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.

Transcending Autobiography
by Jim Wilson

During the years of my growing up, I remember vividly the international tensions focused on the border between East and West Germany. Great armies stood poised, ready to destroy each other—ready to destroy all of us—to maintain the reality of that border.

Then conditions changed, the Soviet Union collapsed, the Berlin Wall fell, and the border disappeared. Where did that border come from, and where did it go to?

The tendency would be to respond to such a question historically, to point out that at the end of World War II, the allies divided Germany into spheres of influence, etc. But this does not really answer the question. The border between East and West Germany arose from the mind of humanity; it had no other existence other than that dependent upon the mind.

To make this clear: consider that birds did not understand this border, the wind did not understand this border, only humans understood this border. Where did this border come from? From the mind. Where did it go to? It vanished when humans no longer wanted to maintain that division.

Much more tenacious than borders between nations are divisions between humanity expressed as sexual divisions. The divisions between male and female, and between straight and Gay seem to reflect basic structures of our biology. And the tensions surrounding maintaining these divisions bear a remarkable similarity to the tensions surrounding the maintenance of borders between nations. During the years of my growing up, I remember vividly becoming aware of the hostility and violence that those who violated the strictures of sexual divisions would receive. Just as someone who attempted to cross the border between East and West Germany would run the risk of being on the receiving end of great, even life-threatening,
Why Do Gay Men Practice Together?
by Alan Oliver,
Gay Men’s Buddhist Sangha

Many people have asked why we believe it is important for Gay men to practice together. There are many other Buddhist centers and traditions in the world, so why create a separate practice environment for Gay men? This is a healthy question which raises important issues of dualism, separatism, and interdependence. I believe the following seven reasons help to explain why we choose to practice together.

1. Affinity groups with similar interests, backgrounds, or visions have been a common model for people to create meaning in their lives. By knowing on multiple levels what your fellow practitioners have experienced, by sharing common life experiences, you can have a powerful base of understanding. Women’s groups, African-American groups, and Jewish groups are just three types of affinity groups that have proved worthwhile and successful.

2. When we practice together, we have the opportunity to directly apply Buddhist principles to
(continued on page 3)

hostility, so also those who cross the borders of sexual divisions in our culture similarly run the risk of being on the receiving end of great, even life-threatening, hostility.

The tendency is to explain the origins of these sexual divisions historically, to explain that as Western culture developed under certain conditions, there arose certain views regarding sexual desire and its proper expression. But this does not explain the situation. These divisions, just like the divisions between countries, come from the mind; they have no reality other than that given to them by the mind.

The First Noble Truth of the Buddha, the Awakened One, is the truth of suffering, that all people are in a state of suffering. When confronted with our own suffering, our own anxiety, our own anguish, the tendency is to try to explain the suffering in personal historical terms, through our autobiography. I suffer because of my less than perfect relationship to my parents, or I suffer because of certain traumas in my life, or I suffer due to the social oppression of who I am. This is the basis of therapy. The view is that by becoming clear about my autobiography, I will in some sense settle, or at least understand, the conditions and tensions in my life.

The Buddha had a different sense of the meaning of suffering. The Buddha understood suffering as a universal condition. The Second Noble Truth says that this suffering has a cause—primarily clinging. Clinging to our beliefs, clinging to any stasis, causes suffering because everything constantly changes. From this perspective, suffering arises due to a habit of mind, a very tenacious and strong habit of mind, the habit of mind which understands things as having a fixed, unchanging nature when in fact everything is subject to change and transformation.

Some people draw the implication here that even if all forms of institutionalized social oppression were eliminated, people would still experience suffering. I look at it in this way: institutionalized oppression, war, hostilities, arise from the habit of mind that attempts to impose upon fluid phenomena a fixed nature. This attempt is doomed to failure, but the habit and desire to have such a fixed nature remains very strong. This explains the tenacity with which humans engage in oppression and war. Because the root cause of such suffering remains, namely, the clinging habit of mind, putting an end to a particular war does not bring an end to war as such, and ending a particular oppression does not end the inclination to oppress.

For these reasons I have come to believe that peace among all peoples can only happen on the basis of a spiritual awakening. By “spiritual awakening” I mean simply the realization that all of us have more in common than what divides us. And that what humanity has in common constitutes the more important part of us than what separates us.

Personally, this was a very difficult realization for me. As a young man I participated in the civil rights movement. There followed years of activism in the anti-war movement during the Viet Nam War, including draft resistance. Years later I became involved in various Gay activist causes. After all these years I came to the painful realization that oppression teaches oppression, and that often the oppressed want to end oppression so that they can have an opportunity to oppress, and that many people involved in the anti-war movement wanted to end that war for ideological reasons, but not because they wanted to end war.
I felt particularly frustrated when Gay activism focused on letting Gays into the military. The Gay activists argued, correctly, that being Gay does not constitute any kind of hindrance in the performance of military duty. But this kind of activism does not raise the issue of a military presence, does not discuss where the military comes from (a habit of mind), nor does it have any insight into the inevitable suffering caused by military activity. Why is it an improvement if a Gay man bombs civilians as opposed to a straight man? If this was Gay activism, it was time for me to leave activism behind.

The Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, shifts our attention from our own situation to the universal, that which we all have in common. There are many stories in Buddhist literature which illustrate this shift. None is more moving than the story of Kisagotami. Kisagotami wanted to have a child, but many years passed and she remained childless. Finally, she gave birth to a son, and her joy overflowed. Sadly, her son lived only a few years, and then died. Kisagotami was bereft. She refused to believe that her son had actually died and sought some kind of medicine or magic which would revive her son. One day she heard that the Buddha had come to a nearby town; perhaps he would know how to revive her son. Presenting the corpse of her son to the Buddha, she begged the Buddha for some medicine which would revive her son. The Buddha said that he could easily do so, provided that Kisagotami bring him the key ingredient, some mustard seeds from a home where no one had died. Elated, Kisagotami went into the village looking for the mustard seeds. She went from house to house, and all of them had mustard seeds; but then she would ask them if anyone in their house had died. Of course, they would say. Kisagotami would then go to the next house and find out the same truth. Finally, it dawned on her that what she was experiencing was not unique. She let go of her son, buried him, and eventually became a famous nun in the Buddha’s order.

This story beautifully illustrates the process whereby we can put an end to suffering, the Third Noble Truth. When we transcend our autobiography and realize the universal, this process leads to equanimity, peace, and the cessation of sorrow. The suffering of Kisagotami for her son does not differ from the suffering anyone experiences as long as they continue to cling to any aspect of existence. Kisagotami transcended her autobiography and attained liberation and the end of suffering.

Recognizing what all of us have in common, what all of us share, we all may attain liberation and freedom from suffering. All people must face birth, old age, sickness, and death. All people at some time in their lives face the loss of those they treasure and love. All people wish to live a life free from oppression, free from hunger, and protected by clothing and shelter. Knowing what we all share, how can we quarrel?

The roots of oppression and war grow in the belief in the substantial reality of our separations. But history shows the complete ephemeral nature of these distinctions. Time dissolves all of these fondly held separations like clay dissolving in water.

Awakening to the reality that unites all humanity, that unites all sentient existence, may peace prevail on earth. May all people treat all people with kindness, caring, love, and compassion. May gratitude for all existence blossoms in all hearts. May compassion flourish in all the realms of existence.

situations that have a familiar ring to many of us. The possibilities of this level of specificity when applying Buddhism to life situations is not present in many practice environments. At times the situation is even worse: you can experience actual discrimination or homophobia in the Buddhist center you are attending. A Gay practice group enables us to fully integrate our lives and our practice in a very direct way, with no need for apologies for bringing subjects such as casual sex into the discussion.

3. Studying Buddhism often involves some level of home-leaving, because Buddhism asks you to take a fresh look at your persona and the conditioning that you experienced growing up. Gay men experience home-leaving directly when they move out from the assumed heterosexual norm to be their own persons. This outsider’s point of view is helpful as you discover Buddhist teachings. The concept of “Don’t know mind” may have more support in general in Gay groups, where the experience of having to rethink your whole life is common.

4. As Gay men explore Buddhism and apply it to their experience, they have an opportunity to create or reshape forms of practice and develop new written and spoken formats. This in turn enables the Gay community to customize what looks like the exotic or Asian practice, so that the “gateway” to Buddhism is easier to access and open by a Western Gay community. This may not be so desirable or easy from a Gay Asian standpoint, since there is a closer match between contemporary Asian culture and traditional Buddhism. Although (continued on page 4)
some Gay men do very well by following the norms of practice of Asian Buddhist traditions, others will want to use their redefining skills and instincts to create vivid and challenging new ways to practice.

5. Practicing together also creates a critical mass of intention which can offer Gay men in general a way to live their lives with less suffering. This is a Bodhisattva position, in that there are others to help besides yourself. As Buddhists, we vow to save all sentient beings, so it seems appropriate that some attention be given to those with whom we share a common bond. When a Gay Sangha mobilizes its resources to do this, it can have a powerful positive effect on individuals, as well as the community as a whole. A distinction must be made between conversion,

which we don't advocate, and providing Gay men with useful tools that they can use to reduce suffering.

6. There is something to be said for reclaiming our historic roots in Buddhist tradition. There is enough evidence of same-sex attraction among monks and among people in Asian Buddhist cultures to show we were there at the beginning of the (continued on page 5)

Mindfulness: Befriending Our Shadow
David Richo, Ph.D.

Befriending the shadow of our ego makes it easier to hold our normal human fears and desires without becoming stuck in them, ruled by them, or attached to them.

To Buddha, the world was not "bad" or "evil" but insufficient. He proposed simply "being here now." This is mindfulness, attention to the moment without the ego's self-deceptive distractions: fear, desire, judgment, attachment to an outcome, and narcissism. It is a commitment to the authentic reality rather than to the fictional possibilities presented by fear and desire: re-doing the past or planning to control the future. Buddhist Tantra shows a path of moral virtue and centeredness: not escape from but stillness in the ongoing dramas of fear and desire. This stillness/mindfulness is our sitting squarely in our reality without being crushed or pushed by it. It is only when we get up from that position, stand against our own experience, that we are at the mercy of fear. Freedom from fear is, paradoxically, staying in it as ours. Govinda says: "The certainty that nothing can happen to us that does not in our innermost being belong to us is the foundation of fearlessness." As we remain faithful to our own reality, we are one with our universe and trust that precisely our own tailor-made destiny is unfolding within it.

As long as we see ourselves as separate, we will be at the mercy of desire. Things will stand out as real and graspable rather than as products of our dualistic habits of thought. The Buddhist Tantric solution is simple: we sit in desire without denying it. From that position, we give up the sense of separate selfhood by letting go of ego and entering the emptiness of unconditional reality, i.e., life unconditioned by attachment and desire, "under an empty autumn sky." The compassion of the horseman of enlightenment is stirred by such emptiness. He is not stopped by it; he loves to ride into it. "So nigh is grandeur unto our dust," as Emerson says. There is something about lowliness, freedom from the arrogance of ego, and spaciousness, freedom from ego solidity, that invites the grace of enlightenment. As we lighten ourselves, we let the light through. (In fact, once we see how much of what we think is illusion and how few distinctions are relevant, we can only burst out laughing.)

Nirvana is a way of describing the bliss of liberation from the self-deceptions of the ego. It is the reality of who we are once we let go of the comforting limits in our attachment to a wholly Other rescuer God. One does not go to Nirvana as we traditionally say one goes to heaven. One simply awakens, in the here and now, to the fact of what has always and already been the case: "this very place the lotus paradise." There is a change in perspective, though no objective change has occurred: like finding out one is (always and already) a twin.

The joy of realizing our true nature creates an exuberance in us to engage in the world with love. The awakened Buddha never tries to become compassionate. He is that automatically by awakening. What is awakening? It is freedom from the dualism of ourselves and our fears, ourselves and our desires, ourselves and all that is. Then compassion is the only option.

The goal of our evolution is not to be free from fear or desire but from attachment to either one of them. Our work is to hold the tensions between them with a relaxed grasp. This is the path that opens between
polarities when both are held in our embrace like twin babes at a mother’s bountiful breasts. These are the little ones who grow up to be Braveheart and Cornucopia, with sleeves rolled up to garden the blossoming world and gather in its enriching harvests.

I have it in me to enjoy desire and be free of its grip over me. I can become free of the habit of grasping the transitory and believing it has permanent gifts to give me. When I am caught in desire, I exaggerate and inflate the value and appeal of what I want. I act as if it were all there could be for me. Under the spell of desire, I go to sleep and become obsessed with the same time. As long as I act as if such delusions are all that comprise me, I cannot contact the profound depths of my own potential. Potential means power, and my power is in the hands of the tyrant of ego as long as I remain imprisoned in my illusions.

The most inveterate and insidious habit of my ego is to believe that what I need is outside myself. To be fooled by such an empty promise is the most intrusive obstacle to enlightenment. When I renounce my preoccupation with the necessary outside, I liberate my boundless inner untapped potential. Renunciation does not consist of giving up my human pleasures but of giving up my unproportional expectations from these pleasures. Once I stop searching the streets, I can go down to the wine cellar of my own house where so many vintages are gathering dust as they await uncorking. What is missing has always been and only is I, the best wine saved till last and waiting, wanting to be poured.

We are on a spiritual path when we accommodate and then transcend the warring opposites that tug at us from ego. We become sane and awake when we stop struggling with them but simply hold them until a healing reconciliation occurs. We do this by giving to ourselves what we always wanted from others: we pay active attention to the reality that faces us without judgment, fear, control, expectation, or clinging. Attention means pausing. We tarry between stimulus and response, between thought and action, as we do between every breath we take. This is mindfulness, our breath-conscious meditative response to the here and now. It is a form of self-mirroring. In this attending to what is, I mirror and pledge my allegiance to the reality behind my present predicament rather than to my ego beliefs/pictures about it. This is the power of mindfulness to wake us up.

The Sanskrit word for mindfulness means attend and stay. We simply stay with and attend to our reality long enough to access both figure and ground and so find the balance of wholeness. Here is a simple example: you and I walk on the beach and I am listening to you speak. Meanwhile, I am also hearing the sound of the waves which is the (back)ground to the story you are telling me. Your story is enriched by my attention to it together with the waves’ sound. It is all one rhythm. To my ears, your story is the figure (what I attend to by my listening); the sound of the waves is the ground (what I hear without zeroing in on). “Listen” is to figure as “hear” is to ground. Together they form one engaging picture/sound.

Remember what Lorenzo said to Jessica in The Merchant of Venice: “Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music creep into our ears . . . such harmony is in immortal souls.”

Figure/ground operates continually in the spiritual/psychological synthesis.Appearances are the visible figure and behind appearances is the invisible ground of being, no-thingness. A form of mindfulness is attending to the ground of being directly, letting go of attachment to the figure and

Buddha’s teaching. This may help us as we make our participation known among Buddhist traditions. We need to be represented at the table of dialogue and practice when Buddhists get together to shape the course of the continuous unfolding of the Dharma. The paradox is that we are always in the state of letting go or surrendering our differences and becoming one with all Buddhists and all sentient beings.

7. The argument is often made for following one tradition, but the traditions are all children of a common source and message. Don’t we enhance the richness of our practice by joining in Gay groups that incorporate insights from all Buddhist traditions? They are all mirrors reflecting back to the common source. Their diversity is rich and fulfilling. We have the opportunity in our Gay practice groups to incorporate and integrate the great insights from everywhere, including new insights of our own. That is a strength, not a weakness. Out of the fires of that process the Buddha’s message will emerge, fresh and whole.
GBF Committees
We always want and need interested participants, so please, JOIN IN! Call the contact person on the committee, or talk to him (or anyone on that committee) at a GBF sitting or event. This is a great practice opportunity!

Steering Committee
Call 415.974.9878
Robin Levitt
Marly Cole
Hal Hershey
David Holmes
Howard King

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Clint Seiter
Terry Stein
Don Wiepert

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Larry Hermson,
Art Director
Robin Levitt
Mailing List

Website Committee
Dexter Young
Contact
415.643.9776

Marty Cole
Hal Hershey
David Holmes
Howard King

Because of very significant reductions in our staff and hours, we have been unable to maintain the Website. We are currently without chairs:
Development Committee
Social Committee
Practice Committee
If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us at 415.974.9878.

Sunday Sitting Facilitators
Call 415.974.9878

The following committees are currently without chairs:
Development Committee
Social Committee
Practice Committee
If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Dexter Young at 415.643.9776, email <dty@aol.com>

allowing a shift of attention to the ground from which it has emerged. Here is an example: I drop my devastation with being left by my partner long enough to enter the archetypal ground below it, the orphan dimension of the child I am and always was. I thereby contact two underground springs in my present crisis: I have personal griefwork to do about this loss and all the losses of my past that it revives. I have a spiritual challenge too, to face and integrate the shadow side of the archetypal orphan child-hero's predicament. Much is afoot in my psyche, triggered by the abandonment, and out for higher stakes! This calamity is not only about me being left; it is about me being found. By mindfulness, I leave the figure and found the ground. A crisis may wash over me, after all, like the flooding Nile that fecundates the arid lands.

The ground of the visible is the invisible. Resting in this is pure mindfulness, the flash that finds the pause. The pause is to time what the emptiness of intrinsic separate existence is to being. Mindfulness brings us to the place where time and being, mutability and unconditionality are one.

To believe that appearances are all there is, means attachment to appearance. Wisdom is discovered when attention to an appearance reveals it to be a figure that has behind it the ground of another reality. This deeper reality is a pure spaciousness, an open potential that, unlike the limited appearance, is limitless. It is precisely the distinction between ego and Self.

One of the ways we spread the message of the Dharma is through our Website. We would like to invite you to share this opportunity to serve our Sangha as internet messengers of the Dharma. If you are willing to share your time and energy in teaming up to update the website, please contact Dexter Young at 415.643.9776, email <dty@aol.com> independently of anything else; all is interdependent. It is not nihilism but an affirmation of the nature of everything as spacious. Wisdom is insight into this emptiness that is precisely the openness described in Apocalypse 19: “I saw Heaven open.”

Thus, an active visit to ground is freedom from the figure in the sense that I no longer have to identify with it, i.e., remain attached to it. There is no “it”! I can watch the movie in my head and in my life without binding myself to any one character or plot-line. When I drop attachment to outcome, a gap opens in my ego’s vicious cycle of fear and desire and surrender is the shift that results. Surrender of ego means letting go of the multiplicity of our fears and desires in favor of the unity of unconditional love, perennial wisdom, and healing power. This is also true devotion.

The Western psychological equivalent to all this is simply to take something as information and not have to act on it. Ken Wilber says, “Mysticism is not regression in the service of the ego but evolution in the transcending of the ego... Ego strength is in our capacity for disinterested witnessing.” This is how attunement and meditation, i.e., staying with what is, increases ego strength. Ego strength makes us confident enough to look beyond ourselves and thereby see all humanity. Compassion opens from confident strength. “One sees one’s heart in all beings and all beings in one’s heart,” says the Bhagavad Gita. “The love is the same for enemies or friends. One is the same in honor or in disgrace, in heat or cold, pleasure or pain, free from the chains of attachment.”

It is a short step from “stay with what is” to “be what is.” “This is My Body,” i.e., this here and now reality is my universe/Self. When what is becomes what everything
We Hope You’re Still There!

We’re performing our annual checkup on GBF’s mailing list, to be sure the folks who are on the list want to continue receiving the GBF Newsletter. There are four ways you can remain on the mailing list:

1) Clip and mail this coupon (with your address label on the back) to us
   2336 Market Street #9, San Francisco, CA 94114

2) If you’re in the Bay Area, bring this coupon to a Sunday sitting

3) E-mail us at gbssf@hotmail.com

4) Call 415.974.9878 and leave a message that you want to stay on the list.

To receive future issues of The GBF Newsletter, please contact us in one of these ways!

If your name or address is different from what’s on the mailing label on this issue, please give us the correct information:

Name __________________________________________
Street/Apt. ____________________________
City/State/Zip ____________________________

is, the human, the divine, the natural. I am more than meets the eye, and so is everything. I and everything are the same. The space around me and everything is the same. Transcendence and immanence unite.

We fear this space, and yet it grants us room to move. Are we ultimately fearing the opportunity to go on? This is the challenge that faces us when heaven opens.

This space is another entry into the unity of all beings, all equally arising from a deathless pure open ground of existence.

Where is my ground? What in my life creates space for an unobstructed view of my real nature? What makes room for everything? What in my life and relationships is conducive to the emergence of my inner wisdom? What will I have to let go of to be free of the maintenance of separateness from which so many distractions are derived?

Once wholeness is acknowledged as figure/ground:

Behind the negative shadow is the positive shadow.

Behind the appearances of dualism is the ground of oneness.

Behind the friend-enemy division is the love that chooses reconciliation over retaliation.

Behind the life-death polarities is not an ending but a cycle of transformation.

Behind restless desire is plenitude and serenity.

Behind fear is an alternative: the freedom from having to be ruled by it.

Behind alienation from Nature is communion within it.

Behind our mortality is immortal diamond.

Behind the ephemeral is the everlasting.

All of IT is I! How well this fits with Freud’s view of the happy result of therapy: “Where it was, there I shall be.” By this he meant that there is no longer any dualistic split between ourselves and our experience of the world. Before working on ourselves, we imagined that everything in our life was an it, over and against us. Afterwards, we saw that the so-called “it” is actually ourselves projecting and introjecting. When “it” is restored to “I,” we take responsibility for all that seems to be coming at us as an integral part of who we are. Then there is no it, only I.

Wallace Stevens stated it: “I am what is around me.” Giordano Bruno does not go far enough when he says: “Through the light that shines in natural things, one mounts to the life that presides over them.” Rather it is that through the light that shines through natural things, that one is the life residing within them. Only one life, not one below yearning for one above. We are already on earth as in Heaven.

The oneness is gently and graciously present to anyone who wishes it.

—Plotinus •

This is an excerpt from David Richo’s latest book: Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side: Shambhala, 1999. It is available at A Different Light, and other bookstores.
GBF Annual Retreat

GBF sponsors its Seventh Annual Weekend Retreat at Vajrapani Institute, in Boulder Creek, on September 10-12. Registration fees will be on a sliding scale from $90-$140 per person, which includes housing and vegetarian meals.

Housing will be in large dormitory cabins and camping areas. A few small, semi-private (two person) cabins will also be available for an additional fee. The registration form appears below. For further information, call Bill Kirkpatrick at 415.621.8549.

Registration Form

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City __________________ Zip ____________
Phone ____________________________
Special Dietary or Health Considerations ____________________________

Accommodations (please check one): ( ) Dorm ( ) Campsite

Transportation: ( ) I can provide transportation ( ) I need transportation

Volunteer Needs: Please indicate availability:
( ) I can help out with the retreat (i.e., bell-ringer, timekeeper, welcoming)

Payment: Sliding scale of $90 to $140. Please pay as much as you can afford. Enclosed is $_________
( ) full payment ( ) deposit ($50 minimum)

Please MAIL form and check payable to GBF to:
Bill Kirkpatrick
37 Frederick Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Sunday Morning Sittings,
9:30am and 10:30am: San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett St, between 21st & 22nd, one block west of Mission St.

August 1 Jim Wilson Monthly Speaker
August 8 Diana Winston Guest Speaker
August 15 Annual Picnic
August 22 Discussion
August 29 Myo Leahey Guest Speaker

* Diana Winston is the founder of the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE) Program, America's first Buddhist voluntary service organization. She has recently returned from Asia where she spent one year in intensive retreat practice as a Buddhist nun in Burma and six months teaching meditation to village children at a Buddhist school in India. Currently she is the Assistant Director of Buddhist Peace Fellowship. She has practiced Vipassana since 1989.

* Myo Leahey is a priest in the Soto Zen lineage of Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi. He began his sitting practice in 1969, and chose to begin full-time training in 1982. He was ordained in 1986, received the Shuso (Head Monk) initiation in 1989, and Shiho (Dharma Transmission) in March of this year from Tenshin Anderson-Roshi.

Thursday Evening Sittings:
Will be suspended for an indefinite period, due to reduced attendance.

Tuesday, August 3, 7:30pm:
Steering Committee Meeting (open to all GBF participants), Andrew Okumoto's home, 905 Burnett Avenue #3, SF, 415.648.8868.

Saturday, August 28, 7pm:
GBF Potluck Dinner Party at the home of Richard Saiz, 1167 Sanchez (between 25th Street and Jersey), SF, 415.648.8614.

Sunday, August 22, 2:30pm:

Tuesday, August 3, 7:30pm:
Dave Richo, author of Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side, will be giving a talk and signing books at A Different Light bookstore, 489 Castro Street, SF.

Sunday, August 15, 12 noon:
GBF Annual Potluck Picnic, will be held once again at the Lake View picnic site in Tilden Park (the same site as last year). We'll share in the food we bring, socialize, wind down and relax. Afterwards, for those interested, there will be a hike led down the appropriately named Inspiration Trail (great views of the East Bay Hills). Carpooling is encouraged. Anyone needing a ride can carpool with drivers meeting at 37 Bartlett St. after the regular 10:30 meditation there.

Directions: If coming from San Francisco, Berkeley or Oakland, take Highway 24 East. Get off at the Fish Ranch Rd. exit, immediately before the Caldecott Tunnel entrance, and turn left down Fish Ranch Rd. until you hit Grizzly Peak Rd. Turn right on Grizzly Peak Rd., and stay on it until you reach South Park Dr. Turn right on South Park Dr, and stay on it until it ends at Wildcat Canyon Rd. Bear right on Wildcat Canyon Rd. 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. If you have any questions, call Clint Seiter at (415) 386-3088.

GBF Member Seeks Sublet
Or House-sit
For August 20-31. Call Dave, 415.759.1440
Local Dharma Centers
A list of local Dharma centers is available on our website and as a handout at our Sunday sittings. We encourage members to explore what these Dharma centers can offer to their practice.

GBF Homeless Project
If you are available to volunteer your time to the Hamilton Family Center on the third Saturday of any month, please contact Clint Seiter at 415.386.3088. A dinner is prepared by GBF volunteers, funded by GBF.

Your Thrift Store
Donations Earn Money For GBF
GBF members can donate their quality cast-offs to the Community Thrift Store (CTS) and GBF will receive a quarterly check based on the volume of items sold. This is a great way to support our Sangha, and the community. Bring your extra clothing and other items to CTS at 623 Valencia St. between 10am and 5pm, any day of the week. The donation door is around the corner on Sycamore Alley (parallel to and between 17th and 18th) between Valencia and Mission. Tell the worker you are donating to GBF. Our ID number is 40. Information 415.861.4910.

East Bay Dharma Book Group
Meets weekly. For more information, call Howard, 510.649.1697.

GBF Website
http://www.gaybuddhist.org

Local Dharma

Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Fridays, 10:30am: HIV Sitting Group.
Hartford Street Zen Center,
57 Hartford St., SF
Information 415.863.2507.

Wednesdays, 7:15pm: Evening Meditation. Gay Men's Buddhist Sangha. Two 20 minute sessions with a short break in between and social time after. All practitioner levels welcome.
Information 415.207.8113

Thursdays, 12:30pm-1:30pm: Mindfulness Meditation for People Living with Chronic or Life-Threatening Illness. Instruction, practice, talk led by Eugene Cash and Frank Ostaseski. Zen Hospice Project. Information 415.285.7502.

Sunday evening, August 1:
Information 415.207.8113.

Friday, August 6, 2:30pm:
End the Nuclear Threat Rally and nonviolent direct action on the anniversary of Hiroshima bombing. Livermore Nuclear Weapons Laboratory.
Information 510.832.4347.

Friday, August 6 to Sunday, August 15: Vipassana Residential Retreat, with Gil Fronsdal, Mary Orr and John Travis.
Vajrapani Institute, Santa Cruz.
Information 415.488.0164, x 371.

Sunday evening, August 15:
Gay Men's Buddhist Sangha Dharma Dialogue Session. Focus on Guilt, Blame and Original Sin.
Information 415.207.8113.

Thursday, August 19 to Sunday, August 22: Vipassana Residential Retreat, with Howard Cohn & Eugene Cash. Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Woodacre.
Information 415.488.0164, x 372.

Saturday morning, August 21,
8:30am-1:30pm: Morning of Meditation. Gay Men's Buddhist Sangha. Information 415.207.8113.

Sunday, August 22 to Friday, August 27: Practice in Times of Chaos. A Retreat for Men, with Michael Meade, Jack Kornfield and others. Mendocino Woodlands Camp, Mendocino.
Information 800.233.6984.

Sunday evening, August 29:
Gay Men's Buddhist Sangha Dharma Dialogue Session. Focus on Compassion and Loving-Kindness.
Information 415.207.8113.

If you would like to recommend a Dharma event for this column please e-mail information to: <halburt@aol.com>.

Meditation Group in Sonoma County
Buddhist meditation group affiliated with GBF meets near the town of Sonoma every other Tuesday evening. Although at present group members include Gay men and Lesbians, the group is also open to non-Gay practitioners. For more information, contact Bob Haas, 707.938.8868.

Ongoing Meditation Group on Monday Nights
Led by Jon Bernie, a meditation teacher in San Francisco with thirty years’ meditation experience (including eleven years of Zen Buddhist training and seven years of Vipassana training). The group is free and open to all; donations gratefully accepted. Quaker Meeting House, 65 9th Street (between Mission and Market), 7-9pm. For more information, call Jon at 415.621.7314.
Climb up on this rock out of the river.

Sit and breathe.

Thoughts like water drip away.

—Hal Hershey