



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

Newsletter

September 1996

GBF Calendar

Call 415/974-9878 for news about GBF and GBF-sponsored events. To skip the recording and leave a message, press 5.

3 Sept. (Tuesday), Steering Committee Meeting, 7:30 pm, at the home of Clint Seiter,

5 Sept., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Bill Kirkpatrick,

7 Sept., Saturday Sitting (East Bay), 10 am, at the home of Geoff McEnany,

8 Sept., Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m., 273 Page St., SF. Vipassana Teacher Howie Cohn will give a dharma talk on "Freedom: Near or Far?"

12 Sept., Thursday Sitting, potluck at 6:30 pm, sitting at 8 pm, at the home of Lee Robbins,

13-15 Sept. (Fri.-Sun.), Fifth Annual GBF Weekend Retreat, Vajrapani Institute, Boulder Creek, CA.

19 Sept., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Mark Marion,

21 Sept., Saturday Sitting (East Bay), 10 am, at the home of Geoff McEnany,

22 Sept., Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m., 273 Page St., SF. Open discussion.

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Come Practice with Other Gay Men at GBF's Sept. Retreat

By this time GBF members should have received registration forms for the Fifth Annual Weekend Retreat to be held September 13-15, 1996, at the Vajrapani Institute in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

This year's retreat will combine traditional practices of sitting and walking meditation with dharma discussion and more free time than in past years. The weekend will be a great opportunity for us to practice together in a more focused way, and to create a space that supports our intention to follow the path of the Buddha.

We will need some volunteers to help with this retreat: timekeepers, bell ringers, and someone to welcome participants on Friday evening. If you'd like to volunteer, please call the GBF phone line and let us know.

If you haven't received a registration form and you want to attend the retreat, or if you simply want more information about this event, leave a message for Daishin David Sunseri on GBF's voice mail line, 415/974-9878. We hope to see many GBF members at this year's retreat. ♡

Tilden Park is Site of Annual Picnic Oct. 6

GBF will be hosting its annual potluck picnic on Sunday, October 6, starting at 11:30 a.m. The picnic will be held at the Lake View picnic site in Tilden Park—the same site as last year.

This is a potluck picnic, so please bring something that can be shared by

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Vipassana Teacher Howie Cohn to Speak September 8

Howie Cohn will give a talk on September 8 titled, "Freedom: Near or Far?" Howie is a Vipassana teacher who has conducted retreats since 1985, and leads ongoing meditation classes in San Francisco and Marin. He has studied with Asian and Western teachers of several traditions, including Theravada, Zen, Tibetan, and Advaita Vedanta. He incorporates a non-dualistic perspective in his teaching. Howie is a Ph.D. candidate in East/West psychology, and has a private practice in counseling.

GBF is always interested in receiving suggestions for future Sunday speakers. If there is someone you wish to recommend, please contact Tom Moon at



Two Co-Editors are Sought to Replace Newsletter Editor

At last month's Steering Committee meeting, Bob Hass announced he will be leaving the position of GBF newsletter editor at the end of November after almost two years of service. This gives the Sangha four months time in which to find a new editor or co-editors.

In the past, only one person has filled the volunteer job of newsletter editor. However, the Steering Committee now is recommending that two individuals serve together as co-editors, and is actively seeking

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Dharma Centers

[Each center offers ongoing programs and activities. If interested, please contact them directly.]

- BPF: Buddhist Peace Fellowship, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley 94704. 510/525-8596.
- BSC: Berkeley Shambhala Center: 2288 Fulton Street, Berkeley. 510/841-6475 or 510/549-1481.
- BZC: Berkeley Zen Center, 1933 Russell Street, Berkeley 94703. 510/845-2403.
- CDS: California Diamond Sangha, P.O. Box 2915, Petaluma, CA 94953.
- CML: Community of Mindful Living, P.O. Box 7355, Albany 94707. 510/527-3751.
- DI: Dudjom International, P.O. Box 40155, Berkeley 94704. 510/849-9928.
- EGZC: Empty Gate Zen Center, 5707 Oakgrove Ave., Oakland 94618. 510/653-5991.
- EHMC: Enlightened Heart Meditation Center. 415/255-0798.
- GGF: Green Gulch Farm (SF Zen Center): 1601 Shoreline Highway, Sausalito. 415/383-3134.
- HSZC: Hartford Street Zen Center: 57 Hartford St., SF. 415/863-2507.
- LMB: Land of Medicine Buddha: 5800 Prescott Road, Soquel. 408/462-8383.
- NI: Nyingma Institute: 1815 Highland Place, Berkeley 94709. 510/843-6812.
- ODD: Orgyen Dorje Den/Bay Area Yeshe Nyingpo: 410 Townsend #406, SF. 415/826-7181.
- POL: PÖL Pema Ösel Ling: 2013 Eureka Canyon Road, Corralitos. 408/761-6266.
- RF: Rigpa Fellowship: 816 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510/644-1858.
- SBC: Saraha Buddhist Center, 3145 Geary Blvd. #515, SF. 415/731-5973.
- SCZC: Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School Street, Santa Cruz. 408/457-0206.
- SFBC: San Francisco Buddhist Center: 37 Bartlett St., SF. 415/282-2018.
- SFSC: San Francisco Shambhala Center: 1630 Taraval St., SF. 415/731-4426.
- SFZC: San Francisco Zen Center: 300 Page Street, SF. 415/863-3136.
- SMZC: Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, 6367 Sonoma Mountain Road, Santa Rosa. 707/545-8105.
- SR: Spirit Rock Meditation Center: 5000 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Woodacre. 415/488-0164.
- TCL: Tse Chen Ling Center: 4 Joost Ave, SF. 415/333-3261.
- VI: Vajrapani Institute, P.O. Box 2130, Boulder Creek 95006. 408/338-6654. ♥

The Local Dharma

September 1996

[Note: Sometimes schedules change, so we recommend you call to confirm events.]

Special Events

4 Sept. (Wed.) "Escaping Into Life" with Shinzen Young. Young describes Vipassana meditation as a way to personal freedom, a way to go beyond our automatic reactions of emotion and suffering, so that life becomes more spontaneous and free. Broadcast on "New Dimensions", KPFA-FM, 12 noon (94.1 in Berkeley, 88.1 in Fresno).

7 Sept. (Sat.) Book Sale at the San Francisco Zen Center. Books on Buddhism, Eastern wisdom, and related cookbooks, children's books, travel, and art books will be on sale to benefit the libraries of Green Gulch, Tassajara, and the San Francisco Zen Center. SFZC

15 Sept. (Sun.) "The Body"; 5 Oct. (Sat.) "Emotions & Mental States"; 2 Nov. (Sat.) "All Dharmas" (Each retreat is being led by Gil Fronsda.) Each of these daylong retreats focuses in depth on a different aspect of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as taught by the Buddha. ("The Breath" was the first session, on August 24.) On each day, sitting and walking practice, instructions, and dharma talk center on one of the four foundations. You are invited to attend one or more of the daylong retreats, which are suitable for both beginning and experienced students. 9 am-5 pm. Cost: \$25 (No lunch). Codes: GF2, GF3, GF4. SR

Gil Fronsda has practiced Zen and Vipassana since 1975 and is pursuing graduate studies in Buddhism at Stanford. He was a monk in Burma. He was trained by Jack Kornfield and leads classes and retreats in Palo Alto and the Peninsula. He is co-editor of Teachings of the Buddha (with Jack Kornfield) and editor of Voices from Spirit Rock.

20-22 Sept. (Fri., 6 pm-Sun. 2 pm) "Company Time" with Abbot Zoketsu Norman Fischer, David Levy, and Marc Lesser. This retreat is sponsored by a group of individuals who work in the business world and are concerned with the direction and tenor of business culture in America. What are we doing in our organizations—where are we going? The workshop will explore these questions, using Buddhist precepts as a focal point for discussion. The event will include gentle meditation periods, talks by the leaders, and discussions. Cost: \$150, commuters; \$225-\$250 accommodations. GGF

25 Sept. (Wed.) Gil Fronsda will be guest speaker after meditation and service at Kannon Do Zen Temple in Mountain View. (See adjacent biographical note). 415/851-0934.

GBF Seeking Second Meeting Site

At present, GBF's Sunday morning meetings at the Zen Hospice on Page Street draw approximately 40-50 people. There are times, however, when the attendance exceeds the seating capacity at the hospice. It would be helpful, therefore, to know of an alternative meeting space that is available on Sunday mornings, and that could be reserved in advance. This would make it possible, occasionally, for us to schedule speakers who are likely to draw larger numbers of Buddhist practitioners.

If you know of an appropriate space, or of someone who might be able to help us locate one, please leave a message on GBF's phone line, 415/974-9878. ♥

New Forum to be Offered on Relationships and the Dharma

GBF will sponsor a full-day Saturday forum on "Gay Relationships and the Dharma" on November 9, 1996, at Kairos House in San Francisco. The forum will focus on examining our past relationship patterns, as well as how Buddhist practice can bring some clarity and wisdom to the way we deal with romantic and/or sexual relationships now and in the future. The cost of the forum is \$10. Look for more information about this practical and valuable event in the October newsletter. ♡

Annual Picnic at Tilden

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others. Last year's picnic was a big success, and we hope to duplicate it this year, with all of us getting a chance to socialize, wind down, and enjoy all the food we brought to share.

To defray the expense of reserving the site, a \$5 fee per person is requested. However, nobody will be turned away for lack of funds. Carpooling is encouraged. Anyone needing a ride can carpool with drivers by meeting at 273 Page Street at 11:00 a.m.

Directions: If coming from San Francisco, Berkeley, or Oakland, take Highway 24 east. Go through the Caldecott Tunnel, and then take the Fish Ranch Road exit. Turn left onto Fish Ranch Road until you reach Grizzly Peak Road. Turn right on Grizzly Peak, and stay on it until you reach South Park Drive. Turn right on South Park Drive and stay on it until it ends at Wildcat Canyon Road. Bear right on Wildcat Canyon Road. The Lake View picnic site is about a quarter of a mile down the road on your left. If you reach Inspiration Point, you've gone too far.

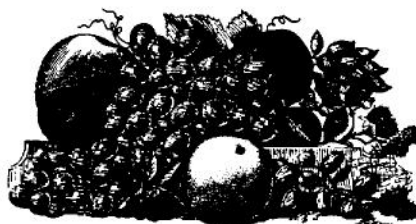
Should you have any questions, call Clint Seiter ♡

Will the Hamilton Family Center Project be Able to Continue?

For more than two years, GBF has been putting practice into action by preparing and serving hot meals to homeless families at the Hamilton Family Center in San Francisco's Haight District. We are grateful to all who have contributed financially or otherwise to support this project.

Due to a severe shortage of volunteers, however, the future of this project is uncertain. Volunteers are needed to help with food shopping, preparation and serving of meals, and coordination of the project. We provide a meal at the shelter on the third Saturday of every month, and volunteers are needed on a one-time, occasional, or ongoing basis. It's a great opportunity for GBF members to work together, to provide service to the community, and to enrich our own lives in the process. To find out how you can help, call Clint Seiter at

♡



Co-Editors Sought

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volunteers for the positions. Bob has offered to work with the new co-editors to ease the transition.

The *GBF Newsletter* contributes vitality and cohesiveness to our sangha. It publicizes GBF activities, provides a forum for dharma discussion, and serves as a link with members who live outside the Bay Area. Please call the GBF phone line at 415/974-9878 if you'd like more information about the co-editor positions or if you wish to volunteer for this practice opportunity. ♡

GBF Calendar

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26 Sept., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Edward Sams,

1 Oct. (Tuesday), Steering Committee Meeting, 7:30 pm, at the home of Alan Oliver,

3 Oct., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Bill Kirkpatrick,

6 Oct. (Sat.), Annual Potluck Picnic, 11:30 a.m., Tilden Park, Berkeley. Bring a dish to share!

Letters

Euthanasia



In a recent discussion with my 82-year-old mother, she alluded to the appropriateness of euthanasia. I suggested to her that from a Buddhist perspective it was best for us to live out our lives with the cards that we are dealt.

But I realize that I have never read any Buddhist literature or heard talks on this subject. Certainly there must be a collection of dialogue around this subject that I have not yet heard in the Buddhist AIDS community.

Perhaps this is a topic that speakers could be invited to address at a GBF general meeting. And perhaps others would care to refer me (and others) to periodical articles about this subject that I could read and perhaps pass on to my mother.

Gratefully,

Daniel Goldstein
San Francisco

More Clouds, More Water

by Andrew Hudson

In his "Forum" article in the July/August 1996 issue of the *GBF Newsletter*, Daishin David Sunseri wrote that Abbot John Daido Looi's article on monastic and lay practice which appeared in the previous month's newsletter seemed to "de-emphasize the lives of real practitioners and real monks." Daishin urged that monks "be of service to the communities in which they live." Fresh from living there amidst a group of gay people (I was attending a retreat led by Eric Kolvig and Arinna Weisman), I would like to make the monastics and activities of Zen Mountain Monastery a little more "real" for him.

Abbot Looi (called "Daidoshi" by his students) founded the Monastery 16 years ago, first running it as a Zen arts center. Over the years he has developed a training system in his "Mountains and Rivers Order" whereby both monastic and lay practitioners can mature through 10 stages of practice to become teachers in their own right.

It is a very thorough training, with Eight "Gates": Zazen; Liturgy; Art Practice; Body Practice; Buddhist Studies; Work Practice; study of the Buddhist Precepts and putting compassion into action; and one-on-one work with the teacher. The student progresses from counting and following the breath, to either intuitive work with koans, or to shikantaza, the observation of things naturally arising. The teacher's role is to encourage and prod the student's growth, until there is no difference between them: student and teacher are teaching each other—they are interchangeable.

To know and appreciate this particular teacher, you have to hear his voice, resonant, clear, coming from his heart, and even more, to be with him, in his presence. Tall, slightly stooped, large in frame & vision, he is a peculiarly American mix of single-minded dedication and unexpected informality. He's a great stickler for every movement in the liturgy being completed correctly, with the whole body and mind. And then he will turn and say quite spontaneously at the affiliated Fire Lotus Zendo in New York City, "How many people haven't had Dokusan with me yet?"

In these formal interviews, discussion of one's practice may be followed by his asking if there is anything else that you want to talk about. He has the reputation of being a

very tough teacher, but I suspect that comes into play only when the student is more advanced and can take more of a push.

What drew me to him was his resolve that gay men and lesbians should know they have a seat at the table. I have heard him say, many times over, in his Dharma discourses, "Male or female, gay or straight, black or white, we are all already Buddhas—perfect, complete, and lacking nothing!" Our task is to realize this in our daily lives, and to wake up!

Having been a lay practitioner himself for many years, he is very welcoming and supportive of *all* lay people, well or disabled or HIV afflicted, as he knows how hard it is to maintain a practice out in the world; and he is determined

to promulgate the Dharma in every way he can. He is probably the most technologically advanced Zen teacher in the country right now: no medium is foreign to him—books, tapes, videotapes, the World Wide Web, and CD-ROMs.

The long, slow work of his training program is

about to come to notable fruition. After some 14 years of studying and being tested, Bonnie Myotai Treace, Vice Abbess of the Monastery and Daidoshi's most long-term student, is in the final stages of receiving transmission from him, and will then become his first Dharma heir. This means that she will become a fully-fledged teacher empowered to work with students on koans, on an equal level with him.

When I first met her, Myotai was hanging out with some of us at the gay and lesbian retreat of 1994, as she wanted to tell us that having been a feminist, she knew something of what we had to go through in our lives.

Myotai used to be in charge of Dharma Communications, the Monastery's very active educational outreach program, and a not-for-profit corporation that produces books, audiotapes, and videotapes on aspects of Zen training. She was also editor of their journal, *Mountain Record*.

Then, to prepare for transmission, she spent long periods in solitude in the mountain hermitage, after which she was given a new job, as she laughingly confessed to those of us at a workshop in New York. She was now "Cybermonk" to the world, via computer, and each morning had to answer questions about Zen practice from places as far away as Russia and Japan. More recently, she has become resident teacher at Fire Lotus Zendo (now also known as Zen Center of New York City) during the three-month intensive training periods held twice a year. A gay brother who sits there has told me how her presence has shot new life into this New York sangha.

Once, at the end of a retreat, I saw Myotai come through the Monastery kitchen where I was working. I noticed again how she spreads an amazing calmness as she glides, rather than walks, across the floor. When I arrived in New York on my way home, I observed how

