
.....connections.....

Number 9

Newsletter of the Regina Insight Meditation Community

Fall/Winter, 2006 - 2007

Interconnection and Service

Sharda Rogell

Meditation practice encourages us to wake up. And as we wake up, we naturally realize our interconnected nature – that we are not isolated individuals living separate lonely lives on this earth (even though it may feel that way at times), but rather that in our deepest nature we are the same. Early in my practice I read a teaching from the Vietnamese Zen teacher, Thich Nhat Hahn, that helped me understand this profound truth. In order to receive the transmission of his teaching, as you read, see if you can let the words penetrate through your whole being.

“If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow, and without trees we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either... If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the tree cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger's father and mother are in it

too...

You cannot point out one thing that is not here – time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper... as thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe.”

When I began my meditation practice many years ago, I was very lonely and sad. I felt lost and had no sense of direction in my life. I had a narrow view of the way things are. Shortly after I began my meditation practice, my mind and heart began to open, both to myself and to others, and my view widened. I understand now that this expansion, which I feel tangibly every day, arises from the letting go of fear that manifests as a limited and contracted view about myself and the world. As I have learned to trust my own precious inner resources that lie within my heart and being, my fear softens and I naturally experience more openness and connection with myself and the world around me.

As I open and feel less afraid, I am more able to reach out to others in a true and genuine way. This reaching out I call “generosity of spirit.” Sometimes we talk about “service” as an important value for a practitioner. But for me, the word can feel narrow and limited in its implication. Mother Theresa says, “In life, we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.” Opening to the way things are naturally brings about this movement of the heart, not out of an idea of how I am supposed to be as a good Buddhist, but because there is no other way to be. When my heart is open, I am in true contact with life around me. Then I am not moving out of an idea of being separate that manifests as my being defensive and fearful, but I am listening to a deeper feeling within, a feeling that naturally encourages connection with another, where I truly care about myself and others.

As I write this, it's the day before Christmas. My close friend is giving a Christmas dinner party tomorrow for 20 of our close friends. She looks forward to this day each year, offering this day to her friends, filling her home with lights and decorations and bringing out her mother's china and silver cutlery. But two days ago she came down with a bad cold. Now, she can't manage the party alone, so the only thing that I can do today is to find time to be with her and help her, not because I think I should, or it's the “right” thing to do, but because it's truly the only thing I can do. No reason.

Waking up means that the generosity of my spirit wakes up – whereby serving others is serving myself, and serving myself is serving others. No giver and no receiver. Doing small things with great love is great – kind and caring energy exchanged

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between two or more people because that is how an open heart moves.

Someone once asked a master, "What is an enlightened being like?" And he answered, "One who responds appropriately." Not because she thinks about it, but because she is in contact with the immediacy of the present situation. When Jesus saw someone who was cold, he offered him a coat.

Simple. Small things. This is where we start. We can call this a practice. But we can also pay attention as a way of being, and

listen deeply to the way our impulses want to move? With mindfulness and discriminating wisdom, we follow the impulses that move towards generosity and connection, and we restrain the ones that move towards more conflict and separation. And we do this because we know that everything is interconnected and all our actions matter. This is the profound teaching of the Buddha. And if we respond to this teaching, we respond because it touches the place where we are already awake to our own Buddha Nature and know the truth of interconnectedness.

Sharda's Retirement Fund – 2005 and 2006 Contributions

In our 10th anniversary year, we began to offer support to Sharda for her retirement as dharma teachers have no retirement support other than what they generate on their own. We recently (December 2006) sent her our contribution for 2005 as we have fallen behind.

The following is copied from a thank-you card which Sharda sent us after she received our 2005 contribution.

To the Regina Insight Meditation Community

*My heartfelt thanks go to each of you who has contributed to my financial support. Without people like yourselves, who care and understand how precious these teachings are, I may not be able to do what I so love to do best – be part of communities like yours. Thank you deeply for your kindness. With Appreciation,
Sharda*

If you feel moved to contribute to our soon-to-be-sent 2006 contribution to Sharda, please give your donation to Sandra Brandt before April 30th and inform her that it is for Sharda's Retirement Fund.

From Dana

The Joy of Service

In the early years of my dharma practice, I discovered the joy of service. When I began to practise in Thailand at Wat Suan Moakh in the mid 80s, I was deeply touched by the offering of the ten-day retreats which take place every month and are specifically for westerners. As a western student, I was welcomed, fed and participated in the retreat with no monetary request unless I wished to give *dana* at the end. My experience of such open-handed generosity inspired me to give easily so that whenever opportunities arose for me to support retreats, I accepted them. My first big step into service was at Gaia House in England where, for six months, I was one of three managers who ran the centre. In working at Gaia House and, later, at the Bodhgaya retreats in India, I started to experience the privilege of offering service in a dharma setting. Serving in this way allows me to have contact with teachers, to hear dharma talks, and to be part of a team that creates the retreat and this is very enriching for my practice. In fact, these benefits give me the understanding and skills to lead this community. For many years, because of all the blessings that come from doing leadership work in our community, service does not feel like hard work, nor does it feel like I do something special. For me, my heart moves naturally in response to what is needed. My love of the dharma has been, and continues to be, what inspires me to offer what I do.

In the West, we may have the idea that service is somehow a burden, a one-way offering that takes something away from our lives. My experience is, however, quite the opposite. Service

gives me a direct connection with the dharma community here and internationally. When I understand that my happiness is linked to the happiness and well-being of others, then naturally I am moved to do whatever it takes to care for others as well as myself.

Service is an expression of our interconnection.

If we look at our community, we see that it is as it is because of all the ways that each of us serves each other, even if we just attend the Wednesday Night Sitting Group. We can regard our participation through attending the group or through performing some other useful activity as just participation, or we can view it in a deeper way, seeing that it is part of a web of community. When we see it in this interconnected way, we find we can more easily offer our time, our energy, our understanding, our listening, and/or our expertise in some area because we know that what we are doing helps hold our community together. Sometimes we might feel overwhelmed by activities and demands and feel protective of our time and energy. When this happens we might forget that service can actually lighten our hearts, that it can be a cause for happiness and joy, and that it can create a strong sense of connection and purpose.

Think back to a time when you did something freely for our community – opened up on Wednesday night, for example, or led the group, or listened wholeheartedly to a sangha member.

What was your experience, and how did that impact your relationship with the community?

One reason service is such an important element of dharma practice is because of our tradition that the dharma teachings be freely offered. Service is not an expectation, but an opportunity to support ourselves and, at the very same time, others. These two, self and other, are intricately interwoven. I believe that when we forget that service benefits all of us, we tend to fall into a pattern of limited thinking whereby we feel that there is only so much time, so much happiness, so many resources and so on, to go around. Dharma practice invites us to find our own places of service, whether in our families, our communities or the RIMC.

Wild Beasts, Butterflies and Big Warm Hugs

Donna Burks

The reality of interconnectedness is fairly new to me. As a result of my practice many illusions have fallen away. In the past I believed that there was always something I alone could do in the face of any given situation that would save me. Interactions and relationships with other people were okay as long as things went smoothly. But if someone made me angry or hurt me – among various other assorted situations that felt too complicated or messy – I would simply cut them out of my life; or at the very least create a safe distance between us. The last thing I would ever consider doing was trying to work it out. The very thought of that scared the living daylight out of me.

But this new awareness changed everything. I could now clearly see how I was never really alone nor did I want to be. It emphasized the importance of wise speech and wise action and made me see, without a doubt, the importance of tolerance, patience and honesty in relationships. Finally, after all these years, I'd had an awakening! The intention was set to make a change. It felt so good – so right. I was sure that it would be almost effortless to put my plan into practice.

Then, almost immediately and quite unexpectedly, an incident occurred at one of our Wednesday night sittings. I became very angry with a friend of mine. Our conflict occurred only a moment before the meditation began. I was furious. Every fibre of my being was in a rage. I sat in my chair fuming. Stories ran through my mind like wild beasts through a jungle. *I hated her. I was leaving – right this minute. I would never come back. I would never speak to her again. I would not come to the New Year's gathering. How dare she boss me around!*

The physical sensations in my body were so vast and so fierce I don't know how my physical being contained them.

Miraculously I continued to sit. Every once in a while, a memory would flit through my muttering mind like a butterfly in sunlight; I remembered her joyous laugh, her love of poetry (especially mine), her generosity in taking me out to dinner for my birthday – *just last week*, her generosity in general. I could feel things getting complicated. If I acknowledged these "other" feelings I would be walking down a path that was still new and quite strange to me. *Wouldn't it be easier to just stick with what I know?*

Sometimes when I am involved in my duties of guiding the community, I feel tired, or the work feels weighty. And yet, I find that I still experience the joy of serving, the joy is still in my heart. In recent months, I have learned how to take much better care of myself and I now trust that when I do this, I am simultaneously taking care of the community. Such is the truth and beauty of interconnectedness.

I delight in the fact that we have a new volunteer co-ordinator, Carol Sexton, who has come forward with great enthusiasm to oversee and co-ordinate service in our community. I believe that this will strengthen RIMC as both new and old sangha members become more involved in offering their time and energy to the community. This is one powerful way to strengthen our connections and our understanding of interconnectedness.

After the sit and discussion she approached me in the kitchen. (Yes, I was *still* there.)

She "sort of" addressed the situation but mostly she was speaking to me as if we were still friends. My response was subdued. I felt rigid. I was still mad. She knew it and I knew she knew.

Finally it was time to leave. Whew! I was finally getting out of there. Now I could go home and stay there and never come back. As I was about to leave the room, she reached out to hug me. *What!* my mind screamed. *Oh no, anything but that!* Then she was hugging me. I was standing there stiff and angry but "kind of" hugging back – lightly.

By the time I got home I was thawing out. The tremendous warmth in that genuine and very beautiful hug sealed my fate. I knew we were still friends and that's the way I wanted it to be even though I was still a bit ticked off.

A couple of days later she called me. I was no longer angry. I'd had time to reflect and to see how valuable the experience been for me and how much growth had occurred. Now it was time to share my experience with her. Although I felt vulnerable, which always feels dangerous, I did. We had a wonderful conversation that was extremely valuable and very nurturing for our relationship.

And so, as a result of my awareness around interconnectedness and the consequences of wise or not-so-wise speech and action on my part and the part of others, which is clearly a result of my meditation practice and the dharma, I have been able to change a firmly ingrained pattern that has been limiting me for years. I see how my current understanding of the dharma serves to help me overcome my differences with others in a respectful way, empowering me to be more open, able and willing to, in return, serve the dharma and my fellow practitioners in an honest, joyful and cooperative way.

I thank everyone who is traveling this path with me. I also send warm wishes of gratitude to my friend, Maureen, who was patient, courageous and caring enough to hang in there with me through this incident – and who told me that I should write this story for the newsletter – *but not in a bossy way!* ☺

Written with metta and gratitude.

Spider, Lizard, Shadow, Sun and Me: Interconnectedness

Gail Tiefenbach

I was doing a walking meditation once. In one direction I walked toward a tree, in the other I walked toward a wall.

It was a sunny afternoon. As I faced the wall, the sun was behind me casting the shadow of my body along part of the wall. At one point, I spotted a little black spider dart into the shadow. Simultaneously, a small lizard I had my eye on flipped itself into action after the spider. The lizard stopped just outside the shadow in the bright sun.

There the three of us were. The lizard frozen, gazing at the spider, the spider frozen in the shadow zone and me also frozen, aware that if I moved the shadow would move, exposing the spider to sunlight.

I stood there for a while, pondering. I wondered about the situation. I could see how the scenario was interconnected – me, the spider, the lizard, the sun, the shadow. Who was going to make the first move? What would happen when any one of the factors changed? Maybe the sun's movement would play a part if we were to stand there long enough or maybe a gust of wind would blow or maybe another person would happen along or maybe anything.

I moved.

The shadow moved.

The sunlight hit the spider. The spider jumped for a crack in the wall. The lizard scrambled like lightning toward the spider.

I saw no more of the spider after that flurry of activity. Did it make it to the crack in the wall or was it lizard lunch? I'll never know.

That's a first-hand experience of interconnectedness for me, one that stands out in my mind.

It causes me to wonder about the unknown number of times that I might have been protected by someone or something's presence and didn't know it.

It makes me wonder about how many times I've been ready to take action but someone or something changed my course and I didn't know it.

It makes me wonder about the myriad ways the environment itself casts an elemental factor into my circumstances.

There seems no way out of being interconnected. It always is. But I don't normally reflect on that any more than the spider or the lizard knew it was the solidness of a human body casting a shadow – a shadow that would play so much into what unfolded.

Reflections on Interconnectedness and Service

Maureen McKenzie

It's New Year's Eve. I am connecting by phone and e-mail, experiencing an outpouring of gratitude and loving-kindness for all that is. As I call people from my past and present life, in love with the world and myself in it, I feel truly connected. This is the perfect example of being connected. I can write something to give to Chris for*connections*.....!

But there is a growing undercurrent of disbelief and distrust. Who was the person avoiding the phone for the past few days, unable to "feel" any love or gratitude, immersed in feelings of isolation, self-criticism, cynicism, and blame?

How can I hang on to the joyous, loving, connected feeling? Isn't that a requisite for interconnectedness? To develop this "authentic" me, the pleasant, good, happy me, I must need to connect better, meditate more, take better care of my self, and so on. Suddenly I'm aware that there's a lot of static on the screen of my consciousness! My conditioning and habits devastate my "divine abodes"! And as my mind spins, I notice that this expectation, or more accurately, this craving for a perpetual feeling of connectedness, has become an obstacle to my happiness.

The good news is that this doubt is a stimulus for investigation. I see my notions, my solid ideas, of who I am and how life should be. I see that I am responding to my conditioning and habit, both of which are human conditions that the Buddha often addressed. I see too, how these expectations often lead indirectly to blame and BIG doubt, which in turn invite anger, frustration, hatred. No space for the experience of love and connection. These insights are the direct results of my connection with the RIMC Sanghathe Wednesday Night

Sitting Group, dharma discussion groups, retreats, teachers and a community of fellow travelers. Through them, I have begun to understand the depth of my suffering and its cause, and to have hope and faith that there can be an end to this suffering.

In the Monday night dharma discussion group, we looked at what the Buddha had to say about our mistaken identification with the five skandhas or aggregates (form, feeling tone, perception, mental formations and consciousness). Seeing them as solid and permanent, and being attached to them, "we are doomed to suffer, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving." Through mindfulness practice and the interaction with others, I can sometimes see clearly the impact of this false identification, of how it informs my moment-to-moment experience, and I feel expansion and gratitude as I relax my grip.

Through the practice of mindfulness and by developing patience, I am learning to tolerate the unpleasant reactions and responses that arise. So while I am experiencing intolerance, judgment, disagreement, I can also notice the soft undercurrent of compassion for our human situation, knowing that my highest and sincere intention is that there be an end to my suffering and that of all beings. I notice what makes me feel constricted and disconnected from this intention, how my suffering snowballs, what benefits come from mindfulness practice in speech, conduct, and company. I witness, noticing the rise and fall of all things.

Can I gently and firmly and with curiosity, bring myself to investigate my experience without blame or shame? Can I nurture seeds of kindness and compassion for myself and for others, even when fear and anger arise? These are my intentions.

And being in community provides the opportunity to practise this, to notice the rise and fall, the in and out, the up and down, noticing that interconnectedness is much more than my fickle feelings tell me, but rather an ocean that ebbs and flows and constantly changes, that buoys us up again and again when we have been swamped. I marvel at the ever-increasing depth of understanding and compassion arising through this process. It is a great antidote to isolation, that mistaken idea (those darn skandhas!) that we are separate. I've noticed that generosity,

kindness and selflessness are three of the gentle by-products of this process. They are the roots of service.

Post script

I find myself very convincing – an ominous sign! Nonetheless, this reflection on the fruits of practice, of RIMC, and of Dana's guidance and compassion has been most worthwhile. Thank you, Chris, for your encouragement and for your commitment to keeping us "connected." And humble thanks to all our teachers and fellow travelers.

From Sub-atomic Particles to Barre, Massachusetts: A Brief Look at Interconnectedness and Service

Chris Gilboy

As I reflect on the theme for this newsletter, I am first drawn to investigate my interconnectedness with form and time, particularly at an experiential level.

I begin by trying to sense the interconnection between all the cells that make up my body. For whatever mysterious reason, these cells have gathered together in such a way that they form a multicellular entity that moves, breathes, touches, sees, hears, tastes, smells, and thinks. The cells themselves are, so I am told by those who research such matters, each made up of smaller units such as walls, nucleoli, chromosomes, ribosomes and so on, which are, in turn, made up of molecules, atoms and sub-atomic particles. Through interconnections between the smallest of particles, successively larger building blocks are formed culminating in the immense: solar systems, galaxies and universes.

What is my felt-sense of being made up of objects so much smaller than I, whilst simultaneously being part of something so colossal?

Mostly humility and awe, tinged strongly with helplessness. I know my being to be all-important to every living cell of which I am made, but I feel utterly insignificant in the vastness by which I am surrounded. My sense of importance is effectively balanced by my sense of unimportance. This leaves me not in a vacuum, but with a profound appreciation for the gifts of, first, experiencing the interdependence between what is tiny and what is huge, second, existence, and, third, the impossibility of my ever being alone and independent of everything or anything else. Sometimes it seems that this appreciation is so deep that my whole body tingles, almost as if every cell is vibrating – dancing perhaps – in unison, and my heart sings

What of time? How am I connected to time?

Each day, I see the sun traverse the sky and watch day turn into night, then night into day. Each year, I feel the transformation of midsummer heat into mid-winter cold back into midsummer heat. As these changes take place, I witness aging and sickness as they affect me and all around me. I become ever more familiar with death, and know it will sooner or later become an intimate part of my own experience – no longer a concept, or a thing that happens to others but not to me. I compare my lifespan to the age of planet Earth as being something equivalent to the time it takes me to blink my eye in comparison to my lifespan. I am again humbled and in awe of my apparent insignificance, now as evident in relation to time as, earlier, it was in relation to space. At some level within, I am deeply disturbed by such evidence of impermanence as it makes itself ceaselessly apparent within my awareness. Yet that within me that has experienced the pure

peace of non-separation, non-identity and timelessness serves to greatly reduce the impact that my feelings of deep disturbance might otherwise have on my relationship to our conditioned existence wherein everything depends on everything else. When I remember, I rest in this moment and only this moment. My doubt and fear are greatly allayed, making way for strengthened faith and energy. In addition, my sense of non-self seems to be getting more deeply ingrained – I can no longer think I am independent of anything around me. Rather, I feel my intimate involvement with form, time, and the infinity of conditions which exist within this relative reality.

Where does service start to fit into this interconnectedness between form and form, and between form and time?

As I contemplate the wonder of my human life, I realize that each of my cells on its own is unable to do a fraction of what the being that results from their interconnectedness can achieve in terms of feeding and protecting those cells. Moreover, through their interconnected functioning, they also have the capacity to care for assemblies of other cells that take form as fellow humans, as other sentient beings, or as non-sentient beings, thus constituting service in its most elementary form. From here, it seems to be a small step to start to get some feel for the complexities of human society and of how we are able to help one another and everything around us – or, given different circumstances in which greed, hatred and delusion are able to flourish, to take advantage of one another and everything around us. This capacity of us humans and of our constituent cells to care for or to damage ourselves and others is, to me, a source of constant amazement and endless concern. I find that trying to cultivate my ability to look after myself and others by practising as best I can the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Four Brahmaviharas and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment takes on new meaning and urgency.

How will this actually change the ways in which I live my life?

Mmmm – the answer unfolds in its own mysterious way! I trust that whatever changes take place are and will be firmly based more upon wisdom and compassion than upon greed, hatred and delusion. For 2007, it means, amongst a host of other things, that I am intending to sit the IMS three-month retreat in Barre, Massachusetts – a possibility totally outside my awareness fifteen years ago, before I came into contact with the Buddhadharma. I hope that this and other forms of meditative practice will somehow help me to be increasingly useful to others, perhaps in ways that are as far beyond my present scope of awareness as sitting the three-month retreat once was.

VIPASSANA EVENTS

THE SASKATCHEWAN SCENE, 2006

January 13 and 14	“Out with the Old, In with the New” Insight Meditation Retreat, non-residential, with Sharda Rogell at the Seniors' Education Centre, Regina; \$85 plus <i>dana</i> ; to register, please call Brian Brunskill at 586-0937
January 27	Pot-Luck Breakfast and Community Gathering, 9 a.m. to noon, at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina (please confirm interest in attending as early as possible: Chris Gilboy at 522-0616)
February 25	Day of Mindfulness, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina
March 16-18	Non-residential Insight Meditation Retreat with Robert Beatty at Queen's House of Retreats, Saskatoon; \$115 plus <i>dana</i> ; to register, please call Doris Larson at 242-5004
March 24	Community Gathering and Pot-Luck Brunch, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at 672 Robinson Street, Regina (please confirm interest in attending as early as possible: Chris Gilboy at 522-0616)
March 25	Day of Mindfulness, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina
April 29	Day of Mindfulness, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina
May 11 to 18	Residential Insight Meditation Retreat with Sharda Rogell , assisted by Dana Anjali , at Wood Acres Retreat Centre, Moose Jaw; \$575 (\$540 before April 21 st) plus <i>dana</i> ; to register, please call Maureen McKenzie at 352-1750
May 26	Community Gathering and Pot-Luck Brunch, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina (please confirm interest in attending as early as possible: Chris Gilboy at 522-0616)
June 15 to 17	Metta (lovingkindness) non-residential retreat with Dana Anjali at Queen's House, Saskatoon; \$TBA plus <i>dana</i> .
June 24	Day of Mindfulness, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina
July 27 to 29	Insight Meditation Retreat, non residential, with Howard Cohn at the Seniors' Education Centre, Regina; \$TBA plus <i>dana</i> ; to register, please call Deb Froh at 771-2980
August 26	Day of Mindfulness, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina
August 31 to September 3	Residential Insight Meditation Retreat, with Joanne Broatch at St Peter's Abbey, Muenster; \$TBA plus <i>dana</i> ; to register, please call Doris Larson at 242-5004
September 15 and 16	Insight Meditation Retreat, non-residential, with Sharda Rogell at the Seniors' Education Centre, Regina; \$TBA plus <i>dana</i> ; to register, please call Brian Brunskill at 586-0937
September 22	Community Gathering and Pot-Luck Brunch, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina (please confirm interest in attending as early as possible: Chris Gilboy at 522-0616)
October 28	Day of Mindfulness, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina
November 9 to 12	Residential Insight Meditation Retreat with Howard Cohn at Wood Acres Retreat Centre, Moose Jaw; \$TBA plus <i>dana</i> ; to register, please call Gail Tiefenbach at 585-2237; E-mail: gtief@sasktel.net
November 24	Community Gathering and Pot-Luck Brunch, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at 2672 Robinson Street

About Regina Insight Meditation Community's Teachers



Sharda Rogell is the guiding teacher for the Regina Insight Meditation Community. She has been practising and teaching Buddhist insight meditation for over 30 years and teaches worldwide. Sharda has been influenced by many Buddhist traditions, as well as by her root teacher, H.W.L. Poonja, during her many trips to India. Sharda is also a student of A.H. Almaas in the Diamond Heart School. She is currently on the teacher Council at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in northern California near her home.



Howard Cohn has practised meditation since 1972 and has led retreats since 1985. He leads on-going classes in San Francisco, California, near his home. He has studied and practised with many Asian and western teachers of several Buddhist traditions including Theravada, Zen, Tibetan, and Advaita Vedanta, and incorporates a non-dual perspective in his teaching.



Dana Anjali has been practising Insight Meditation since 1988. In 1993, she founded the Regina Insight Meditation Community where she is the Dharma Guide and is mentored by her teacher, Sharda Rogell. Since 2003, after completing her training at Spirit Rock, Dana has been the Community Dharma Leader. She teaches meditation classes, weekend non-residential retreats and leads the Wednesday Night Sitting Group in Regina as well as supporting people in their ongoing meditation practice. For the past four years, Dana has also been teaching Healing through Meditation classes.

Retreats: require pre-registration. If you are on our regular mailing list (please contact us if you wish to be placed on it), details of residential retreats will be mailed two to three months before the event. **Please ask retreat contact persons about scholarships** if your financial situation deters you from attending.

Days of Mindfulness: We try to ensure that the opportunity for more extended practice is available to the community by setting aside the fourth Sunday of each month in which there is no scheduled retreat. Half-day (9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.) or full-day (9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) sessions made up of alternating periods of sitting and walking meditation with a taped dharma talk during the afternoon; 2672 Robinson Street. Information is distributed by e-mail, or please contact Maureen (306-352-1750) or Chris (306-522-0616).

Meditation Evenings and Public Talks: Please look for posters at traditional locations announcing public talks by visiting teachers when they are in Regina or Saskatoon.

Weekly Sitting Group: Regina

Wednesdays throughout the year, 7:30 to 9:15 p.m.; 2672 Robinson Street; led by Dana Anjali or an RIMC seasoned practitioner; 45-minute sitting, about 50 minutes for discussion, and 10 minutes for dedication of merit and closing announcements

Weekly Sitting Group: Saskatoon

Sundays throughout the year, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.; Yoga Central, 211B – 3521 8th Street, Eastwood Centre; 45-minute sitting, 45-minute discussion

ALL EVENTS are fragrance free – please avoid wearing perfumes, perfumed skin-care products, clothing washed in fragranced detergents, or anything else which can cause distress to those who are chemically sensitive.

Contacts for Regina Insight Meditation Community information: Maureen (306-352-1750) or Chris (306-522-0616).

Contact for Saskatoon Insight Meditation Group events: Doris (306-242-5004).

IMPORTANT: Because future issues ofconnections..... will be viewable online at www.reginainsight.ca, please let us know if you wish to continue receiving paper copies. Contact Chris at 522-0616 or 2672 Robinson Street, Regina, Saskatchewan S4T 2R4.

THE CALGARY SCENE, 2007

February 25

“The Gift of Gratitude,” one-day Vipassana retreat, with **Kusla (Judy Pequegnat-Jess)**; 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; \$25 + *dana*; for information, contact Judy at 403-241-2219

July 27-August 5

Ten-day residential retreat with **Guy Armstrong** and **Sally Clough** in Water Valley, Alberta; for information, contact Barbara at four_dharma@hotmail.com or at 403-243-9697

Sitting Groups:

Calgary Vipassana Sangha meets 2nd Thursday of every month from September to May to meditate and study the teachings of the Buddha. This is for experienced meditators. Suggested donation \$5. For further information on retreats or meditation classes, call Judy at 403-241-2219 or visit us at www.yogameditationcentercalgary.ca

Calgary Theravadin Meditation Society, meets 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.; open to all meditators with experience in Vipassana meditation; cost: *dana*; contact Anne Mahoney at mahoneycoleman@shaw.ca or 403-270-8450

Metta Study Group, meets 2nd and 4th Monday of every month, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.; cost: *dana*; contact Anne Mahoney (403-270-8450)

Community of Mindful Living, Bow Valley Sangha, Canmore, meets every Tuesday, 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.; occasional days of mindfulness and non-residential retreats; visitors and beginners welcome; contact Mary Dumka at ma48an49@telus.net or 403-678-2034

THE WINNIPEG SCENE, 2007

Sitting Groups:

Winnipeg Vipassana Meditation Group, meets Sundays at 9:30 a.m. at Yoga North, 109 Pulford Street (basement of Augustine Church) for sitting (about 30 minutes) and discussion (30 to 45 minutes); contact Nelle Oosterom (204) 453-3637

The Practice of *Dana*

In the spirit of the 2500 year-old tradition of the Buddha's teachings being priceless and freely offered to everyone who wishes to hear them, our programs are open to all, regardless of their ability to pay. Registration fees for retreats and classes cover administrative costs only.

Dana is the Pali term for “*spontaneous generosity of the heart.*” Everyone wishing to express appreciation for hearing the teachings can voluntarily offer donations for the support of the teachers at retreats, public talks, sittings or any other occasion.

RIMC Finances, 2005, 2006

Chris Gilboy

Our main financial (and logistical) activity continues to be the retreats that we organize. As in 2005, we held four retreats – three residential (Jaya’s and Gemma’s in May, Norman’s and Molly’s in August and Howie’s in November) and one non-residential (Dana’s in January). They had a total financial turnover of nearly \$27,000, and were attended by 136 retreatants. When we run retreats, the manager bases the registration fee on a break-even attendance of 22 or 23 full-paying retreatants for residential, 26 for non-residential, though these numbers may vary depending on how many people the manager thinks might participate. Although retreats, as with RIMC finances in general, are never run to make a profit – in 2006 they brought in a surplus of \$3,622 despite the fact that one of them was \$625 below break-even.

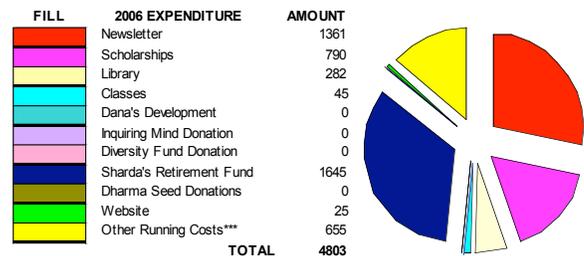
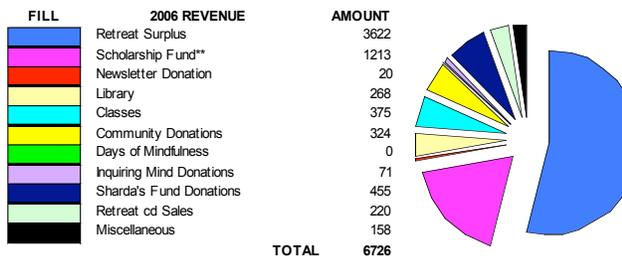
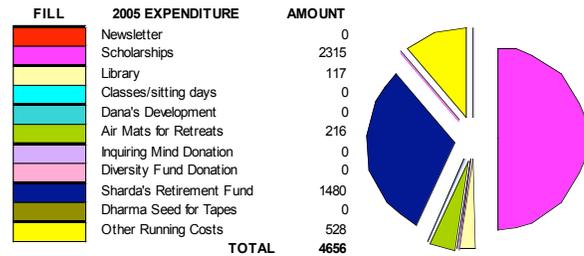
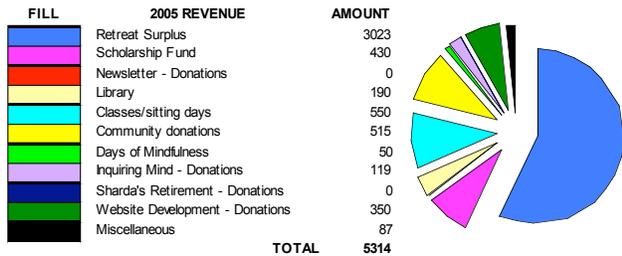
The revenue for 2006 shows the retreat surplus forming the major source of RIMC income. It was followed by income dedicated to the scholarship fund, the majority of which (\$528) was raised at our garage sale in June and through the purchase of \$265-worth of “Gift of the Dharma” certificates which sangha members bought to give to friends. As for expenditures, our 2005 contribution (\$1645) to Sharda’s retirement fund, and the printing and mailing of our last, 12-pages-long issue of ...connections.... (\$1361) were RIMC’s two major outlays. They were followed by \$790 worth of scholarships (substantially less than the \$2315

given in 2005) and \$655 for our general running costs. The latter included spending on such items as several lunches during which options over RIMC’s organizational status (e.g., charitable, non-profit) were discussed with Pauline Duncan, bedding for teachers’ use at residential retreats, a microphone for recording dharma talks at retreats, flowers for Sharda when she was in hospital in early 2006, and materials used in making zabutans for teachers.

The 2006 surplus appears to be substantial, but we are still playing catch-up and still have to send Sharda our 2006 retirement-fund donation, and make our other regular donations (Inquiring Mind, the Spirit Rock Diversity Fund and Dharma Seed) for 2005 and 2006. For the past several years, Dana has not used any funds to help her meet some of her “dharma development” needs, a situation that will change in 2007 as she’ll be accompanying Sharda to New Zealand to sit a couple of retreats. Also, website development will be a significant cost.

RIMC revenue and expenditure, once the donations back-log has been cleared up, are well balanced. We continue to receive income through retreat surpluses, but must not count on this as a regular source as retreats should just break even. Last summer’s garage sale, besides being great fun, raised enough for the scholarship fund for us to plan having another this year (June 9th).

Name of Retreat	Teacher(s)	Dates(2006)	Number of Retreatants	Income	Expenses	Balance
1. Cultivating an Open Heart	Dana Anjali	February 11 and 12	48	1,840	666	1,174
2. Deep Rest	Jaya Ashmore and Gemma Polo Pujol	May 18 to 22	30	9,390	8,970	420
3. Celebrating Buddha, Dharma and Sangha	Norman Feldman and Molly Swan	August 4 to 8	22	6,380	7,005	-625
4. The Healing Power of Mindfulness	Howie Cohn	November 10 to 13	36	9,343	6,691	2,652
TOTAL			136	26,953	23,331	3,622



Tables and pie charts showing comparisons of RIMC revenues and expenses in 2005 and 2006

(** “Gift of the Dharma” certificates: \$265; garage sale: \$528; WNSG sales table: \$173; Ann Leger Anderson memorial: \$140; general donations: \$107

*** Includes \$90 business lunches; \$48 telephone charges; \$44 zabutans; \$71 flowers; \$65 cds; \$57 microphone; \$72 teacher’s bed linens; \$58 office items etc.)

Open Letter to All RIMC Sangha Members

Dana Anjali

January 22nd, 2007

As you all know from a letter that I sent out a month or so ago, I have been reflecting on changing the way I hold my role in the community. Since last November, I have been considering going off Sangha Council as a way of trying to focus my energy and attention on teaching and guiding the community rather than being as heavily involved in its everyday running as I am now. During Sharda's recent visit, however, it became clear to her and me that this would not be an effective way to address the issues that we are facing as a Council.

After discussion with Sharda around my role and the situation in the Sangha Council, Sharda facilitated a meeting with the Council at which I presented a proposal which had come out of some exploration with Sharda before the meeting. To me, this proposal felt much clearer and in alignment with where I, the Sangha Council and the community at large are at this time. What I proposed was that we dissolve the Council in its present form as it no longer seems to be the most effective way of working. Instead, I will continue to lead the community as I have, primarily involving myself in teaching and guiding the community; also, whenever needed, I will consult with community members when they bring particular issues or concerns to my attention. In place of the Sangha Council, we will set up a Working Group made up of about four or five individuals who are willing to take on the responsibility for co-ordinating the day-to-day running of our community. After I had finished outlining this proposal, everyone at our meeting with Sharda voiced his or her opinions about what they had just heard. Much to Sharda's and my surprise, there was unanimous approval for this restructure, with Council members expressing considerable relief in being able to let go of the original proposal that Council continue without me. In view of this, therefore, we decided to go ahead with this change in structure.

Those who will form the Working Group will need to be people in the community who have a strong dharma practice and who already have an active role in supporting the community. It's likely that, at least initially, they are or have been involved with Council service. At our Council meeting this coming weekend, we will begin to fine-tune how this Working Group will be set up, and who will be serving on it.

Though we are now dissolving the Sangha Council, I feel that it is important to emphasize how valuable its work has been both for us as individuals and for the sangha. I have witnessed that, both within and outside the meetings, our process has been a very rich and fruitful learning experience whereby all of us who have served on Council have endeavoured to bring our practice into our ways of communicating and decision-making. I also feel that, without this phase in our history, there would not have been the same opportunity for Council members and our support team to be exposed to some the whys and wherefores of decision making in a dharma community. This is a great strengthening factor in our sangha. Because of these benefits, I hold the work of the Sangha Council and its supporters as an important phase in the development of RIMC. I acknowledge and thank all of you who have served in the past and who are presently serving for the time, effort, wisdom and compassion that you have generously offered to our community. Each of you has played a large part in the unfolding of RIMC and in bringing about the health and strength that the community now experiences.

Another change is with regard to the Wednesday Night Sitting Group. For the past few years, although I know that the sitting group is very supportive and important to participants, I have been feeling more and more limited in my teaching scope by the group's drop-in nature. I find that, when I try to have some consistency from one week to the next, it is not really possible because two-thirds of the group naturally changes. This is, of course, to be expected in a drop-in group. Since the beginning of our community, the drop-in nature of the group has been considered very important as it allows anyone at any time to attend with "no strings attached." I want to add here that I am very much aware that some people attend Wednesday evening on a very regular basis. I have very much appreciated their commitment as they have created a sense of steadiness in the ever-changing group and have been a great support for me. My intention is to offer most of my teachings to the community in ways other than through the open sitting group.

As most of you know, with the financial support (*dana*) that I currently receive from the community, I can only offer one evening each week to teach for RIMC in addition to the time I ongoingly spend taking care of many other community-related matters. On another three evenings, I teach my Healing Through Meditation Classes which generates most of my income at present. Also, we have reached a place in the development of our community where a number of our senior practitioners have occasionally been leading the Wednesday Group. These practitioners have indicated that they are willing to take on more of this responsibility, which provides a way for them to enrich and nourish their own practice and also benefits the community as a whole.

Over the past few years, I have noticed that some of our senior members have lessened their attendance of the Wednesday Night Sitting Group. I have a sense that this change may actually bring them back to this group which really is the heart of RIMC.

In view of these various circumstances, the Council – along with Sharda – decided that sangha members who have been authorized by Dana and Sharda will generally lead the Wednesday Night Sitting Group on a rotating basis. I will, however, continue to lead the Wednesday Group from time to time as I know that, over the years, I have developed a relationship with many of you. This change will allow for "seasoned" sangha members to enrich their practice through sharing their understanding of the dharma with the group. On another weekday evening, I will offer classes for people both within and outside the community. This will allow me to teach class members who make a commitment to attend the whole course – a way of teaching that I have long wanted to introduce as it provides the opportunity for us to go deeper into dharma themes than we can in the Wednesday Night Sitting Group, where I have felt so limited by its drop-in nature. Making this change has been something that I have long thought about and that, more recently, the Council has been considering, so we have not made the decision lightly. For me, leading the Wednesday Group has been a wonderful experience, but it is now time in my own development and in the development of the sangha's more senior practitioners to create a different form. I realize that, by making this change, I may have less contact with you if the form of a committed class does not fit your circumstances. If that is the case, I will be available and happy to see people on a *dana* basis should you like guidance with your practice.

Many of you know that I will be away for two months on a sabbatical from January 28th to April 1st. This trip was largely inspired by the opportunity for me to be with Sharda in New Zealand where, in March, she will be teaching a nine-day retreat and a weekend retreat. There, I will be making connections with another dharma community to which Sharda is strongly affiliated. I know some members of the community there from past times spent in India and at Gaia House. Having this opportunity both to sit and to share time with Sharda will greatly nourish my personal practice in a way that, in recent years, I have rarely been able to do.

I will lead the Wednesday Group on January 24th and feel it is important to create space then for anyone who is part of RIMC, and particularly those who regularly attend the Wednesday Group, to talk about this change as it will have an impact on all of us. I feel very positive about what is happening, but am aware that change is not always welcome nor easy. I hope that we can process our feelings skillfully as we move through these times.

When I return in early April, we will be starting afresh with the new structure for the governance of our community.

Warm Wishes,

Dana

Bits and Pieces: Some News of the Sangha

Chris Gilboy

2007 will be, as 2006 was, a busy year for RIMC as we continue trying to strengthen as best we can our support for the practice of Vipassana meditation in Regina and the surrounding area. We do this through offering retreats, Wednesday Night sittings, days of mindfulness, discussion groups, and other events and facilities.

One of the most recent offerings is our website, which is now live! If you have not yet visited it, and are interested in seeing how we are informing web surfers and other internet visitors about our community, our address is www.reginainsight.ca. The site has been a long time in the making, and we hope that the wait has been worthwhile. As one of the people involved in the final decision-making stages, I found it difficult to accommodate and truly honour the diverse views and opinions regarding colour, feeling tone (is it welcoming, confusing, helpful and so on?), content and a host of other details that were invited and offered. Changes to the original were made in response to the feedback, so what you see at reginainsight.ca is far from being one person's handiwork. I think it appropriate, however, to acknowledge the efforts of four people – Russ Portigal of Saxon Rio Saxon Design Inc., our web designer; Sharda for her enthusiastic interest, clarity of vision and decisiveness as we approached the final stretch; Susan Neden who was instrumental in getting the process off to a heartfelt start and in providing insightful advice as those important end-decisions were being made; and Dana, who kept the project moving forward whilst lovingly writing up much of the content.

For the first time since leading her first retreat in Saskatchewan in 1994, Sharda was unable to come here to teach. Her January retreat had to be cancelled because she was ill (but, fortunately, completely recovered her good health), and was on sabbatical later in the year. A wonderful consequence of there being substantial gaps in our retreat schedule was that we were able to fill those gaps by introducing our sangha to four new teachers (Jaya Ashmore, Gemma Polo Pujol, Norman Feldman and Molly Swan) who all provided us with new ways to enrich our practice and with insightful teachings to deepen our understanding of the dharma. We are truly grateful to each of them for making the time and effort to come to Saskatchewan, and hope opportunities will arise for them to return and give us further guidance.

Sharda's long absence from Regina ended this past January when she taught a wonderful non-residential weekend retreat, *Out with the Old, In with the New*, to 40 participants. Sharda found the temperature contrast between California and Saskatchewan a memorable experience – one that she thought she might talk about from time to time after returning home to Fairfax! Happily, we'll be benefiting again from her presence amongst us in May and again in September.

In 2007, we're planning to have six Days of Mindfulness – considerably more than we had last year. They offer us a rare and valuable opportunity to spend a half or a full day in silent meditation.

Over the past few months, we have also held our first three RIMC bimonthly social gatherings. The outcome of our "Mindfulness of Community" process that began more than two years ago, the gatherings comprise a pot-luck meal, which started by being breakfast but will change to brunch for our next meeting on March 24th, and a two-hour meeting that focuses on issues of general concern. At the first of the meetings, the 15 or so sangha members present decided, amongst other things, that:

- we would continue holding these gatherings every **fourth Saturday** of every **second month**;
- in general, two facilitators would be chosen (from amongst everyone present) to lead the next meeting; *and*
- the topic (one only) for the next meeting would be chosen by the group.

The theme for the following two meetings was *dana*, and for the upcoming meeting is "*Changes in Our Community*."

As Dana mentioned in her Open Letter, Sangha Council has dissolved after serving RIMC for about eight years. In the past year, Cherie Westmoreland and Shannon Corkery retired from Council, as did Yvette Young (one of our two *Recorders*) whereas Brian Brunskill, Liz Gavin and Gail Tiefenbach joined it. Deep gratitude is extended to all of them, to our other Council Members (Pat Cavanaugh, Susan Wiebe, Jill Forrester, Maureen McKenzie and Dana) and to our support persons (Gladys Behnsen, *Chair*; Sandra Brandt, *Treasurer*; and Linea Noels, *Recorder*) for all the heartfelt care, attention, wisdom and energy they put into guiding RIMC. What we are now as a community is largely a beautiful result of their interconnected service.

For some (currently including Brian, Maureen, Susan and Chris supported by Sandra as Treasurer, Gail as Recorder – with Linea as back-up when needed – and Carol Sexton as Volunteer Co-ordinator), the service continues through the Working Group. All RIMC members are invited to contact any Working Group member if they have concerns to voice or recommendations to offer – we will do our utmost to address whatever is brought to our attention in a way consistent with the dharma.

Another major change now in effect is the facilitation of the Wednesday Night Sitting Group, which may now be led on a rotating basis by any amongst: Kinda Kealy, Susan Wiebe, Jill Forrester, Laura Bourassa, Susan Neden, Cherie Westmoreland, Pat Cavanaugh, Gail Tiefenbach, Chris Gilboy, and Maureen McKenzie. Dana will still lead whenever she can, but a main

reason for this change is to free Dana to teach courses to dedicated participants. The first few Wednesday sittings appear to have gone really well as some of our more seasoned (using Dana's word) practitioners share their understanding of, and experience in, the dharma. The doubts initially held by a few regular Wednesday meditators are, I am told, melting away – to the extent that, at least for some, they are being replaced by vibrant enthusiasm. This surely bodes well for the future.

Laura and Kelly Bourassa are back with us for a few more weeks before they return to Tanzania, where they'll be based for another couple of years or more. For the present, it is lovely to have them sitting with us now and again on Wednesdays, with Laura leading on occasion.

We miss several sangha members who have left Regina for other parts of Canada. Amongst them are:

A Last Farewell to Two Sangha Members

Rest in natural great peace
This exhausted mind
Beaten helpless by karma and neurotic thought,
Like the relentless fury of the pounding waves
In the infinite ocean of samsara.

Nyoshul Khen Rimpoche



Mary Cronin (by Dana Anjali)

Many of you who have sat retreats over the past three years will remember Mary Cronin who sat with us often. Mary died last March after living with cancer for six years. I came to know Mary through my Healing Through Meditation classes. As she discovered the power of the practice of mindfulness in her life, she wanted to delve deeper into the practice and teachings, and so began to attend retreats as often as her health allowed her. For me, Mary was a very profound teacher as well as a dear friend, showing me her capacity to face what was happening to her body as the cancer progressed. Mary was always very clear that she was not dying of cancer, but instead was living with cancer. She refused to be defined by this condition as though it was all she was. I remember often being amazed at her capacity to allow herself to feel the grief, the fear and all the other emotions and mind states that naturally came when she received difficult news. As she did that, however, she came to a place of steadiness and developed an ability somehow to embrace her reality with strength, heartfulness and tremendous humour.

In looking back at her last year or so, it amazed me how she still engaged in social justice projects to which she was deeply committed – the Early Learning Centre, for instance, and completing the book *My Heart Could Not Speak the Truth* that she co-edited with James McNinch. This book is a compilation of people's personal perspectives of their experience of being gay, lesbian or bisexual during their primary and secondary education. She also was very involved with supporting First Nations child education projects. Even though she was not well, Mary felt it was very important to bring the issue of *dana* to the forefront of our community. One of the ways that she did this was by writing an article forconnections..... in the last issue (#8). Her commitment to all of her projects was unwavering, yet she gradually had to let go of being able to continue much of the work she was doing.

Shannon Corkery, who is now living and studying in Halifax, Nova Scotia; for the three years or so prior to her leaving, Sangha Council had benefited from her youthful vitality, wisdom and dedication, as had those occasional Wednesday Night Sittings that she had willingly and capably facilitated; *and*

Josephine Savarese, who is an assistant professor at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick, has been practising with us since our first retreat, and has also facilitated a few Wednesday Night Sittings, sharing with us her wisdom and sparkling wit.

Dana has just spent a month in Bali, which is, for her, an island paradise. Her time there has been re-energizing for her and utterly amazing in all sorts of wonderful ways that I hope she will share with us upon her return. She is now in New Zealand, where she will be traveling and sitting retreats with Sharda.

Mary inspired not only me but many of us in the sangha as she often was very open about her experience. She gave us the gift of really being able, with great honesty and clarity, to embrace life and to stand firm amidst the realities of sickness and death.

Over this past year I have very much missed Mary, and often wish that she could have lived longer. Yet I know that Mary understood the Buddha's teachings pointing us to a deeper reality than life and death. In the same vein, I also understand that truly she has gone nowhere.

At the sitting group the Wednesday after Mary's death, there was a special gathering to celebrate Mary that her daughter, Clarisse, was able to attend. Unfortunately, I could not be there as I was away at the time. From what I heard it was a beautiful occasion in which sangha members were able to share their experiences of Mary and her passing. She is missed by many of us who were touched by the beauty and strength of her spirit.

Ann Leger-Anderson (by Chris Gilboy)

I first met Ann Leger-Anderson when I became a parishioner of St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral in the late 1980s. I was always struck by her shy reserve and her ability to ask rare but penetrating questions. She lived on Leopold Crescent, just round the corner from where we have our Wednesday Night Sitting Group, so I often saw her walking in the neighbourhood – always alone. I knew she was a professor at the University of Regina, but little else about what she did or what was important to her.

Though Ann and I rarely spoke to each other socially, there was undoubtedly a strong bond based on – for me – great respect touched with curiosity. "I wonder if she is lonely?" I often asked myself when I drove past Ann as she strode along the roadside. It was a question that I never actually asked her, and so will never know the answer. She seemed utterly self-sufficient.

For many years including her last Yuletide, we exchanged Christmas cards. I went to a couple of Christmas parties at her

house, and she came to several of our Hogmanay parties before we ceased having them.

When I stopped attending St Paul's, I did not see Ann for a few years – except when she was out walking. One day, to my great surprise, she came to a non-residential retreat and then to another and then to an occasional Wednesday Night Sitting. She still asked the occasional searching question of whoever was teaching the retreat. And she did not join in with any RIMC socializing. Then, in November 2005, she came to the residential retreat with Howie Cohn! The dharma seemed to be becoming an increasingly important part of Ann's life experience. I was glad she was part of our sangha – our former St. Paul's connection, though rarely acknowledged, was important. We were keeping each other company on the same spiritual journey.

I was deeply saddened when I learned she had cancer. I was never aware of how seriously ill she was until Dana called me to ask if I

would move some garbage bags for Ann from her back door to the dumpster in her back lane. Dana had grown to know Ann through her Healing Through Meditation classes. A few days later, Ann collapsed and was admitted into the Intensive Care Unit at the Pasqua Hospital. Dana and I visited her several times before she left ICU for a regular ward. I visited once more. Through her time in hospital, several other sangha members also lovingly spent time with Ann, who was evidently deeply appreciative of such bonds of friendship. Then, suddenly, she died.

I miss seeing your lone figure in my neighbourhood. I miss sitting retreats with you. I appreciated your strong presence. I am grateful that we walked our spiritual paths alongside each other for a while. I hope you have found the great and abiding peace of ultimate togetherness. May you, who so deeply touched my heart, be free from all suffering, dear stranger, dear friend.

Connect–ed

I feel great warmth toward you, the readers, as I near the end of compiling Newsletter #9. I think the warmth emanates from my deep wish that not only will you enjoy reading the newsletter, but that your practice will somehow benefit – perhaps from reading of an insight or experience that clarifies some aspect of your dharma understanding

I am immensely grateful to all who have contributed to this issue. I loved receiving and reading the examples of *interconnectedness and service*, the theme of this issue, that have been offered to us all. They make my work as editor wonderfully worthwhile.

Issue #10 of*connections*.....will be circulated about this time next year. If you wish to receive a printed copy, it is essential that you please let me know by calling me at 306-522-0616 or by writing to me at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina, SK S4T 2R4. Now that we have a website, most of you will be able to read it there, and can choose to print it if you wish to have a hard copy. The theme for the next newsletter is creativity in a dharma context. The deadline for contributions, which should be sent to cgilboy@ir.gov.sk.ca, is 31st December, 2007. Enjoy your writing and/or whatever other ways you have of expressing your creativity!
Chris Gilboy

Regina Insight Meditation Community

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