting in difficult situations, in one instance a loving bystander was the one to diffuse a boiling pot and reestablish a mother's appreciation for, even delight in, her own beautiful child.

The warmth of the fellowship on this one day is sure to have delightful repercussions: the beginnings of friendships and vows to attend a Sangha more regularly; for children some experience in quiet time and focused listening; the appropriateness of sometimes rolling and cavorting like young squirrels. I can only add my thanks for all those whose planning, preparation of soups and cornbread, and all, contributed to such a beautiful outing.

2013 Retreat Dates

Both 2013 retreats will be held at the Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp

Spring

May 2nd-5th

Teacher:

Michael Ciborski

This retreat will include a children's program.

Fall

September

26th-29th

Teacher:

Cheri Maples



Real-World Practice

Alison Matthews

Zen and the Art of Shepherding

We often think that we learn detachment on the cushion, or in a retreat, or by walking slowly in beautiful places. It is true that much can be learned in such places and situations. However, this is a tale of discovery: the journey to become centered and clear, detached from an outcome, and ego-free in the midst of a seemingly chaotic practice. For those of you who don't know, I have an Icelandic sheepdog named Markus. He is many things to me and an integral part of my life. Our sheepherding endeavor began from an ideal 'should', that is, that in order for an Icelandic sheepdog to be considered breedable, he/she *should* be able to demonstrate an instinctual skill at sheepherding. Of course, this is not actually true, it was just my supposition. But, I decided to take up sheepherding just to see if he could do it.

Our progress has been slow, but, this summer Markus and I were supposedly ready to compete at the first level herding trials. The goal of herding is to move stock at a moderate pace to a designated location. The whole operation ought to be quiet and orderly. Markus is, however, over eager and wants to run fast and bark a lot in order to make the sheep move. As a consequence, I was a nervous wreck about our preparation or lack thereof for the early summer trials. True to form, Markus began barking even before he went into the arena to start the test. After some aborted starts, I excused myself both days. It was simply terrible. I was frustrated and miserable about the whole thing. All my imaginings had included cooperative sheep, a quiet dog, and a knowledgeable handler. Unfortunately I had none of the ingredients in my reality.

So, I had a choice: either give up or get some sheep so I could practice daily. In thinking about this, I considered a number of things 1. Markus does have definite talent. 2. On our good days, I

have found that the connection that Markus and I have while sheepherding is absolutely breathtaking. 3. Sheepherding is simply the controlled movement of stock; Markus was bred to be a farm dog. He ought to be able to do this, quietly and calmly. 4. I have invested a lot of time and thought in herding. I have found no other dog-human activity (except perhaps for tracking and hunting) that is quite as challenging. The dog's instinct is necessary to the task. I, as the handler, must figure out how to channel that instinct to the best advantage. We are true partners. The sheep will not move without him.

The upshot of my thinking was to continue and get some sheep to work with.

I borrowed some dog-broke sheep for the summer. My plan was that I would work with Markus and the sheep at least five times a week over the summer. Working at home on a daily basis allowed me the chance to slow down and work on one element at a time. Markus was very eager and was good at reading and anticipating my body language. This can be good and sometimes not so good. He figured the faster the better, the noisier the better because then the sheep will move. We spent much time learning that herding is *not* running and barking after running sheep, but rather a moderate steady progress to achieve a goal, such as going through an obstacle or stopping at some predetermined place.



A nice, quiet fetch.



Turning a corner and covering.

So as time and the weeks passed, Markus became very good at being quiet and controlled and effective at home. We continued to work with other sheep and to test our progress in other venues. There, Markus would revert to his barky, runny ways, but even those improved as time went by. My trainer and I made plans and rehearsed for the Labor Day AKC trial. It was to be a three-day trial. Markus and I seemed to be ready and I felt confident we would do well.

The first day of the trial came. I was excited, nervous, and confident. I felt sure all would be just fine. Except maybe not.

Markus and I had worked so hard preparing for this event. I really wanted to qualify all three days so Markus would get his title. I felt that we had already earned it. However, life does not go exactly as planned.

We were the first up in the started class. Just getting through the gate was a challenge. He began to bark. He was picking up my anxiety and telling me that he would get those sheep for me, I did not have to worry, that he was very fast. After some coaxing, I got Markus to the starting cone, signaled the sheep to be brought in and, thinking I could not hold him at his post while I got into place, let him go. He did a beautiful run, albeit barking and running too fast, but he did not go quite far enough and cut in, gathering up the sheep the opposite way I had sent him. The sheep were upset because of his speed and noise, but he

brought them to me and we maneuvered each obstacle handily. The run was ok. It would have qualified except for the major issue of the initial cut in. That cross over cost Markus almost half his points in that section, and the rest of his work was definitely not stellar. It was clear to all watching that Markus knew his job but was too eager. We did not qualify. Markus should have had the award for the noisiest dog in the trial.

The second day was worse. He broke his stay and disqualified himself within about 4 seconds. I was close to tears from frustration and despair.

The third day came, I allowed Markus to wander up to the starting cone ahead of me instead of keeping him at heel. He trotted ahead, barking some, but mostly looking for sheep. Since there were no sheep, he was more content to lie down and stay. As the sheep came in, I nailed him to the ground with my eyes and edged on toward my own starting place. Markus waited. He did a correct outrun and we did the entire run, at a run, all the while Markus was barking excitedly. The run was way too fast, and Markus seemingly forgot the meaning of the word 'sit', to say nothing of the words: 'quiet', 'steady', or 'wait'. He did do his directionals very well, though. Because of that and because he doesn't like to lose sheep, we proceeded through the obstacles in the correct order and in the correct direction. However, it was fast, and rough, and definitely not my ideal of quiet steady movement of stock to the destination. My fellow trialers, who had been watching us for the past three days in growing sympathy and support, applauded mightily when we came through the gate. I was so touched and pleased that we managed to get the job done. And we tied for last as qualifiers with another friend. We were all overjoyed.

My trainer and her dog finished her championship title handily that weekend by doing consistent quiet work extremely well. They provide me with a doable goal and a vision of what can be despite the reality of, as the judge so succinctly put it, "A

mad hatter's wild ride." Markus and I do work well together. Our summer of the sheep and much practice has allowed a confidence and style of working to develop between us that we had not been able to achieve otherwise. I have learned that sheep-herding is a way to get a job done, yes, but it is also a way to find a center in a life, to let go of uncontrollable outcomes, to be absolutely in the moment, responsible for my own actions, allowing each other critter the result of its own actions. I can only control my attitude and where my feet go. I cannot control my dog or the sheep. They have their own journey. When Markus learns that he has the power to control the sheep without barking; he will stop barking. When he learns that, the sheep will respond less frantically to him. And we will achieve our goal of moderate, steady movement of stock to a predetermined goal. In a word, we will be herding, quietly, efficiently and well. Zen at work!

Nurturing Our Future

Rowan Conrad

Maha Sangha: Organization and Innovation

For many years Thay told us, "Organism, not organization." My retrospective wisdom on this is that he is quite aware how easy it can be for one or a few misguided people to take over an organization and use it to run amok and create difficulty.

A few years ago, Thay modified his message, asking Dharma Teachers in North America to get organized and bring consistency to things like the Aspirant process. Hopefully, this means he saw in us enough maturity to wield the power of an organization wisely.

Our tradition now has two organized maha entities in North America. The first, of course, is the monastic establishment now found in three locations: Deer Park, Blue Cliff, and Magnolia Village. Their organizational forms go back 2,600 years, and yet continue to evolve. The second is the North American Dharma Teacher's Sangha which

formally incorporated only about a year ago, yet profits from the millennia of experience of the monastic sangha as well as the experiences of contemporary sanghas throughout the US and Canada.

What organization can bring is consistency and stability. What an organization can also do is stifle creativity and evolution. A fundamental insight of the Buddha is that everything is in constant change. Everything. That means everything is also in a constant process of evolution and adaptation to shifting environments and circumstances.

When asked what advice he could offer our sanghas, one thing Thay Phap Hai said (and I quote his meaning, not his exact words which I do not remember) was that we could shake things up a little. Not get habitual about our forms and approaches. He modeled this for us on retreat by, among other things: changing the order

of the outdoor walking and Dharma Talk, incorporating an informal “Teacher Tea,” modifying the Mindfulness Trainings Panel approach, and encouraging us to look at Teacher interviews differently. Most of these things were quite well received and effective.

In any case, all were worthy experiments. The challenge is not to be caught in habit energies that can prevent us from widening current Dharma Doors and creating new ones. Can we have the wisdom to use our organizations to create stable platforms for innovation, evolution, and development rather than using them as structures to hide within and behind? Always a challenge.

The alternative trap is using innovation for innovation’s sake. To make up new things in order to be entertained by the process of making them and

the enjoyment of playing with a new toy. Did the Buddha say something about a middle way?

Can we evolve our structures to support new realities and needs? Can we honor those structures that serve us?

Open Way is currently in the process of evolving our structure. Open Way did not truly foresee becoming a multi-sangha organization, more than a local vehicle. We did not design our corporate structure to be more than a casual umbrella for a set of sanghas. Yet this is what has organically evolved. Now it is our task to make the corporate structure serve its newer and broader task for providing structure and stability for our larger sangha and joint activities (retreats, mindfulness days, Aspirant support, and the like) without inhibiting our ability to widen and develop effective

local Dharma doors. To this end the following steps are being taken:

- 1) There will be another meeting of the state sanghas leadership, which we’ve been calling the Directors and Program Directors meeting (Directors Meeting), in January ahead of the Open Way Annual meeting. This meeting will

be both for the purpose of working with a proposed revision of the Open

Way Sangha, Inc. bylaws to reflect our newer broader reality and as well as to continue to develop our relationships with each other. These relationships are the lubricant for the sangha organizational engine. Smooth function requires that they be continually renewed. This meeting will be at Open Way Mindfulness Center Friday evening January 25 and all day Saturday January 26.

- 2) There will be two Open Way (Missoula) Thursday evening meetings in January (January 10 and 17, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) before this meeting



to explore our local structures and programs and inform our leadership prior to the Directors meeting. Other localities will be sharing and informing their leadership via their own council processes.

3) The Sunday following the Directors meeting the Open Way Annual Meeting, January 27, will look at the output of the Directors meeting and likely approve the bylaw changes that turn Open Way, Inc. into a true multi-sangha organization and adopt new program council structure for dealing with Open Way/Be Here Now sangha processes and structures for Missoula.

It is our aim and intent that the structures we create (and continually create), not only locally, but regionally and internationally will enhance our wise innovation, evolution, and Dharma Door creation and as well provide the consistency and stability needed for effective collective and individual practice.

Announcements

Welcome Home Little One!

Congratulations to Greg and Corrie Grallo on their new arrival, baby boy Nico Grallo born on October 20th, 2012! Thatcher will make a great big brother to him!



Brandon Kendall

Funds for the Mindfulness Center

As most of you know, we are buying the Mindfulness Center in Missoula. In January, 2012, we made our first annual payment plus an extra \$1000. Now we are in a new payment year.

If you were unable to participate last year and your circumstances have changed, please consider a pledge this year, using the enclosed form.

Any amount that you can give, will be gratefully appreciated.

Online Thich Nhat Hanh Mindfulness Resources:

Plum Village Monastery in France: plumvillage.org

Deer Park Monastery in California: deerparkmonastery.org

Blue Cliff Monastery in New York: bluecliffmonastery.org

Magnolia Grove Monastery in Mississippi: magnoliagroove.org

Wake Up USA: us.wkup.org

Thich Nhat Hanh Dharma Talks: tnhaudio.org

TNH's North American 2013 Tour: tnhtour.org

TNH's Books: parallax.org (Most of Thay's books are also in the iBookstore and Kindle store.)

Order of Interbeing: orderofinterbeing.org

The Mindfulness Bell: mindfulnessbell.org

Steve Allison-Bunnell

The Buddhists that Time Forgot



It was then that Zog realized Thag told him, "Bring your mammoth bow!" and not "Ring your magic bowl."



OPEN WAY MINDFULNESS CENTER

702 Brooks Avenue

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Return Service Requested



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About Open Way

Open Way formed in 1989 to practice mindfulness and meditation in the tradition of Nobel Peace Prize Nominee, Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and the The Order of Interbeing. In Missoula, meditation practice is offered on Monday and Tuesday evenings. The Sangha schedule includes discussion groups, classes, outdoor walking meditations, and mindfulness day events. Flowing Mountains Sangha in Helena meets Tuesday evenings, and Open Sky Sangha in Kalispell meets Wednesday evenings. The Open Way Sanghas jointly offer resi-

dential retreats in Spring and Fall. Open Way is active in the Open Gate Prison Outreach Program, which sponsors meditation groups in area prisons.

The Center is at 702 Brooks Avenue in Missoula, in 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.