Queer Cookin

John Krowka

Since July GBF has been making a contribution to our community by preparing one dinner every month for the residents of the Hamilton Family Center (HFC). The first part of each dinner begins weeks before the actual event with a meeting to plan the menu and divide the work among the volunteers. Our primary goal is to provide a nutritious meal that the HFC residents will eat and enjoy. We are often tempted by culinary extravagance and reminders of the virtues of simplicity are often helpful. We are not, after all, trying to compete with Chez Panisse. An entree, vegetable, salad, side-dish, dessert, and beverages are chosen. Recipes are selected and the amounts of ingredients to feed about 70 people are calculated.

The Saturday of the dinner is busy for everyone involved. In the morning volunteers shop for groceries, usually at discount supermarkets to get the best prices. It really is amazing that a nutritious and tasty meal can be prepared for about $2.00 per person. Early on Saturday afternoon one of the volunteers drives to the “Bakers of Paris” in South San Francisco to pick up their donation of bread for our meal.

At about 3:30 pm the cooking crew, which consists of 6 guys, assembles at the HFC. We walk through the communal sleeping/living rooms to get to the dining room and kitchen. Huge pots, pans, colanders, and the like are taken out from the supply shelves and the work begins. It is great to see everyone in the kitchen working together to make the dinner. Sometimes there is disagreement (“Blanche, dear, I really think the salad needs more tomatoes”), but it is always resolved amicably, and mindfully. The convivial banter in the kitchen leaves no doubt that this is a

continued on page 5

What

GBF

Means

To Me

Daishin David Sunseri

I’ve been practicing with people in the Gay Buddhist Fellowship for over two years, and I feel very strongly that we function as a true sangha for our community in the most vital way.

In Buddhist organizations I’ve been associated with in the past, hierarchical power politics and manipulation for position, control and money have been common practices. Although GBF has had some problems with regard to differences of opinion and personal issues, there remains at its core an honest, compassionate, and sincere commitment by its members to provide a unique environment for gay men to experience the truth of the Buddha’s teaching, and to share

continued on page 5
LOCAL DHARMA
December, 1994

Sundays Introductory Open House Dharmadhautu is dedicated to promoting an uplifting environment for students to practice meditation and to study Dharma as taught by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The Sunday morning Open House is intended for new students and visitors, featuring various local speakers. Meditation instruction available. 9-noon. Free of charge. BDSC Berkeley Schedule
4 Dec Jonathon Ranslahoff
11 Dec Robert Horton
18 Dec Sheila Sabine
25 Dec Chris Keyser

Sundays Community Practice Day This includes open house, sitting practice session, and Shambala Practice Session. Meditation instruction is available during any of these practice sessions. Talks are given at Open House and on Shambala Practice Days. SFDSC San Francisco Schedule:
4 Dec Open House. 9:30 am-12:00 noon
11 Dec Shambala Practice. 9:00 am-12:00 noon/1:30 pm-4:30 pm
25 Dec Sitting Practice. 9:30 am-12:00 noon

Tuesdays Guided Meditation on the Lamrim Lamrim, the Graduated Path to Enlightenment, is one of the most profound teachings of the Gelugpa Tradition. The Lamrim presents a concise view of the entire Buddhist path, and is a timeless source of inspiration, appropriate for experienced students, as well as new students of Buddhist philosophy. 7 pm TCL

Zen Center Classes The Zen Center organizes the study of Buddhism into a Five Root curriculum:
I: Life of the Buddha and Early Texts
II: Buddhist Psychology
III: Buddhist Wisdom
IV: Ethics and Compassion
V: Zen

New students should begin with
the introductory class, The Life of the Buddha. Class fees are $30 members/$40 non-members. '94 Study Session V begins 23 Dec. Call for details. GGF

7 Dec Medicine Buddha/Healing Meditation 7pm TCL

10 Dec Monastic Day Retreat with Ajahn Amaro. By donation, no registration required. SR

10-11 December The Practice of Tranquillity Meditation (Shinay) Lama Lodru Rinpoche will give instructions and lead the meditations. Shinay meditation is the mind resting one-pointedly on an object so that not so many thoughts arise and the mind becomes very stable and calm. 10am-12, 3pm-5pm, 7:30pm-9pm Members 6+ months: $35 weekend, $10 per teaching; General public: $70 weekend, $20 per teaching. KDK

12 Dec Lama Chopa/Tsog 7pm TCL

14 Dec Praises to 21 Taras
7pm TCL

15-18 December Nyung Nes Retreat Members 6+ months: $50; General public: $100 KDK

17 December In The Beginning: The Book Of Genesis & The Dharma with Jack Kornfield, Stephen Mitchell, Rachel Naomi Remen, Brother David Steindl-Rast, John Tarrant. Bill Moyers invited Stephen Mitchell to participate in a new PBS series on Genesis, and the day will include discussions of Genesis from the perspective of the Dharma. Please bring a pen and paper as we will spend a short time writing midrash, a creative re-imagination of one of the great stories discussed during the day. 10am-5pm $80 call for details. SR

31 December New Year's Eve Sitting Sitting and walking meditation, ending with the traditional 108 bells on the O-Bonsho, the great bell. Afterward, a bonfire and hot drink. On New Year's morning there will be ceremony and special breakfast. 8pm-midnight $35 includes overnight accommodation and breakfast. $15 for New Year's Eve only. GGF
The Gay Buddhist Fellowship

Meditation Instructions

These instructions are intended only for those who do not yet have a practice or for those who want to learn a new one. If you already have a silent meditation practice, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, and if you plan to continue it, please feel free to practice it at any meeting or retreat of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship.

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship is an ecumenical organization composed of people from several different Buddhist traditions and lineages. Although the following instructions come from one of the Vipassana lineages, the practice of mindfulness or awareness is central to all of our traditions, so cultivating awareness should not interfere with either the spirit or the practice of your own tradition, whatever it may be.

Sitting Meditation

Posture. Sit or kneel in a position that feels stable, using a cushion, a meditation bench, a chair, or the plain floor. Try to keep your spine straight in order to help keep your mind more alert. Don’t force your body into a posture it isn’t used to; rather, let it stretch gradually over time into the new posture. Don’t hold your body in a position where it might be injured. In order to calm the mind, it’s better to remain unmoving in sitting meditation, but to avoid hurting your body, shift positions if you feel much pain.

Mindfulness of Breathing. “Mindfulness,” the Buddha said, “is the pathway to the Deathless.” Close your eyes and turn your attention inward. Find that place in your body where breathing feels most obvious. For most people, that’s at the abdomen or the nostrils, but it can be anywhere. Bring your attention to that place and try to keep it there without a sense of forcing. Simply know the bare sensations of breathing with as much directness and subtlety as possible. Let awareness of other things go. Your mind will wander in thought. As soon as you notice that wandering, without judgment let the thoughts go and bring your awareness back to breathing with a kind of gentle, gliding motion in your mind. Don’t try to stop thinking, a common error, because that effort will surely fail. Just let go of thought once you recognize it and return to mindfulness of the breath. Be patient and gentle with yourself. Training our minds to be aware is very difficult, but success is certain if we patiently persist.

Extending Mindfulness. Once you find that your attention has begun to wander less and can stay on the sensations of breathing with some stability, then try extending mindfulness to other sensations in your body. Use awareness of breathing as your anchor: start there, then extend your awareness to some other sensation, like tightness in the shoulders, and then return “home” to awareness of breathing. Notice clearly which sensations are pleasant, which are unpleasant, and which are neutral. Can you learn to be with them all equally, without reaction?

After you find that you can track events throughout your body without a lot of wandering off into thought, try extending mindfulness further to include mental events too: knowing thoughts as thoughts, emotions as emotions, mental images as mental images, and consciousness (the function of knowing) as consciousness. Notice here, too, what events are pleasant, what unpleasant, and what neutral. Can you begin to learn to be with all emotions equally? After you extend awareness further to include seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting, you will have opened your field of mindfulness to encompass all that we can experience.

Walking Meditation

Walking meditation is identical to sitting meditation, except that you are training your mind to pay attention to a moving body instead of a sitting one. Try to maintain awareness of the sensations of walking, bringing attention back when you see that the mind has wandered off into thought. In some traditions, formal walking meditation is done in a group; in others it’s done alone. If you do it alone, it’s useful to move more slowly than usual and to walk without a destination. Walk back and forth on some straight track about fifteen to twenty paces long.

Mindfulness in Daily Life

In every moment, during any activity at all, we have a chance to wake up by being present, and being present comes from being aware. Pay attention to sensations in all the body’s postures: sitting, walking, standing, lying down. Watch what your mind is doing in all its moods. Ask yourself, “What’s happening?” in order to stimulate mindfulness in the moment. Then ask, “How am I relating to this?” in order to see whether you’re caught of free. Is there reaction in your mind? Is there a way to let go? The Buddha said that freedom through mindfulness comes like slowly filling a bucket, drop by patient drop. Each moment of seeing clearly what is here and then letting it be, thought it may seem inconsequential, is significant. One day the bucket overflows.

Mental Noting

A word about the practice of noting what is happening by labeling it with a silent thought. Some of our Buddhist traditions practice noting; others avoid it. You might experiment with it to see if it’s helpful to you or not. If you decide to try it, just identify whatever is happening in your body or mind by labeling it with one word spoken silently: “in, out” or “rising, falling” for breathing; “thinking,” “seeing,” “joy,” “tingling,” “anger,” “burning,” and so forth. When you are moving slowly in walking meditation, try noting each part of each step: “lifting, moving, placing.” The value of noting is to help direct mindfulness to whatever’s happening, and also to antidote thought without thought.

- Eric Kolvig
Gay Buddhist Fellowship. And I want to thank all the members of GBF for recognizing the importance of this organization and supporting it so generously. I know we will continue to be a resource for the gay community, and I hope we will also continue to care for and respect one another as a true extension of our spiritual practice, fully understanding how unique and valuable an opportunity we have been given.

Gratitude to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha

Daishin David Sunseri is a GBF member and Zen monk in the tradition of Shunryu Suzuki-roshi and Issan Dorsey-roshi.

The monks appeared on-stage dressed in traditional maroon and orange robes. Each wore an unusual hat that looked like a fez with a huge fringed orange wedge on top of it. One of Drepung Loseling’s foremost reincarnate lamas and tantric masters, H.E. Jampa Rinpoche, led the group and played two types of cymbals, the bub and sil-nyen.

The monks began their performance with an invocation for creative awareness within themselves and the audience. They changed in their unique style in which each vocalist sings three notes simultaneously. By controlling carefully their breathing and vocal chords, they created sympathetic overtones which harmonized with the primary notes they sang. Two monks played the ten-foot-long dungchen trumpets and other monks played bells, drums, and the high-toned gyaling horns. Their sounds seemed to rise continuously from one note to the next rather than in discrete intervals. It was a very non-Western sound.

The piece, “Sounds of the Void (tong-Ny Mo-Ro)” combined their polyphonic singing and musical accompaniment. The

continued on page 7
continued from page 1

A group of gay Buddhists. A real spirit of camaraderie is evident.

The HFC residents wait patiently in line as the food is brought from the kitchen onto a fold-out table in the dining room. The GBF crew begins serving the items onto the yellow, plastic food trays at about 6:30 pm. The residents are very friendly and the children are usual polite and smiley. We are learning by experience what the HFC residents like to eat. Everyone raved about the lasagna we made at the October meal. Chocolate cake, made from scratch, was a hit at the November dinner. We learned that broccoli is as unpopular at HFC as at the Bush White House. Corn on the cob, however, is always well received.

Almost half of the meals we serve at the HFC are to children. Families of many different colors, sizes, and descriptions share the mealtimes at the HFC. It warms our hearts to see the fruits of our labors enjoyed. It is inspiring to see the residents who are motivated by love for their family stick together in the face of adversity. Our interactions with the HFC residents and staff help us to break down the us/them dichotomy that we often cling to with regard to homeless persons. We are all human beings who share the same Buddha nature.

After most of residents have been served, the GBF crew takes turns eating, usually joining the residents at the long cafeteria tables. Then the trays are collected and the crew begins the cleanup. Any extra food is wrapped and stored for the next day. The pots and pans are scrubbed, the cups and trays washed, and the countersurfaces and floors are cleaned.

The kitchen becomes as it was before we arrived. Another crew will be at HFC the following day to feed the HFC residents. At the end of the evening a group "Om" or a hug is shared by the kitchen crew.

The HFC project at GBF is in need of volunteers to help with planning, shopping, and cooking, as well as to provide financial support. The contribution authorized by the GBF Steering Committee for this project is only able to cover a fraction of the expenses for the dinner and additional donations are needed to continue this practice. Anyone interested in volunteering or making a financial contribution should call Clint or write to him c/o GBF. Come share this wonderful experience!
continued from page 5

"Dance of the Black-Hat Masters" intended to eliminate negative energies by the movements which symbolized the joy and freedom of seeing reality in its nakedness. A demonstration of the Tibetan tradition of monastic inquiry was followed by a chant to help purify the universe. The final piece of the first set was the "Yak Dance" which symbolized the rugged strength and playfulness of the Tibetan spirit. The costumes required two monks to make up each of the two yaks which pranced in joyful synchrony with each other and the musicians. What an interesting practice these monks had learning to dance like yaks.

The second half of the performance began with "Dak-zin tsar-chod" whose purpose is to release the mind from its ego-clinging habit. "The Dance of the Skeleton Lords" followed with dancers in skull-face masks and red skeleton suits. Geshe Namgyal told us that this dance might look scary but we shouldn’t be afraid. Its purpose is to remind us of the ephemeral nature of all things. An invitation for purifying the environment and its inhabitants was followed by the "Snow Lion Dance" which symbolized the fearless and elegant quality of the enlightened mind. The final piece was an invitation for world peace and harmony through creative living.

After the concert Geshe Dam-dul Namgyal reminded us of their life in exile. The monastery was established near Lhasa in 1416 by Chojey Tashi Palden and Loseling was the "Hermitage of the Radiant Mind". At times more than 10,000 monks were members of this community but the Chinese communist invasion of Tibet in 1959 closed or destroyed its monasteries and forced them to relocate in southern India. Their number has grown to more than 2200 monks recently and Drepung Loseling monasteries can even be found now in Georgia and Tennessee.

Many people who attended these concerts by monks from Drepung Loseling will carry warm memories of their performances. Their visit was a welcome addition to the rich musical and spiritual life of the San Francisco Bay area. The unique practice of these gentle monks who bring peace through their singing and dancing continues to enrich the lives of all who see and hear them.

What Do You Think?
- Do you have an idea for an article for a future issue of the newsletter? Let us know.
- Do you want to respond to an article? Send your response to the newsletter, and note whether we can print it. This could be the start of an ongoing dialogue about Buddhist/gay issues.

The newsletter is devoted to presenting articles of interest to GBF members and friends, and we encourage your comments and participation.

- GBF Newsletter Committee

GBF Calendar

11 Dec. Sunday Meeting Rich Brown, instructor and health educator will speak, and demonstrate, Chi Kung, which combines breath work, simple movement and meditation. This traditional Chinese exercise strengthens the body and aids the path of spirituality.

15 Dec. Thursday GBF Steering Committee Monthly Meeting. Open to the membership of GBF. Call John Krowka, this month's host,

25 Dec. Sunday Meeting "Christmas: What's a Buddha to Do?!" Alan Oliver will lead the discussion, which just might be the best way to spend this particular morning!

Feb. Day of Vision Quest/Sitting Open to all GBF members, this will be a day to mindfully discuss the Big Questions, such as: What is the Purpose of GBF? What Do The Members Want? Look for details in the January newsletter, and tell the Steering Committee your ideas!