



Newsletter
November 1999

Gay Buddhist Fellowship

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the Gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of Gay men in the Bay Area, the United States, and the world.

GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.



Jim Wilson offers a composition for Shakuhachi flute before his Dharma talk at the GBF retreat.

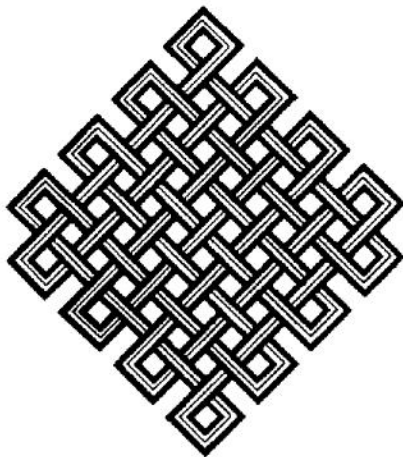
Fall Retreat Brings Strength and Renewal to Sangha

by Hal Hershey

GBF convened its Eighth Annual Retreat on September 10 at Vajrapani Institute, high in the Santa Cruz mountains, amongst 70 acres of long-standing redwoods, madrones, and oaks. Nineteen participants joined together from all over the Bay Area for silent sitting and walking meditations, ritual and play, vegetarian meals and camaraderie. Jim Wilson shared his music and illuminating clarity in three Dharma talks, focusing on the fundamental principles of Buddhism.

Saturday evening's candlelit ritual before the great Enlightenment Stupa focused on Gratitude, bringing forth heartfelt emotions. The ritual ended with the candles arranged inside the meditation hall, softly illuminating the beautiful gilded images.

Chilly fog-shrouded mornings gave way to crisp hot days as we deepened our practice together and found strength in our Sangha. GBF members



Sunday Schedule Changed

On Sunday, September 26, GBF members considered the suggestion to eliminate the 9:30 sitting and agreed that the schedule should be changed. However, the proposal to start the Sunday sitting at 10:00am instead of 10:30 was not approved. The meditation hall will be open at 10:00am on Sundays and available to members to sit or stretch in silence before the regular sitting at 10:30am. Speakers will be introduced after a quiet five-minute break, and have approximately fifty minutes for a talk, questions, and discussion. After announcements, GBF will convene at noon in the outer room for social time.

David Holmes and Howard King designed the schedule for the retreat, and offered a framework for exploring ritual in our practice. Bill Kirkpatrick handled the essential preregistration work. Don Wiepert led Yoga practice, and Lee Robbins gave a workshop in relating the religion of our upbringing to our present Buddhist practice, as well as offering a discussion of his proposed Twelve Step Program based on Buddhist principles. There was also time for exploring the grounds of Vajrapani Institute and adjacent Castle Rock State Park.

Retreatants were given a chance to record their impressions and feelings about the retreat on tape. There is now discussion and support growing for holding our first Winter retreat, over the Presidents' Day weekend in February. Details will be published in the newsletter.

Two members of GBF offered us these reflections:

Coming Home . . .

by Gary Harrold, Aptos, California

At Vajrapani, arching, spreading as a tree
goodness has showered over me.

Ease, concentration, and patience drifted like fog
Being alone seems more friendly, like a croaking frog.

It takes awareness—work—to allow generosity to flow
So put in your heart before you go . . .

We talked of impermanence as in dying
as well as exaggeration as a form of lying.

The Dharma teaches us to watch clinging, grasping, desire
Yea, beneath my soul it sure seems to start a fire.

Then I ask "That excitement, do it I need?"
Neither my heart, body nor soul does it feed.

Separating myself from excessive media, the norm,
helps shelter equanimity of Dharma from the storm.

So bring on the traffic, long lines and frowns,
Oh, the sweet challenge of calmness abounds.

Sense the face, neck, shoulders, and back
when my thoughts go to desiring and lack.

So, it was in the Three Jewels that we took refuge,
then the delusional world didn't seem so huge.

Doing What I Do

by Sozan Peter Schellin, San Francisco, California

I am a Buddhist monk in the Zen tradition of Suzuki-roshi—partially-sighted, middle-aged, queer—and like you, I suffer. The suffering is why I started treading on the "spiritual path" in the first place.

