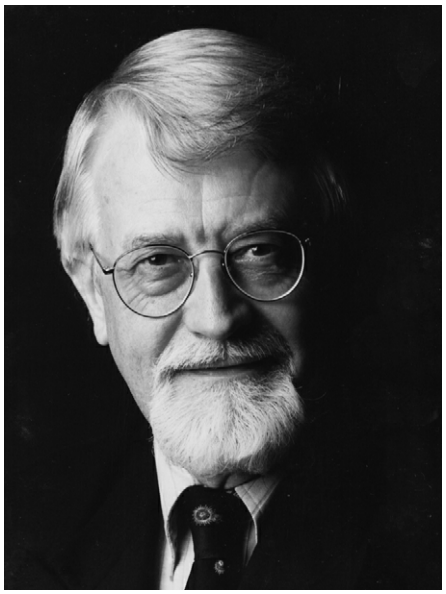
Gay Buddhist Fellowship

APRIL / MAY 2007 NEWSLETTER

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 San Francisco Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

Roger Corless 1938-2007



Roger Corless, an active member of GBF and a frequent contributor to this newsletter, died on Jan. 12, 2007, after a recurrence of the cancer he thought he'd healed.

In the early sixties, after finishing a degree at the University of London, Roger gave up the security of his personal and professional life in England to study Buddhism in America. He got a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin and for over 20 years was a professor of Buddhism and Christianity at Duke University. He wrote two books and many articles reflecting his appreciation of the dharma and the Christian mystic tradition.

He retired to the Bay Area in the late '90s and was a vast resource to the gay and Buddhist communities here. He knew of what he spoke and wrote: he had three altars in his home and was committed to living the philosophies that he studied and honoring all his different inner spiritual temperaments. He combined awesome cross-cultural erudition, mischievous erotic humor, deep kindness, and a gift for making the esoteric down to earth and useful. He believed that "Buddhism is about the experience of joy."

For much of his life he lived as a solitary scholar; at the end, he welcomed the opportunity to ask for help, which he got. He faced death with dignity, humor and utter trust, with every expectation of arriving in what he likened to "Nurtureland." He blessed the GBF by giving talks, writing articles, leading retreats, but mostly by the sprightly authenticity of his being. We won't see his likes again.

On October 22, 2006, Howard DePorte interviewed Roger at the GBF Sunday sitting. The following is a transcription of that interview.

HOWARD DEPORTE: This is a new format for the dharma talk. It was motivated by a desire to learn from you, Roger, and your life experience. All of us are critically aware and appreciative of your profound intellect and awareness and scholarship around the dharma and religion, and we have been blessed, richly, by your teachings throughout the years. We want to continue that blessing, but with a little twist: we want to learn

about the dharma from your life experience. So you are, we sense, a tree deeply rooted, and we would like to pluck your fruits today. (Laughter)

ROGER CORELESS: That sounds rather ominous.

HOWARD: In the sense that the fruit is quite ripe. It's kind of a conversation between you and me, and everyone gets to listen in.

ROGER: Since I am 68 years old, we can't go through everything that I've done in one installment.

HOWARD: That was one of my questions, so you are 68.

ROGER: Yes.

HOWARD: And how are you doing right now? We have all held you in prayer and in meditation around the disease process in your life, so how are you doing?

ROGER: Well, I am coming out of the tunnel, but I am not quite out yet. The cancer that I've been working with—and I do like to say I've been "working with the cancer." I don't like to say "fighting." In order to say "fighting cancer," that means I am fighting my own body, and that doesn't help me. I've been working with the cancer since I was diagnosed in November of 2004. It really consumed me. When it was all over and seemed to be in remission, I was all set to get back to my life that had been interrupted and then I found that I was losing my eyesight, partly due to the cancer, to a very rare condition that excites the doctors. They are very pleased to see me because this autoimmune retinopathy is quite rare. They said, "Oh, I've never seen this; I've read about it." But now it's more difficult, but it seems to be stable, so the cancer seems to be in remission and the eyesight seems to be stable at the moment. I think I'm legally blind, so it is quite different to go around even in a familiar part of the world seeing everything in a haze. But I'm starting to come out of this tunnel and the only problem is a mechanical problem with my ostomy bag which is not behaving itself. When I go to bed at night I pray that I will have a peaceful night and not a pissful night! (Laughter) It's quite disturbing to wake up in the middle of the night and find that the bag has failed, and then have to, while I'm sleepy, fix it all up. But that is a problem which can be solved eventually. These ostomies can be troublesome. It is a particular branch of nursing to know how to deal with these things, and I am in contact with the nurses who are specialists in this, so we expect to solve that, and then I will feel better. I am not responding to this problem with the bag with the joy and the gratitude that I would like to have. In fact, I am responding to it with a certain amount of low-level anxiety, which the doctors want to give some pills for, and I have some very mild things, and I don't want to take too many. I do feel that I am coming out. I am not able to get at my scholarship as easily as I was, because it is very difficult to read. I can still read a little bit. It means that I am moving into a different mode, and teaching more from what I have learned in the past. It's a good job I am retired, because I may not be up to date with the latest article or book that has come out in my field.

HOWARD: What have you learned about yourself in this disease process? Anything new?

ROGER: I think I have spoken of this a little bit before, but the main thing has been to try to get more into the body. In theory, I know that the mind is not located in the head, and that the intellect is not the only way to use the mind, but I have been supported in the idea that it is in the head, and that the intellect is the main thing by my profession. If one becomes too involved in a subject, then it thought to be bad. I have been criticized for being too involved in Buddhism and Christianity as I studied the dialogue, and I was told that that wasn't objective. I replied that objectivity is a subjective decision. (laughter) And I said that it's not scientific to go that way. Then I found out that anthropologists have a term called "participant-observer," so I said, "Well, I am a participant observer!" Oh well, that's all right then.

However, it's been very difficult for me to come into the body properly and to take care of it in this way. The disease I had is something you don't really want to talk about that much in public. I mean, most people don't want to hear that you have blood in your urine, and that you're waking up in a puddle of piss and so forth, because we ignore all of that. We tend to think that if we have a body, it's the body beautiful, and we don't realize, as I think Trungpa says, that if you don't think that your body is a stinking mess, try going without washing for a considerable time. Then you will find out. We are fortunate that we can keep washing, and we don't notice that actually the body is a source of all kinds of nasty pollutions. Now, this doesn't mean that we say, "I hate the body," but it makes us a bit more realistic about what the body is. The Buddha said at one time, "You should treat the body like an open sore." That's to say we don't want to have this open sore, but we look after it; we protect the body because it is useful. I'm still not as much in the body as I would like to be, but it is very difficult to get professors into their body. You will notice that very famous professors, and I am not that famous, walk with their heads forward, because that's where they are, and it kind of leads them forward. I am trying to walk a bit more upright.

HOWARD: So, it is kind of a new learning for you—getting into your body?

ROGER: Yes.

HOWARD: Do you have a specific practice that you have employed to get you there?

ROGER: Well, during the height of the medical treatment of repeated surgeries and chemotherapies, I didn't have the energy to do any kind of formal meditation, and I haven't really gotten back to it yet. So I would just lie on a recliner and put on some soft music and just try to be present with the condition. That was my practice, just to be mindful of the present moment and then to try to use it as a vehicle for having compassion for those who have similar kinds of problems or worse problems. One thing that I have been able to keep up is a very, very short and simple practice in the morning. I have a little postcard of Medicine Buddha Bhaishajya Guru on top of my medicine cabinet, and somebody sent me tsa tsas of the different forms. I offer incense to Medicine Buddha in the morning and pray that all of us who have cancer or another life-threatening disease, or visual impairment, or another disability can be well, happy and peaceful, and when we die, we can we die calmly, joyfully and with compassion for all living beings. Then I visualize rays of light coming from Medicine

Buddha to me and especially to the part that I have a problem with right now and then to everyone else. It doesn't take long, but it is quite a powerful little practice.

HOWARD: Did the anxiety that came up for you around the ostomy bag surprise you about yourself?

ROGER: I don't think it surprised me, no, because I've been fearful of disease. I hadn't had much disease during my life; I've been fairly healthy, but I've been afraid that something might happen, because I've seen, as we get older, more and more things tend to go wrong with us. At first, I was quite afraid of this, and then I was trying to feel, well now it's happened, so your worst fears have come to be. So I don't think I was surprised by it, and I think I'm dealing with it reasonably well. All the therapists I've talked to say, "You're doing pretty well."

So I wasn't surprised, but I would like to be more comfortable with whatever happens. There's still a feeling of trying to push disease away, which is not helpful. I'm trying to be more accepting, and I think I've had some success in that, but I haven't quite made it yet.

HOWARD: Is there a word of advice you can give all of us about how to get into our bodies?

ROGER: Well, I think if we do any kind of meditation on the awareness of the body, insight meditation as we now call it, seems to help that. We used to call it the Burmese method. Then it was called *Satipatthana*, then it was called *Vipassana*, or Insight Meditation, and that's where we become aware of the body. It was called the *Satipatthana* method because it comes out of the *Satipatthana Sutra*, where the Buddha recommends becoming aware of the body in the breathing, and more of the aspects of it, as a way of waking up. But specifically, if we have a problem, like a pain or some other physical problem, I think we can use that as a focus of awareness and not try to push it away. See, we automatically do that, I think. If we meet a friend and we say, "How are you doing?" and he or she says, "Well, I just caught a bad cold," we immediately draw back, and say, "No, don't come near me."

As I understand it, in the Tibetan tradition, the Tibetan doctor takes the Boddhisatva vows, and part of it is that he or she will take on the disease of the patient if that is the only way to cure them of what they've got. And this acceptance of disease as a part of the reality is, I think, something that would help Western medicine at the time, because Western medicine at this time seems to feel that sickness and death is a kind of failure, and I think it can be a way of waking up.

HOWARD: And that's a strong Jesus tradition also, that moving into the disease, putting hands on, being in relationship with the disease of others.

ROGER: Yes, according to the tradition, Jesus knew what was going to happen to him and went ahead anyhow. Then this entering into the suffering is put quite remarkably, I think, by Mother Julia of Norwich. She's my favorite Christian mystic. She lived in a town called Norwich, and she had a number of visions of Christ which are remarkable because they combine the visible and the invisible in one way. I could give a whole lecture on her, and I won't go into her right now. But she said that she was invited into the side of Christ, and as she went into the side of Christ, she found an infinite realm, which was heaven, and she said it was large enough for all who would go there. And this was kind of a nurturing or mothering thing for her. She talked of Jesus as her mother, and some of the mystics of the Middle Ages have also talked of that. So as the mother can take us to her breast and feed us with her milk, so Jesus takes us inside his breast and feeds us with his blood, which in the Christian tradition is not a freaky thing, because the blood is a purification. So this accepting of suffering as a part of the reality of life and using it as a way of advancing on the spiritual path, I think, is something that both Christians and Buddhists share in their own way.

HOWARD: So at 68 years if you could go back and change one thing about your life, what would that be?

ROGER: Hmmm . . . I don't know that there is much that I would change that I could have any effect over. I might want to say that I wouldn't have got involved in drinking alcohol, because I found over the years that I was one of those people that became trapped in alcoholism, and I had to find a way out. And if I hadn't been drinking alcohol to drunkenness so many nights in smoky bars, I might not have gotten the bladder cancer, and I might not be in this position. But then I wouldn't have had the advantage of using all of these things. I can't think that there was a time when I made a decision that I thought was a bad decision. I remember when I had finished undergraduate college at London, and I realized that I had the opportunity just to go on to a regular job. My father worked in a bank, and I thought maybe I should do that, although I'm terrible at figures. My mother wanted me to get married, but I was realizing that I'm not the marrying sort. (Laughter) That wasn't going to happen, so I thought, "Well, I could do that," or I could try to work with Buddhism and Christianity in some way that I don't understand, and apparently to do that I've got to go to the USA because there was more opportunity for graduate study in that area. I thought, "Well, what would it be like when I'm really old, like sixty, and looking back on my life?" I would think that if I chose to go into just an ordinary job, then I might think, "Well, I should have taken the risk," because it was a great risk. I had to leave my country of origin, come to the U.S. with—I had $100 and 200 books, and now I have a little more than $100, and I have four or five thousand books. I'm not quite sure what to do with them when I can't see. Then I had to come to the US on a one-way ticket. I came on the boat because that was the only way you could take all these books without extra charges on the airlines, and there weren't many airlines in 1962. There weren't that many aircraft coming across. So here I am making this big decision to leave everything. I don't know anybody in the US; all my friends are in the UK. It's a one-way

ticket. Will I ever come back? I was going to be given a job in New York City, selling church furniture in a church bookstore, because I was doing something for them in England and the man who offered me the job said, "Well, we could start you at that," and I said, "What would the salary be?" and he said, "We could start you at $350 a month." I said, "I am not too familiar with American standards of living or what the dollar is worth. Could I live on that?" "Just barely, I guess," he said, which was true. (Laughter) He wasn't lying to me.

So, I thought, "Well, can I possibly do that?" I was quite afraid to make the jump, but then I thought, if I look back on my life and I didn't make the jump, I would feel like I had wasted my life, and if I made the jump, but it didn't work out, I would say, "Well, it didn't work out." So I have actually been pretty clear about my motivations throughout my life, and I don't believe that I have made a really big error. If I had known that alcohol would not suit me, I might not have gone into it, but then recovery from alcoholism is a foundation of my spiritual practice.

HOWARD: Five million questions from that episode stirred in my mind, but I do want to go back. Can we get a little personal? More personal?

ROGER: It depends how personal.

HOWARD: Oh, OK! (Laughter) How did you know that you weren't the marrying type? What happened that gave you an indication?

ROGER: Oh. Well, it was very strange, because my family could have been drawn from Central Casting as being the English couple. They never touched. I saw them embrace once. My mother said, "I only had sex with your father once, you know, and it was hell." (Laughter)

HOWARD: I'd be running too!

ROGER: Yes! And sometime later, when there was a sex scandal on TV from some politicians, Mother said, "Well, I don't know what all this fuss is about sex. I never found it all that interesting." And my father—they were about in their seventies—said very quietly, "Yes, dear. It was very seldom, wasn't it?" So I was brought up to think that sex was some very frightening thing that other people had, possibly in France. (Laughter) I know when there was an attempt to legalize homosexual conduct, which eventually went through, it was put through to the House of Lords first, because they thought, "Oh, well their lordships will be very conservative and will nix it." But they were very much in favor of it, actually. But a field marshal, the Lord Montgomery, who was well known of course for the Second World War stuff, delivered himself of the opinion that "I've heard that these things go on in France, and so forth, but we are not French, we are English, thank God."

So, I didn't understand it. I had these strange feelings, and I was always a bit fussed over by large women who would descend upon me and say I was so cute and then they would put makeup all over me and kiss me, and oh dear! And I would withdraw and say, "No, you mustn't do that!" And then when I got to puberty, the other boys seemed to find that the girls were interesting, and I thought, "Well, I don't know what they see in that," and I was more interested in the other boys, but I knew there was something wrong with that. So I stuffed the whole thing, and I just got into my books. My books have been my significant other. I never knew that you could date, or have a boyfriend. There was also a big scandal when I was in my teens with a certain Lord Montague, who lived in a big home called Beaulieu, spelled B-E-A-U-L-I-E-U, but you know, we are the country that produced Monty Python, so you don't expect things to be pronounced how they look. And he would have these big parties for these men and somebody ratted on him, and it was like Oscar Wilde all over again, and I felt, "Well, I would have liked to be at one of those parties," but he was put in jail and it was sinful and so forth. So it wasn't until I came to the US that I began to poke my nose out of the closet a little bit, even though the US was a bit nervous about this. You know, there were a lot of questions on my visa application about sex. Also communism. But they wanted to know a lot about sex, and one of the questions was about homosexuality, and I said no because I was thinking, "Well maybe I'm going through a phase," you know. And then, "Are you proceeding to the United States of America with the intent of perpetrating any immoral sexual act?" It wasn't specified what.

HOWARD: That was on the application, or the person just asked you that?

ROGER: That was on the application form, yes. There were these long forms. It was really an amazing form. The Immigration and Naturalization Service is a very strange outfit because it's not looked at by the ordinary American voter; it's all done by executive order. And actually, the homosexuality thing was still on there when I was becoming a citizen, and I stayed off for a bit until it was removed under the Clinton administration.

But when I came to the US I was a little more liberated from other things, but it wasn't really until I got to the University of Wisconsin that I found more people, and then I would just get drunk and go to the bars, but this wasn't a satisfying thing, and it really took me entering the alcohol recovery program before I realized that, well, this really was me, but now what do I do about it? Well, I don't know that I want to date, because then I might get into a relationship and then I'm not accustomed to that. I mean I've lived on my own such a long time. Anybody else in the place is difficult. But I've become comfortable with the fact that I am gay, and I'm pretty well exclusively that. I'm not really towards the spectrum of being heterosexual.

But now a strange thing has happened. Since they removed my bladder they also removed the prostate, which, of course, interferes with a certain mechanism that you can understand about. But, it also seems to have taken away a lot of my libido. I mean, perhaps I'm concentrating maybe on the bad all the time, but I now find myself in the strange position of being a kind of sexless being in a rebirth which is very sexual. The human rebirth is controlled by sex to a large extent. I think that's why, when the Buddha is shown in the Wheel of Existence as being incarnated in the different realms of rebirth—he appears as a person giving food to the hungry ghosts, and playing music to the devas—he comes to the human realm as a monk, as if to say, "In order to progress in the human realm, you must work with your sexuality and find

out what is the most skillful way to use that power." The details then could take a long time to talk about, but I think it is quite important, and I am just beginning to realize this now, because at the moment I seem to be this sexless being in a sexed world. Who knows? If the bag thing is worked out, maybe I'll start getting interested again, but it's quite an interesting observation that I'm making now.

HOWARD: We are running up against the clock. We wanted to open up the sangha to questions of Roger. We only have about ten minutes, so let's go ahead and do that.

QUESTION: Hi, my question is, I'm a bit interested in what drew you to Buddhism, because in the 1960's I don't think there was that much going on in terms of Buddhism.

ROGER: Yes, well in a sense it's rather embarrassing. I was interested in what was going on with the world, and I found that something called religion might be the way to go, so I didn't have a bookshop in my village, but in those days Penguin Books would do what we call mail order over here, and I saved up my allowance until I would send off for these books, and I sent off for all the books they had in the different religions. And I read a book called *Buddhism* by an extraordinarily English person called Travers Christmas Humphreys Q.C. (Laughter) He became Mr. Buddhism in some ways; he was asked to be at the coronation of Elizabeth II as the representative of Buddhism. I felt I was remembering something. It's rather embarrassing to say that because Christmas Humphreys' book is a very bad introduction to Buddhism because it is rather Monist. What I may be remembering is something Taoist, actually. If I ever write my autobiography, it would have to start off this way, "'He hasn't got jaundice you know, Mrs. Corless,' the nurse said as she brought me into my mother. 'It is his natural color.'" I was extremely yellow, and through my early life, until puberty I was quite yellow, and I was called "Chink" by my compatriots, by my playmates. I was the recipient of a racial slur even though I wasn't of that race. And the people said, "Also, when you smile, you lose your eyes, you see, and you look Chinese." I've changed color; I recognized when I was about 8 or 9, "I'm changing color." They called me sallow, and then I went white again. I may have had a previous life as a Chinese. In fact, I went to a psychic once who said, "You were a Chinese sort of sage, and you came very quickly into this life, and then you didn't know what was happening," which was perfectly true. I said to my mother, "I'm Chinese," you know. (Laughter) And she said, "You're playing at being Chinese," and I said, "No, Mother, I'm not playing at being Chinese, I am Chinese." What a stupid woman that doesn't understand that! (Laughter)

So even today when my skin is Caucasian, I will have Chinese people who have just met me say, "Do you come from China? You look like you might have come from the northwest, from the Xinjiang Province." Well, not this life. So, I was remembering something, and that's what drew me into Buddhism, and of course, it took me a long time to unlearn what Christmas Humphreys had told me in that book. And so I would recommend you read my book, *The Vision of Buddhism*, which is the reversal of all of that.

HOWARD: So do you have a sense of a future life?

ROGER: Well, I like to joke that I'll come back as a Chinese lesbian. (Laughter) I am trying to write my articles and books now in a fairly comprehensible English so that that lady will be able to learn English and be able to understand what I'm trying to say. I would like to have at least one trip into the deva realm and have some R & R after all of this.

No, I am not quite sure what will happen. In any case, I feel equally attracted to the Christian and the Buddhist tradition. I also had a sense of remembering something when I went on my first trip to a Christian monastery—it was actually Church of England Benedictine—called Nashdom, which is "Our House." It was built for the Russians before there were all the troubles, because the English and Russian royal families were all together, and I felt that I'd come home also to the Benedictine tradition. So I feel very much at home in both the Buddhist and the Christian traditions. I remember once coming out of a 12-step meeting and someone said, "I hear you're Buddhist." This was in North Carolina, where Buddhism is unusual. And I said, "Yes, well, but I'm Christian too." She said, "Where will you go after you die?" Out of the blue the answer came: "That's not my responsibility." And I think that's true, that what I am to do now is to be some kind of host to these two traditions and then, I try—I don't always remember to do it because I'm sometimes too tired—but when I'm going to sleep I try to sort of let everything go, let my identity go, and prepare for death in that way. Well, I won't have any identity, and whether it's Christian or Buddhist I don't know, or some other mixture. It's not up to me to say what happens next.

HOWARD: You mentioned preparing for death. Is there a practice that you do that could be a resource for all of us as we weigh that?

ROGER: There are rather complicated practices, "death yogas" as the Tibetans call them, and one can look into those if one is interested, but I don't make it that complicated. Some years ago I was visiting the Bay Area—I wasn't living here then—and I realized during the night that I'd developed an inguinal hernia that stuck out much further than it should do. I'm subject to these—my father had been as well—and I realized that it could be very serious, because it had become actually incarcerated, and that was the next thing to become strangulated, and there was no one I could get a hold of. I was living at the Zen Center, and everyone was fast asleep, and I thought, well, I know there was an incident of a student at Duke who got this and he died overnight. He got this, and he said, "Oh, man, the pain!" But his roommate said, "Have another drink, dude," and in the morning he was dead and blue. And I thought, "This might be it." So then I thought, well now, I must prepare for death, but should I do Christian stuff, or should I do Buddhist stuff? And I thought, well, that wouldn't work, so I just let everything go. So what I try to do is I try to visualize all my possessions, and all my friends, and all my intellect too just simply dropping away, and then being open to whatever.

HOWARD: On behalf of the sangha I just want to express my appreciation, and certainly our appreciation, for you vulnerability and openness this day, and the love that we hold for you.

ROGER: Thank you very much. ■

GBF

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Annual GBF Hike to Chimney Rock

No kidding, has another year already gone by? Okay, guys, it's time once again for GBF's famous and spectacular spring wildflower hike/pot luck picnic at Chimney Rock in Point Reyes Park on Saturday, April 14. Chimney Rock is famous among Nature lovers for its incredible springtime displays of wildflowers. Drake's Bay on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other provide dramatic backgrounds. We might also visit the Pt. Reyes lighthouse. The hike is short (about a mile each way), but the drive up, while beautiful, isn't; be prepared for an all day excursion. This will be a potluck picnic so please bring a dish to share with others. We will be carpooling from the GBF Center (37 Bartlett St.) at 9:00 a.m. Bring warm clothing (it gets windy up there), a blanket, and sun block. Rain cancels. For more information, call Clint Seiter at (415) 386-3088.

GBF Members enjoy a picnic in Point Reyes Park.

UC Berkeley Botanical Garden Picnic Lunch and Garden Tour Saturday, May 5

Cinco de Mayo! What better time to visit the UC Botanical Garden with friends from GBF. A hosted lunch will be served at noon and at 1:30 PM we'll take a docent led tour that will last about an hour. And yes we will see many plants native to Mexico along with other exotics from around the world.

Garden entrance fee is $5.

For details on the garden, check the web site: http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu/

Pack some sunscreen and a jacket (in case it gets breezy). Meet at the garden entrance at 11: 45, or meet in front of the GBF center (37 Bartlett St.) at 10:30 AM and car pool over. Heavy rain cancels. For further information, call Clint Seiter at 415.386.3088 or Marvin Snow at 510.898.3229.

Calendar

Sunday Sittings

10:30 am to 12 noon

Every Sunday followed by a talk or discussion, at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street (near 21st St between Mission and Valencia).

MUNI: 14 Mission or 49 Van Ness-Mission, alight at 21st St, walk 1/2 block.

BART: 24th and Mission, walk 3 1/2 blocks. **PARKING:** on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

April 1 Tom Moon

Tom Moon is a psychotherapist in San Francisco. He works primarily with gay men, and specializes in the use of mindfulness as a tool for self-exploration. His spiritual home is Spirit Rock Meditation Center, where he is a student in the Dedicated Practitioner's Program, a two-year course of study whose goal is to make daily life into spiritual practice.

April 8 Robina Courtin

Ven. Robina Courtin was ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist nun at Kopan Monastery in 1978. She has worked full time since then for Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. She is now director of Liberation Prison Project, which supports the Buddhist practice of thousands of prisoners in the USA and Australia.

April 15 Anushka Fernandopulle

Anushka Fernandopulle has practiced dharma in the Theravada Buddhist tradition for over 15 years in meditation centers and monasteries in the USA, India, and Sri Lanka. Anushka is a longtime LGBT activist, has worked in HIV prevention and education, was the director of the Boston Gay and Lesbian Helpline, and was co-chair of the board of Trikone (South Asian queer group). Anushka currently works as an organizational development consultant, helping nonprofits function more effectively. Her work is informed by a B.A. in social anthropology/comparative religions from Harvard University and an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management. Anushka is currently in training as a dharma teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center/Insight Meditation Society and serves as vice-chair of the board for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

April 22 Bonnie Jonsson

Bonnie O'Brien Jonsson, MS, has led thirty-seven year-long "A Year To Live" groups since 1998 and leads Living & Dying Mindfully workshop/retreats and trainings nationally. She teaches meditation in prison and through East Bay Dharma in Berkeley, California, and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction through the University of California, San Francisco. Bonnie is the lead facilitator of the Kalyana Mitta (small groups of spiritual friends) network through Spirit Rock Meditation Center. She is currently writing a book that explores her relationship to death as a guide in living life and has been published in newspapers and *The Inquiring Mind*. She is a California board certified CEU provider for MFTs and LCSWs. Bonnie brings love and joy to this deepest of inquiries.

April 29 No meeting.

The SF Buddhist Center is hosting one of their visiting teachers and needs the center all day Sunday.

May 6 Jorge Ferrer

Jorge N. Ferrer, Ph.D., is core faculty in the East-West Psychology Program at California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco. He is the author of *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (SUNY Press, 2002) and coeditor of *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies* (SUNY Press, forthcoming). Formerly a member of the Planning Committee of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship's BASE (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement), Jorge teaches courses on transpersonal psychology, embodied spiritual inquiry, comparative mysticism, East-West studies, and spiritual perspectives on sexuality and relationships. He also facilitates workshops and intensive retreats on embodied spirituality and Holistic Sexuality both nationally and internationally.

He will speak on "Beyond Monogamy and Polyamory: Extending Sympathetic Joy (mudita) to Intimate Relationships"

May 13 Ji-Sing

Ji-Sing Norman Eng is the former facilitator of Q-Sangha at the Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco. His main spiritual teacher is Thich Nhat Hanh ("Thay"), and he was ordained by Thay into the "Order of Interbeing" (Unified Buddhist Church) in 2003 with the Dharma name of "True Wonderful Happiness."

May 20 Dharma Duo Sunday—
Joe Goode and Carl Wolf.

Sangha members Joe Goode and Carl Wolf will share their experiences on the path.

May 27 Discussion

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By the power and truth of this practice, may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow, may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is without sorrow, and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment or too much aversion, and live believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF Dedication of Merit