

REFLECTIONS
engaging
on the Verse of the Faith-Mind

“The Supreme Way is not difficult; it just precludes picking and choosing.” I am taken by this first line of the Verse of the Faith-Mind as generations before me have been. I suggest each of you write this phrase down. I am sure you already have it memorized. Put it in your change pocket, on the handle bars of your bicycle, on the steering wheel, on the bathroom mirror and kitchen sink, on your computer and cell phone, and let it become part of your daily activities. Read it before engaging in whatever activity you are about to embark on, ‘sit’ with it a moment and then move forward. Play with it and play with your habits and patterned ways of experiencing the world. Watch how you pick and choose even when that is not necessary at all.

When I fully involve myself in zazen, my day-to-day picking and choosing is much smoother and easier. I have the sense that my likes and dislikes are not so important. I imagine my associations have loosened and so I am freer to improvise. I’m not as constrained. I have the sense that my background and foreground are wider (mind you this is not conscious) and so I move differently--not necessarily more efficiently or even better. When we fully involve ourselves in zazen, we ourselves are more fully involved in our unfolding lives and the unfolding of all that is right before our eyes. The sense of synchronicity is more prevalent. This is comforting and this comfort allows us to settle or relax more deeply into our lives.

Settle more deeply into our lives! The word ‘settle’ initially had 2 uses. It meant both abide: a place to remain stable; and it meant to sit. Often, we think to remain stable means to find or create a fixed position to better secure ourselves. In actuality, the most stable position is one that is rooted but flexible...like a tree, especially a tree that is in a grove or forest not standing alone. The tree holds to the ground but moves in circumstances. The Buddha was fixed in position under the bodhi tree but he moved within his arising circumstances, at one time touching the earth; at another time, looking to the Venus star. We sit, the other meaning of settle, in our circumstances--not wiggling, not avoiding and not grabbing; not picking and not choosing, because our hands are open. When we are fully involved in what we are doing, there is no room for picking and choosing. When we are fully engaged, what crack would picking and choosing find to slip in?

– Jack Duffy

This is a weekly blog set up by the Palouse Zen Center about 3 years ago. This year we are focusing on Trusting the Heart. To access the blog, contact Will at will@willsimpson.org.

Mindfulness Bell Interview with Eileen Kiera
Last winter Tracey sat down with Eileen to discuss her life of practice. The interview became an article for the Mindfulness Bell which is published this November. For a copy of this issue of the Mindfulness Bell you can subscribe on-line at www.mindfulnessbell.org.

LETTING GO TO TRUST
breathing

During the Spring Practice Period Eileen answered questions after her dharma talk on Teachings of the Mountains. In this excerpt Eileen refers to our dharma friend Mary who died on the last day of our January retreat in Indianola.

Question: “How is not knowing related to trust?”

I spent a lot of time with a long-time practitioner, Mary, after she got diagnosed with ALS. As her health declined, there were times when she would have a hard time breathing and she would be afraid. But when she let go of that fear and entrusted herself to the next moment, then her breath would come naturally. It took a great deal of confidence for her to be able to trust that by letting go, she would be okay. She didn’t know if the next breath would come or not. But by letting go, it was just okay. In this life and death practice, she touched something that allowed her to trust the experience of not knowing whether she would have another breath or not. She said in one moment her identity as “me”, as “Mary” fell away and she touched something that she knew would never die. She could never explain it but she knew that, no matter what, she was okay. Mary entrusting herself to each breath, equally entrusted herself to dying and to that which never dies.

MOUNTAIN LAMP • 2012 SCHEDULE

Eileen Kiera at Mountain Lamp

- December 30th – January 1st – 2012 New Year’s retreat
- January 1st-12th • Retreat on the Vimalakirti Sutra
- March 3rd & 4th • End of Life Conversations, joined by Jon Prescott
- April 7th • Day of Mindfulness
- May 5th-26th • Three week retreat with Jack
- May 18th-20th • Order of Interbeing weekend
- July 21st – 28th • Deep River, Clear Streams
- September 1st • Day of Mindfulness
- October 13th • Labyrinth Walk
- December 29th to January 1st • 2013 New Year’s retreat

Jack Duffy at Mountain Lamp

- May 5th-26th • Three Week Retreat with Eileen
- July 14th-19th • Ancient Bones
- Sept 22nd-29th • Sesshin
- Dec 1st-8th • Rohatsu Sesshin

Other practice opportunities at Mountain Lamp

- February 4th • Day of Mindfulness without Eileen
- February 11th & 12th • Journaling with Desiree Webster
- October 6th • Day of Mindfulness without Eileen

For study opportunities with Eileen and Jack away from Mountain Lamp, please see full schedule at mountainlamp.org. For Seattle events, please go to websites of Three Treasures and Mindfulness Community of Puget Sound.

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

What a tremendous year this has been.
We have witnessed many amazing changes up at Mountain Lamp.

- *With the skillful guidance of Laurel York Odell, our fundraising consultant, we have developed an organized effort that is moving us towards our vision of Mountain Lamp as a full fledged, lay practice center in the heart of the Pacific Northwest.*
- *The cottage has been transformed into a beautiful, tranquil house for our teachers, Jack and Eileen.*
- *The main house, in turn, now houses the temple keeper, short and long term residents and space for many more retreatants than we've previously been able to accommodate indoors.*
- *Jack and Eileen have graciously donated a comprehensive solar system to Mountain Lamp, which has been installed and functioning well.*
- *We've had some major water system improvements (a large bow to John Morgan) allowing much more efficiency with water flow to accommodate our retreatants.*
- *We have a beautiful new monthly "e-news" (thanks to Christine Eeastgard).*
- *We have a full daily schedule now and are offering many opportunities for practice in the way of programs, weekend retreats and longer retreats.*

We would also like to share some recent transitions to the board:

It is with sadness that we announce Ken has resigned his post from the board of Mountain Lamp after 3 fruitful years of service. We appreciate his forthright action. Ken, thank you for your ongoing service to Mountain Lamp—and we look forward to your continued presence in a different capacity.

...and, we'd like to welcome our newest members...

Bindi Sawchuk, John Morgan and Kathryn Hunt. Bindi is an accountant and will be taking the post of treasurer. John brings his solid presence and a wealth of knowledge about facilities and how things work. Kathryn, a writer by trade, offers her clear thinking and great word skills. This unique team joins me, Jack and Anita Graham in solidifying the huge steps we've taken financially, in our program offerings and facility development. A deep gassho to you all.

To all of the many hands and hearts that have contributed to this wonderful transformation a deep, deep bow of gratitude!

– Desiree, for the board

A DIFFERENT WAY OF GIVING

Spending a night at Mountain Lamp for personal retreat each month gives me almost 2 days of retreat time with sitting periods before lunch and dinner as well as the 2-hour block before breakfast. We do work meditation after breakfast, but afternoons and evenings are free for walking, canoeing, visiting or quietly sipping tea while enjoying the view. My \$49.50 payment (\$55 if not a Circle of Friends member) includes all meals (eaten in community), and often the unexpected bonus of a teacher interview. There are substantial discounts for staying a week or longer.

It's wonderful to spend time with the small residential community at Mountain Lamp. Coming up to practice during non-retreat times helps energize and support them, too, so this form of giving bestows many gifts on all involved.

– Sue Perkins

SEASONAL TRADITION of GIVING

In this traditional time of giving in our culture, we ask that you keep Mountain Lamp in your hearts and plans. With your generosity, our wish list can be fulfilled, our staff, retreats and lands can be supported. With a deep bow of gratitude to all, we offer our best intentions in this season and into the new year

Open Hands, Open Hearts Our Generosity for the Year in Summary

of Supporters: 63

of Contributions: 151

2 Matching Gifts of \$25,000 & \$5,000 matched

\$68,160. generated for financial support of Mountain Lamp's future

Our Hearts are Celebrating!

TEMPLE KEEPER REPORT from 2011 Retreat Season

The 2011 retreat season at Mountain Lamp has been active and diverse. We playfully balance the two traditions maintaining a steady focus on our shared exploration of wisdom and compassion.

Since May the residents have kept a full daily practice schedule. During this time, we've seen four Days of Mindfulness, two Circle of the Sound gatherings, seven guests on personal retreat, an Order of Interbeing gathering, a work day for moving our teachers to their new home, a month long retreat, a visit from Thay in Vancouver, a Zen Sesshin, and a Labyrinth Walk. You could say we've been mindfully busy!

Shortly after the arrival of resident guests Carlos and Lupita, we hosted Br. Phap De and Br. Phap Ho (monastics from Deer Park monastery) and 40 guests in our meditation hall to listen to the brothers offer teachings.

In July we held our month long retreat with the topic of Wise Women of the Way. During the month we were joined by a total of 50 guests with 9 people staying for the full month.

Finally toward the end of September we hosted Three Treasures Sangha for Walking Rain Sesshin. This exciting and intensive retreat included a huge wind and rain storm tempting us to rename the event to prevent future inclemency.

Only two days later Carlos and Lupita left for their home in Mexico, officially ending the most intensive part of our 2011 retreat season. We will miss their warm smiles, dedicated practice and many talents. I encourage all to spend time face to face with us here—playing with love, courage and confidence. This is your practice home.

–Tracey Pickup



THE SUN, MY ELECTRIC POWER

Mountain Lamp has recently installed a solar system in order to provide “clean” electric power to support the function and activities of the center. Thanks to a very generous start-up donation from Jack and Eileen during the Open Hands, Open Heart Campaign, solar panels were installed on the roof of the barn. Over time, State incentives and Federal tax credits will help off-set some of the original cost of installation.

Technically, solar photovoltaic modules are made up of individual cells which convert solar radiation into electricity. When the sun shines on the modules, the cells produce a stream of direct current which is then turned into alternating current through an inverter. The system at Mountain Lamp consists of 39 solar panels, capable of producing 7.2 kW. It was designed to produce 2/3rds of the electricity we use. Since last April when the solar panels went on-line, we have seen our electric bill reduced by 90%. The excess energy not used on sunny days goes back into the commercial grid and during the short, dark days of winter is returned to us. We not only get smaller electrical bills, we also receive credits to be used when the sun isn't shining.

Most importantly, the solar system has raised our awareness of how we use this precious and valuable resource. Whenever a light is burning or a heater running, we know that the sun has given us this miracle. And so we are more conscious to turn off lights and not to leave unused heaters running. We invite you to come to the barn and take a look at the technical equipment, which is so sensitive it shows how much energy is being produced in each moment, reflecting when the sun is out and when clouds pass over the sun.

- edited from an article by Carlos Abusaid

RUNNING WATER

Mountain Lamp's good friend and long-term practitioner, John Morgan recently upgraded the water system to improve water pressure to the cottage and house.

The domestic drinking water at Mountain lamp is supplied by a well and the water was distributed via a circuitous route, which led to a drop in pressure by the time it reached the cottage. John designed and installed a new water main, with consideration for future possible additions to the infrastructure of Mountain Lamp and the requirements of Whatcom County for water supply. The board approved his estimate of \$3800 for the project. The new line runs directly from the barn, past the cottage, and connects into the existing line to the house.

In mid-September, John brought his backhoe and 360 feet of 2 inch pipe, and began digging the long trench, laying and burying the pipe, finishing up the day before sesshin began. We celebrated at sesshin by having 5 people showering and dishes being washed all at the same time. The water pressure at the cottage is wonderful, and the final cost was about half the original estimate, around \$2000. Many thanks to John for his knowledge, work and equipment.

AUSPICIOUS COINCIDENCE

I like the term auspicious coincidence, though mysterious affinity seems more appropriate. Whatever the name, it represents exactly my experience living at Mountain Lamp. How can it be that suddenly a Mexican couple find themselves residents in a Dharma center in northwest Washington?

Finding a lay center that offers a solid foundation in practice is not easy. And I have found such a center at Mountain Lamp. As a result I tried to give myself wholeheartedly to the experience which from the very beginning was very nourishing.

Carlos and I arrived in the middle of a transition. The center was taking a big step—it was growing up. The community was moving into the main house, and the teachers were moving into their own cottage. I knew that this growing up had been happening all the time, and for many years both with the center, as well as with the practitioners. The feelings of transition and growing were a common factor that united us.

When we were not on retreat all the residents (Jack, Eileen, Tracey, Carlos and myself) had a daily schedule of sitting, walking, working, and community meals. There was no difference between weekdays and weekends. When one observes the mind closer, many things happen in an hour or a day. It gives the sensation of very long days. At the same time the contemplation about impermanence gives rise to the urgency of taking advantage of the moment. Then a week passes leaving the sense of not having enough time.

We very much enjoyed when Sangha members would pay a visit for a day or more. The feeling of community practice embraced and nourished us. Living around Jack and Eileen without imposing any expectation helped me to see them in different aspects of their lives -- like parents and friends, not only as teachers. I always so much enjoy their company and their own manifestation.

I was a gardener, cook, sutra leader and flower arranger. In each of these activities the learning process, my own unfolding and the interaction with friends, birds, frogs, snakes and innumerable beings came together to create a kind of intimacy. The intimacy gave rise to MUmentum where doing things faster or slower didn't matter much because there is no right or wrong -- only the manifestation of the moment as it is.

One of my fears is riding horses. I have always felt their majesty but at the same time they are threatening to me. So one day I had the opportunity to ride Jack's mare (Sharida). Jack Roshi made all the preparations and led the ride. I was very afraid but sat firmly and determined on Sharida and followed Jack's instructions on the way. Along the ride there was some anxiety and fear shouts but there were also some delightful and enjoyable moments. In the end I realized how important it is to have someone willing to guide me on the ride, a horse willing to be ridden and a rider willing to go beyond her fears and limitations.

My most deep bow to all of you who made this experience possible.

– Lupita Pedroza Martinez

teachers



Eileen Kiera . . . is an ecologist by training and a vegetable gardener by passion, but the practice and support of the Dharma has been her primary focus for the past 32 years. She's a student of Thich Nhat Hanh and Robert Aitken, Roshi. Thich Nhat Hahn acknowledged her as a dharma teacher in 1990, and since then she's led retreats in many places in the U.S., Europe and Australia. Her primary commitment, however, is to support the maturing of Dharma practice near her home in the Pacific Northwest.

She lives with her husband in the mountains east of Bellingham at Wild Rose Farm, the rural practice center of Mountain Lamp Community.

Jack Duffy . . . was given permission to teach by Robert Aitken Roshi in January 1992 and was given independent teaching status and the title of Roshi in the formal Transmission Ceremony 5 years later. Jack has been a student of Aitken Roshi since 1981 and has studied with other teachers, including Joan Rieck and Thich Nhat Hanh.

He brings his roles of spouse, father, and psychotherapist, as well as years of endangered species work and wilderness wanderings, to his teaching.

MOUNTAIN LAMP COMMUNITY

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VISIONING

Throughout our years of practice, we have visited many places where prayer and meditation have been a primary focus for many years. Always we are moved by the serenity of such places. It is something quite different than we experience anywhere in the modern world, and to go to such places we enter into something that is ancient and sacred. The quiet years of meditation have penetrated the air, and we are embraced in silence and awareness. We touch within ourselves a place of refuge that is always there, but gets covered over by our everyday lives of planning and worries.

In going to places of retreat, we touch what is sacred and ancient within ourselves, our personal place of refuge. And when we leave that place, we are able to carry the stillness with us sometimes for a brief period, sometimes for a long while. We have dedicated Wild Rose Farm to becoming a place of refuge for those wishing to live their life in mindfulness and peace. We know that this won't take place overnight. Like our practice, it will grow slowly through years of dedication and awareness. But each breath, or each Mu we breathe in awareness, each step we take in mindfulness, perfumes the air with practice. And without our knowing how, a place of refuge is born.

GRATITUDES

Donors to the Open Hands, Open Heart Campaign

Thank-you for supporting Mountain Lamp

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OUR GRATITUDE AND THANKS . . .

E - NEWS

Many of you have been receiving our monthly "e-news" online. It is our hope that this monthly newsletter will serve to keep everyone informed about events and happenings within our Mountain Lamp Community on a monthly basis. Retreat schedules, days of mindfulness, work days, special festivals, ongoing classes, etc. will be listed as well as a link for more information and, in some instances, downloadable and printable application forms. If you are not receiving the e-news, and wish to be, please send a request to ml-info@mountainlamp.org. Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the request for updated contact information. It is greatly appreciated.

winter 2011