Robert Daniel Ennis is Featured Dec. Speaker

Our speaker for December 8 will be Robert Daniel Ennis, who has been a teacher of meditation for over 20 years. Robert teaches in the Fourth Way tradition, a Western approach to practice that is sometimes called "Cowboy Zen." He is the founder of the Tayu (truth) Meditation Center located in Santa Rosa. His topic will be "Gay People and Awakening in America." ☃

Preserving Tibetan Buddhist Texts

It has been a long labor of love. After two decades of painstaking research and printing, Dharma Publishing of Berkeley recently sent a massive shipment of restored texts and artwork to the East, as part of one of history's largest book preservation and publishing efforts.

The project, which began in the early 1970s, was headed by Tarthang Tulku, an exiled Tibetan lama and scholar. About 36,000 sacred texts have been preserved so far, including the teachings of Buddha, and the philosophical and practical texts of many Indian spiritual masters and Tibetan authors. All are books and art that Tibetan refugees managed to smuggle out of their country after 1959, the year the Chinese army invaded Tibet. Scholars estimate that more than 80 percent of Tibetan books and artworks were destroyed during the invasion and the Chinese cultural revolution that followed.

There were many steps involved in the Dharma Publishing project. First, (continued on page 3)
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[Note: Sometimes schedules change, so we recommend you call to confirm events.]

6 Dec. (Fri) “Being Present in the Darkness: An Evening with Cheri Huber.” Depression can be a doorway that will lead us straight to ourselves if we are willing to go. We can discover what depression is, how we depress ourselves, what the process is inside us, and how we can change it. 7:30 pm. East West Bookstore, 324 Castro St., Mountain View, CA. (415) 988-9800. $8.

Cheri Huber is the author of There is Nothing Wrong With You, The Fear Book, That Which You Are Seeking Is Causing You To Seek, and The Key.

17 Dec. (Tue.) “A Perspective on Confidence in our Original Nature” with Furryu Nancy Schroeder, priest at San Francisco Zen Center and Green Gulch Farm. Suzuki Roshi often spoke of the importance of practicing with confidence in our original nature. What does this mean? Furryu will offer us a view. 7:45-9:00 pm. Suggested donation $5-10. HSZC

20-23 Dec. (Fri.-Mon.) “Nyung Ne Purification: Intensive Weekend Retreat” led by Geshe Lobsang Tsephel with Kendall L. Magnusson. This 200-year-old practice seeks to purify past negative actions of body, speech, and mind through the powerful force of compassion. Involving periods of fasting, prostrations, meditation, and chanting, this intense retreat is a perfect means to clear away obstacles and accumulate merit quickly. The December program will feature a special offering of light to welcome in the winter solstice and honor the birth of a great bodhisattva. Room and meals $108 plus donation. LMB

21 Dec. (Sat.) “Shunryu Suzuki Roshi 25th Annual Memorial Ceremony and Celebratory Dinner.” It is the tradition at San Francisco Zen Center to have an annual memorial service for Suzuki Roshi which recognizes the continuing importance his presence and teachings have at Zen Center. Please make reservations for dinner by Wednesday, December 18 with the City Center office. 6 pm. $7.50 SFZC

22 Dec. (Sun.) “Christmas Caroling in the Castro.” Join the Living Peace Meditation Community for a pre-caroling warm-up with yummy soup and veggie chili at Erich Aardema’s house. Caroling through the Castro to Coming Home and Maitri Hospices. Bring a friend. 51 Noe Street (between 14th and Duboce) 5:30-9:30 pm. For information call Erich (415) 552-8296 or Karen (415) 346-3923.

26 Dec.-1 Jan. (Thu.-Wed.) “New Year’s Insight Meditation Retreat” with Gil Fronsdal and John Travis. Quiet your mind and welcome in the New Year with mindful awareness in this retreat designed for both beginning and experienced meditators. The retreat includes personal interviews and nightly Dharma talks. Room and meals $290 plus donation. LMB

29 Dec.-1 Jan. (3pm Sun.-10am Wed.) “Vajrasattva Purification Retreat for the New Year.” It is possible to still the storm, to purify the negative energy that prevents us from actualizing the path to enlightenment. An especially powerful Vajrayana method is the practice associated with the Buddha Vajrasattva. It is said to be as effective in burning away delusions and negative energy as is a great fire in burning away thousands of acres of forest. $120 VI

31 Dec. (Tue.) “New Year’s Eve Sitting.” The evening will include periods of sitting and walking medi-

(continued on next page)
"Sacred Mandalas" Exhibit Now on Display

Dharma Publishing has assembled an exhibit of sacred art and books called "Sacred Mandalas" that is now open to the public. Displayed are masterpieces of Tibetan sacred art, including over 50 original paintings and silk-screened prints and over 200 museum-quality reproductions depicting Mandalas. The exhibit also includes sacred Tibetan books, slide and video presentations, and a lecture series. Dharma Publishing books and art prints will be available for purchase.

The exhibit celebrates the creative dynamic of Mandalas, symbols that shape primordial energy into a coherent array of balanced and harmonious forms. Traditionally, a mandala is circular and divided into four quadrants. Each quadrant relates to one of the four directions: north, south, east, and west, and to specific colors and enlightened qualities associated with the directions. In the center resides the image or symbol reflecting the principal qualities of that specific mandala. Sacred art can be seen as a door that opens to the beauty, wisdom, and compassion inherent in the human heart and mind.

"Sacred Mandalas" continues through spring 1997 at Dharma House, 2910 San Pablo Avenue (between Ashby and Heinz) in Berkeley. For more information, call Dharma Publishing at 510/548-5407 or visit their Web page at www.nyinma.org.

Local Dharma
(continued from page 2)

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship exists to support Buddhist practice in the gay community. Our understanding of practice includes, but is not limited to, traditional Buddhist practices such as meditation and mindfulness, individual forms of practice, compassionate service in the community, and relationships with teachers and spiritual friends. The GBF is a forum in which all of the distinct Buddhist traditions can be brought together to address the spiritual concerns of gay men.

We respect and care for each other in a compassionate way as an expression of the full realization of the Dharma. We recognize that every aspect of our lives is practice. We cultivate a social environment that is accepting, open, inclusive, and caring. We acknowledge and support the growing network of gay practitioners in the United States and around the world. In addition, we intend to create programs that contribute to the well-being of the larger community.

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship Newsletter is published monthly by the Gay Buddhist Fellowship. It provides news of interest to GBF members, as well as writings by living Buddhist teachers covering a broad cross-section of current Buddhist thought. It also serves as a forum where gay Buddhist practitioners can address spiritual concerns regardless of their form of practice or tradition. All signed articles express the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the GBF. © 1996 Gay Buddhist Fellowship. All rights reserved.

Tibetan Texts
(continued from page 1)

more than 100,000 texts were reviewed and catalogued. The authors had to be determined, and then the books were placed in volumes that were complementary to either the author or subject. Because the books were printed in the Tibetan language, Dharma Publishing developed a special computer font, which itself took several years to accomplish.

Ali told, 42,000 individual books and 70,000 color prints will be given away at no charge to the 7,000 monks, lamas, and nuns expected to attend the 10-day World Peace Ceremony next January in Bodh Gaya, India—the place where the Buddha is said to have reached enlightenment. In turn, they will carry them back to more than 300 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, retreat centers, and refugee camps throughout Asia.

Thanks...

GBF wishes to thank the hosts of the Thursday night sittings in San Francisco: Bill Kirkpatrick, Lee Robbins, Mark Marion, and Edward Sams. By making their respective homes available to our sangha one night a month, it has been possible to maintain a regular weekly sitting schedule in the city for members. Thanks also go out to Geoff McNeny of Oakland who continues to host the twice-a-month Sunday morning sittings that are held in the East Bay, and which alternate with those held in San Francisco.

Contributors

Thanks to the following people who helped with this issue of the GBF Newsletter: Alan Oliver, Bob Hass, Brian Shelley, David Holmes, Don Marx, Edward Sams, Joaquin Pose, Ken Harper, Mark Marion, Robin Levent, and Tom Moon.
Stopping The War

by Jack Kornfield

The unawakened mind tends to make war against the way things are. To follow a path with heart, we must understand the whole process of making war within ourselves and without, how it begins and how it ends. War's roots are in ignorance. Without understanding, we can easily become frightened by life's fleeting changes, the inevitable losses, disappointments, the insecurity of our aging and death. Misunderstanding leads us to fight against life, running from pain or grasping at security and pleasures that by their nature can never be truly satisfying.

Our war against life is expressed in every dimension of our experience, inner and outer. Our children see, on average, 18 thousand murders and violent acts on TV before they finish high school. The leading cause of injury for American women is beatings by the men they live with. We carry on wars within ourselves, with our families and communities, among races and nations worldwide. The wars between peoples are a reflection of our own inner conflict and fear.

Contemporary society fosters our mental tendency to deny or suppress our awareness of reality. Ours is a society of denial that conditions us to protect ourselves from any direct difficulty and discomfort. We expend enormous energy denying our insecurity, fighting pain, death, and loss, and hiding from the basic truths of the natural world and of our own nature.

To insulate ourselves from the natural world, we have air conditioners, heated cars, and clothes that protect us from every season. To insulate ourselves from the specter of aging and infirmity, we put smiling young people in our advertisements, while we relegate our old people to nursing homes and old-age establishments. We hide our mental patients in mental hospitals. We relegate our poor to ghettos. And we construct freeways around these ghettos so that those fortunate enough not to live in them will not see the suffering they house.

We deny death to the extent that even a 96-year-old woman, newly admitted to a hospice, complained to the director, "Why me?" We almost pretend that our dead aren't dead, dressing up corpses in fancy clothes and makeup to attend their own funerals, as if they were going to parties. In our charade with ourselves we pretend that our war is not really war. We have changed the name of the War Department to the Defense Department and call a whole class of nuclear missiles Peace Keepers!

How do we manage so consistently to close ourselves off from the truths of our existence? We use denial to turn away from the pains and difficulties of life. We use addictions to support our denial. Ours has been called the Addicted Society, with over 20 million alcoholics, 10 million drug addicts, and millions addicted to gambling, food, sexuality, unhealthy relationships, or the speed and busyness of work.

Our addictions are the compulsively repetitive attachments we use to avoid feeling and to deny the difficulties of our lives. Advertising urges us to keep pace, to keep consuming, smoking, drinking, and craving food, money, and sex. Our addictions serve to numb us to what is, to help us avoid our own experience, and with great fanfare our society encourages these addictions.

One of our most pervasive addictions is to speed. Technological society pushes us to increase the pace of our productivity and the pace of our lives. Panasonic recently introduced a new VHS tape recorder that was advertised as playing voice tapes at double the normal speed while lowering the tone to the normal speaking range. "Thus," the advertiser said, "you can listen to one of the great speeches by Winston Churchill or President Kennedy or a literary classic in half the time!" I wonder if they would recommend double-speed tapes for Mozart and Beethoven as well. Woody Allen commented on this obsession, saying
he took a course in speed reading and was able to read War and Peace in 20 minutes. "It's about Russia," he concluded.

In a society that almost demands life at double time, speed and addictions numb us to our own experience. In such a society it is almost impossible to settle into our bodies or stay connected with our hearts, let alone connect with one another or the earth where we live. Instead, we find ourselves increasingly isolated and lonely, cut off from one another and the natural web of life. One person in a car, big houses, cellular phones, Walkman radios clamped to our ears, and a deep loneliness and sense of inner poverty.

That is the most pervasive sorrow in our modern society. Not only have individuals lost the sense of their interconnectedness, this isolation is the sorrow of nations as well. The forces of separation and denial breed international misunderstanding, ecological disaster, and an endless series of conflicts between nation states.

On this earth, as I write today, more than 40 wars and violent revolutions are killing thousands of men, women, and children. We have witnessed 115 wars since World War II, and there are only 165 countries in the entire world. Not a good track record for the human species. Yet what are we to do?

Genuine spiritual practice requires us to learn how to stop the war. This is a first step, but actually it must be practiced over and over until it becomes our way of being. The inner stillness of a person who truly "is peace" brings peace to the whole interconnected web of life, both inner and outer. To stop the war, we need to begin with ourselves. Mahatma Gandhi understood this when he said:

I have only three enemies. My favorite enemy, the one most easily influenced for the better, is the British Empire. My second enemy, the Indian people, is far more difficult. And my most formidable opponent is a man named Mohandas K. Gandhi. With him I seem to have very little influence.

Like Gandhi, we cannot easily change ourselves for the better through an act of will. This is like wanting the mind to get rid of itself or pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Remember how short-lived are most New Year's resolutions? When we struggle to change ourselves, we, in fact, only continue the patterns of self-judgment and aggression. We keep the war against ourselves alive. Such acts of will usually backfire, and in the end often strengthen the addiction or denial we intend to change.

One young man came to meditation with a deep distrust for authority. He had rebelled in his family, understandably, for he had quite an abusive mother. He had rebelled in school and dropped out to join the counterculture. He had fought with a girlfriend who, he said, wanted to control him. Then he went to India and Thailand to find his freedom. After an initial positive experience in meditation, he signed up for a period of practice in a monastery. He decided to practice very strictly and make himself clear and pure and peaceful.

However, after a short time he found himself in conflict again. The daily chores didn't leave him enough time to meditate nonstop. The sound of visitors and an occasional car were disturbing his meditation. The teacher, he felt,

wasn't giving enough guidance, and due to this, his meditation was weak and his mind wouldn't stop. He struggled to quiet himself and resolved to do it his own way but ended up fighting himself.

Finally, the teacher called him to task at the end of a group meditation. "You are struggling with everything. How is it that the food bothers you, the sounds bother you, the chores bother you, even your mind bothers you? Doesn't it seem odd? What I want to know is when you hear a car come by, does it really come in and bother you, or are you going out to bother it? Who is bothering whom?" Even this young man had to laugh, and that moment was the beginning of his learning to stop the war.

The purpose of a spiritual discipline is to give us a way to stop the war, not by our force of will, but organically, through understanding and gradual training. Ongoing spiritual practice can help us cultivate a new way of relating to life in which we let go of our battles.

When we step out of the battle, we see anew, as the Taoist Ching says, "with eyes unclouded by longing." We see how each of us creates conflict. We see our constant likes and dislikes, the fight to resist all that frightens us. We see our own prejudice, greed, and territoriality. All this is hard for us to look at, but it is really there. Then underneath these ongoing battles, we see pervasive feelings of incompleteness and fear. We see how much our struggle with life has kept our hearts closed.

Ongoing spiritual practice can help us cultivate a new way of relating to life in which we let go of our battles.

When we let go of our battles and open our heart to things as they are, then we come to rest in the present moment. This is the beginning and the end of spiritual practice. Only in this moment can we discover that which is timeless. Only here can we find the love that we seek.

Love in the past is simply memory, and love in the future is fantasy. Only in the reality of the present can we love, can we awaken, can we find peace and understanding and connection with ourselves and the world.

A sign in a Las Vegas casino aptly says, "You Must Be Present to Win." Stopping the war and becoming present are two sides of the same activity. To come into the present is to stop the war. To come into the present means to experience whatever is here and now. Most of us have spent our lives caught up in plans, expectations, ambitions for the future, in regrets, guilt, or shame about the past.

When we come into the present, we begin to feel the life around us again, but we also encounter whatever we have been avoiding.

We must have the courage to face whatever is present—our pain, our desires, our grief, our loss, our secret hopes, our love—everything that moves us most deeply. As we stop the war, each of us will find something from which we have been running: our loneliness, our unworthiness,

(continued on page 6)
our boredom, our shame, our unfulfilled desires. We must face these parts of ourselves as well.

To live in the present demands an ongoing and unwavering commitment. As we follow a spiritual path, we are required to stop the war not once but many times. Over and over we feel the familiar tug of thoughts and reactions that take us away from the present moment. When we stop and listen, we can feel how each thing that we fear or crave (really two sides of the same dissatisfaction) propels us out of our hearts into a false idea of how we would like life to be. If we listen even more closely, we can feel how we have learned to sense ourselves as limited by that fear and identified with that craving. From this small sense of ourselves, we often believe that our own happiness can come only from possessing something or can be only at someone else’s expense.

To stop the war and come into the present is to discover a greatness of our own heart that can include the happiness of all beings as inseparable from our own. When we let ourselves feel the fear, the discontent, the difficulties we have always avoided, our heart softens. Just as it is a courageous act to face all the difficulties from which we have always run, it is also an act of compassion.

According to Buddhist scriptures, compassion is the “quivering of the pure heart” when we have allowed ourselves to be touched by the pain of life. The knowledge that we can do this and survive helps us to awaken the greatness of our heart. With greatness of heart, we can sustain a presence in the midst of life’s suffering, in the midst of life’s fleeting impermanence. We can open to the world—its ten thousand joys and ten thousand sorrows.

As we allow the world to touch us deeply, we recognize that just as there is pain in our own lives, so there is pain in everyone else’s life. This is the birth of wise understanding. Wise understanding sees that suffering is inevitable, that all things that are born die. Wise understanding sees and accepts life as a whole. With wise understanding we allow ourselves to contain all things, both dark and light, and we come to a sense of peace. This is not the peace of denial or running away, but the peace we find in the heart that has rejected nothing, that touches all things with compassion.

Through stopping the war we can embrace our own personal grief and sorrows, joys and triumphs. With greatness of heart we can open to the people around us, to our family, to our community, to the social problems of the world, to our collective history. With wise understanding we can live in harmony with our life, with the universal law called the Tao or Dharma, the truth of life.


**Massage, Sex, and the Dharma**

by Alan Oliver

Recently I scheduled a massage which was casually chosen from the many ads in the back of the *Bay Area Reporter*. Advertised as a “whole body” massage, it proved to be just that with equal and highly focused, professional attention given to all parts of my body without discrimination.

In that completely relaxed state, I thought of how often I had violated that “equality” principle at times of sexual intimacy, emphasizing one part of the body over other parts. The fixation on one part of the body, be it penis, buttocks, lips, neck, or toes, is a stereotypical practice among gay men and would seem to limit the intimacy that comes with valuing and giving attention to all parts of the body when making love.

Since taking a few short lessons in massage, I have found myself more willing, in lovemaking, to give equal time from head to toe. In learning about massage, having it done to you, and applying the principle in bed, you become a better and more attentive “practitioner.” After the massage was over, feeling relaxed and physically taken care of, a persistent question once again caught my thoughts. How did the experience relate to the Dharma? Nowadays all experiences prompt that question for me.

The central principle of the massage experience—care and focus given to all parts—can be directly translated into dharmonic understanding, whether applied in sexual situations or to your whole life. How do we give equal attention and awareness to all parts of our lives? Are we able to massage every moment and every situation, whether it be a Buddhist retreat or in a gay bar? Is one moment more important than any other moment? Is practice more important than perceived non-practice?

We often make these distinctions, and these distinctions then shape what we pay attention to, emphasizing one focus over another. Therein begins the sorting out which can lead to alienation from our experience, suffering, and the feeling of being out of alignment.

Teachers often offer us a dharmic massage, directing our attention to areas we may have avoided or inadequately considered. In our minds, seeking a lover may be more important to us than feeling the fog on our skin, or truly understanding a friend’s insight. Until we can skillfully become aware of and experience (i.e. massage) every moment of our lives despite the need to make distinctions, it is difficult to rest in an enlightened state. This is difficult, because at the same time we are paradoxically urged to follow the Eightfold Path and use skillful means, which require making distinctions. As in most paradoxes, and as the Heart Sutra says, there is no distinction to be made, and also no end to distinctions.

It can be most instructive to watch how young children give their attention to everything before they are taught to make distinctions by their family, friends, teachers, and society. To do so is to see beginner’s mind in action. This is one of our greatest challenges: to experience beginner’s mind and give attention to every moment of our lives.

Alan Oliver is a consultant who helps schools and organizations create healthy environments through applying systems thinking. He also serves on GBF’s Steering Committee.
An Important Letter to all Newsletter Subscribers

Dear GBF Newsletter Recipient,

Recently we received a letter from a gay prisoner who had just started receiving the GBF newsletter. He sent us twelve 32-cent stamps and said he didn't have any money to send, but at least he could pay the postage for his copy of the newsletter. We frequently receive letters from people who tell us that just knowing we exist is a comfort, and that the newsletter offers them some contact with a gay Buddhist practice. Clearly the newsletter fills a need for many people.

The financial reality behind the newsletter is also clear. We now have over 600 people on our mailing list, of whom only 150 to 200 are contributors. Currently, about 75 percent of all donations to GBF (which we receive primarily as a result of our twice-a-year appeal letters) goes to support the newsletter. Each person who receives it is benefiting from the financial investment of $15 that it costs just to print and mail it, plus all the volunteer hours that the writers, editors, layout people, and mailing volunteers contribute.

The steering committee has decided to separate our fundraising activities from the expenses of the newsletter. Therefore, we are putting the newsletter on a sustainable subscription basis of $15 per year. We will include a subscription form in the newsletter once a year, and use the response we receive to create a new mailing list.

If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter, simply return the form below to us. If we do not hear from you by mid-January, we will need to remove your name from our mailing list as of the February newsletter. If you have started receiving the newsletter in the last two months (after sending us a check), then you need not send another check. Just indicate that below and return the form to us.

We need your support and encourage you to respond. We want to thank each of you for the support you have given GBF in the past. Whatever your decision, we hope you will continue to explore your spiritual path and we wish you well.

Sincerely,

GBF Steering Committee

GBF Newsletter
Subscription Renewal Form

____ I have enclosed $15 to renew my subscription to the GBF Newsletter.

____ I want to support GBF by donating the additional amount of $________

____ Limited Income: I have enclosed $________

Name: __________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________

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Please return this entire sheet with your payment to: GBF, 2261 Market Street #422, San Francisco, CA 94114. If the address label on the back of this sheet is correct, you need not fill out the address information.