

# Sae Taw Win II News

Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Foundation 8769 Bower St., Sebastopol, CA 95472 [www.saetawwin2.org](http://www.saetawwin2.org)

## From Dr. Thynn's Desk

Winter 2008

It has already been ten years since we established this center. One wonders how time has passed so imperceptibly! The evolution of the Center is very much on a parallel with the evolution of the founder herself, her family, the teaching programs and the community. Obviously, I have aged another ten years, with more health problems cropping up; garnered more experience of teaching Americans; my husband, Dr. San Lin, has morphed into my spiritual partner; our children have learned to be in community in spite of having their own lives; our teaching programs have made quantum leaps through well-designed, science-based curriculum and high-tech savvy; and the teachers-in-training are progressing well. Students may come and go, but there exists a constant and committed group of senior as well as more recent students who have made the Center their spiritual home. As such, overall I feel great fortunes have befallen us and we are so blessed.

2007 was especially challenging for me because of my son's and my own health issues, but it was because of our small and committed community that we were able to overcome these financial challenges in a way that is truly remarkable. Our overall deficit in 2006 was in the vicinity of \$15,000. In 2007 we reduced the deficit to around \$5,000. It just goes to show the fantastic energy and deep commitment of our local and long-distance community who made sure the Center thrives and continues to spread the Dhamma in the West. I am deeply and profoundly touched by your trust in those of us who are running the Center: the Board, our office manager Roger, our volunteers, and myself.

My sabbatical will begin just around the time that this newsletter goes to press: I will be taking my son Tet on a healing journey to Burma. We hope to be back sometime in April. Meanwhile, the Dhamma classes will continue under the care of Carol Meredith and Roger Burns. The senior class of seasoned practitioners will take it upon themselves to read and prac-



*Dr. Thynn visiting with participants in the Buddhist Bicycle Pilgrimage in September '07.*

tice and hold classes together in my absence. These are, in fact, the marks of a maturing Dhamma community, which is very gratifying for me. For about eight years I did not leave the Center to visit Burma, as the community was too young and still forming. Now I feel confident enough to leave for a long sabbatical and allow my students and aspiring teachers to find their own ground. To be honest, it does give me a good feeling of contentment and gratification. I can safely say it has been a road well trodden.

In September, we will be celebrating Sae Taw Win II's 10th anniversary occasion with some fanfare, I am hoping.

## *A tribute to my first teachers* - The late Sayadaws U Eindasara and U Awthada

By Dr. Thynn Thynn

In this issue I'd like to honor my first set of teachers, from whom I imbibed not only the Satipatthana or Daily Life Mindfulness Practice (DLMP), but also the distinctive manner of teaching DLMP. And most important of all, I learned how to be in the world, to live fearlessly, to love fearlessly; in other words, to be utterly human yet guided by the wisdom that emerges from this practice.

It was this fearlessness that helped me to embark on my marriage thirty years ago, live a fully engaged family life, move to the U.S., and take on the risk of starting a center in California. This was because my teachers trained us not to retreat from the world, but instead to learn to be in the world yet not be sucked into its chaos and vagaries.

The path that they showed us was so freeing that it was not difficult to embrace it – to go, as they say, “where angels fear to tread” – to innovate, to create, to be spontaneous, to experience the joy of life, and to laugh freely at one's own foibles and folly.

Sayadaw U Eindasara lived in the middle of Rangoon in a nondescript monastery, very quietly, without amassing followers; he taught only those who sought him out. He was a poet of profound depths. Sayadaw U Awthada lived a large part of his life as a homeless teaching monk until his later years. The former was a wonderful poet and teacher, with a patient and unassuming wisdom. His teachings were simple yet very penetrating, especially when he dispensed one-liners for us to contemplate as kammattana, similar to working with a koan in the Zen tradition; and he did this without our knowing it. Sayadaw U Awthada had a delightful, quick, Zen-like wit, always pushing us beyond our habitual

kamma and conditioning. They were an awesome pair.

These teachers were far ahead of their times in their openness to all possibilities, in their liberal thinking and freedom from rigidity and orthodoxy. Their teachings and practice method was simple, direct, and free of attachment to form. They were able to transcend convention yet live within the confines of conventions as Theravadan monastics in a way that showed us that one does not need to be either a slave to convention nor reject it. In other words, they showed us how to actually live the middle way of the transcendence of both extremes.

The most remarkable lesson I learned from them was how to differentiate between respect for the Sayadaws' wisdom as teachers and emotional dependence on them as their student. In American terms, they refused to Allow us to be “codependent.” Long before I came across that word in the U.S., we as their students had learned not to hang our emotional hats on them or anyone else, but to trust our own innate intelligence and wisdom.

I was single and 33 years old when I met and studied with them, for a period of about one year; in this short time, their teachings made me feel well equipped and

prepared to face whatever came my way in life. That turned out to be a very challenging three decades of the householder's life, including devastating health problems, the work of child-rearing, moving from country to country, and finally creating a Dhamma center in California.

The Sayadaws are no more in this world, but their legacy lives on in the Daily Life Mindfulness Practice, in our little Dhamma community, and in my students in the West.



*Daily Life Practice Sayadaw U Eindasara*

## Student Voices from Sae Taw Win II

### Practice in Daily Life

By Bob Miller

The Daily Life Mindfulness Practice is much more powerful and more sustainable than any practice I've learned before. I found that out at the five day intensive workshop at Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Center, taught by Dr Thynn and her assistant teachers Carol Meredith and Jane Sipe. And moreover, this practice is not as difficult as many other meditation practices, and which have much less benefit.

At the workshop, rather than dry lectures, admonishments, and dictates, our class was led through lectures, hands-on training exercises, and practical applications that allowed us to directly experience the essential concepts of the practice of mindfulness in daily life and how to develop equanimity and wisdom. True to the psychological principle of "elaborative cognitive processing" as a way of more deeply grasping concepts, we were encouraged to

write about our experiences and realizations at the beginning and end of each day's class. These writing sessions turned out to be enormously helpful in the process of internalizing and more deeply understanding the teachings and experiences.

As a result, I found myself able to separate my emotional reactions of aversion and grasping from the actual happenings of the present moment. In the workshop, I learned through the hands-on training given in class to experiencing the practice in the task periods. I came to realize how I characteristically had let my immediate and often misleading emotional reactions to people's actions affect how I perceived and reacted to them. And I learned — dramatically — how the practice of equanimity helps me to transcend my value judgements and attachments to

them. I found I can love other people more completely and authentically regardless of their actions, and that brings me a feeling of confidence, peace, and security I've rarely felt before. And the best thing is that even now, a month after the class, these understandings and skills are still available. Do they take intentional and effortful practice? Absolutely. Am I perfect at it? Absolutely not, and I don't have to be. Does the availability of ongoing lessons on the internet make the practice easier? Absolutely. Are relationships getting better, and is life getting easier and more peaceful? Absolutely. Do I recommend you take this workshop, and any others offered at Sae Taw Win II? The word "Absolutely" is not strong enough!!

### Empowerment in Daily Life Practice

By Melissa Titone

Mindfulness practice has brought me a sense of peace because it has made me feel empowered in areas of my life that used to frustrate me. Whenever I am in a situation in which I could blame someone else or a circumstance for my unhappiness, if I am mindful I can bring it back under my control by focusing on myself: How am I causing my own suffering here? Oh, I am clinging... ah, peace. Oh, it is greed... ah, peace. Oh, I am delusional... ah, peace. Identifying what I am doing usually causes the distressing emotion to evaporate instantly.

Knowing that my suffering is all in my head and therefore under

my control helps immensely in dealing with people and situations. I have spent most of my life blaming others and being a victim. I am finally seeing how helpless that makes me, and how useless a practice it is. That alone is reason enough for me to make this a lifelong practice; for, of course, I must learn these lessons over and over again to reprogram myself.

Adding more gratitude, loving-kindness, and compassion to my

life has helped change my perspective and given me patience during trying times. It still takes a lot of effort to remember to do it, but the more I practice, the easier it becomes. I feel like a happier, calmer person since I began mindfulness practice a year and a half ago. I also feel like I know myself a lot better, and am more accepting of the parts of me that I used to reject as flaws. Not judging feels so much nicer! Yay!

### Walking With Alfi

By Patricia T. Kelly

I was walking my dog Alfi near the school around the corner when, all of a sudden, I felt suspended, diffuse, light, and no longer "I." That is, "I" seemed to be one with all. That's the best I can do using words. After a time, I was again walking with Alfi with my feet on the ground and the body back to its usual state. It seems that I was covering ground without being aware of walking or of my surroundings as usually perceived. I was left with a taste of the infinite that has stayed with me and, to use a friend's terms, softened me.

## Mindfulness experiences during the November 2007 Workshop for New & Beginning Students at Sae Taw Win II

By Brent D. Scheihagen

I was sitting outside on a lawn chair, where the trees part way to give a view of the town of Graton down below, when I had a moment of realization. It was during our break on the second day of the November workshop at Sae Taw Win II, and on this particular day, the theme of our practice was watching our LIKES and DISLIKES – which, to someone uninitiated in the teachings of the Buddha, might seem like a fairly simple task. It in fact turned out to be something so much harder to grasp and yet so simple; but in all the time since I'd begun delving into Buddhism, this particular truth had gone completely undiscovered. The notes in my journal explain my discovery well enough:

*In the process of observing likes and dislikes, I've noticed something about the phenomena that seems to be true. LIKING is LIKING is LIKING – regardless of the object which stimulates the liking, "LIKE" in-of-itself is the same in every case. Every time I observe it, it just disappears entirely and it's "sameness," if you will, becomes more apparent.*

What I finally saw is the mental formation of "LIKING" as a singular and distinct object. In that moment, I observed the mental formation in isolation – an experience that, even during the 10-day Vipassana retreats that I've previously attended, had never happened. I figure that the conditions nec-

essary for this particular realization to occur during this workshop were made possible by the methods applied at STW II under the guidance of Dr. Thynn and her capable instructors and moderators. In particular, during the course of the workshop, is the use of exercises that provide for experiential learning.

The major difference at STW II as opposed to the silent retreats I've done is that first an understanding of the theory is taught through a discourse, then through a hands-on exercise -- which is then applied during a task like cooking, gardening, etc. -- and then there is a period of reporting our practice to the teachers, and a group discussion. Every person has the opportunity to clarify as necessary anything they might not have understood; and in many cases, the opportunity to hear other students' questions further clarified my own understanding. By moving from discourse, to exercise, to integration into daily-life situations, to discussion and back again, there was a buildup of applied knowledge through continuous experiential learning that in my case led to a realization that for me feels like quite a milestone indeed. It didn't end there, however; I didn't observe "LIKE" and just call it a day, but became encouraged by my discovery to peer deeper into my mind as I sat on that lawn chair.

In watching and observing, I became further aware that the "sameness"



*Dr. Thynn giving the keynote address at the Vesak (Buddha's Birthday) Celebration in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

that I'd initially used to describe the mental formation of "LIKE" was a bit of a misnomer. Each time I looked, the formation began to disappear instantly, which gave rise to the realization of the formation's immaterial this, I continued to watch, and for a moment felt as if I sensed the surface level of my consciousness as if it were a tangible thing, and below the surface I could sense the potential for like and dislike continuing to arise. As I put it in my journal, *"The push and pull or potential of like and dislike seems to exist perpetually under the surface of the consciousness, where GREED, ILL-WILL, and DELUSION still remain. I feel pride in what I feel to be a true realization. LIKING arises; I watch it and it fades. Pride comes from somewhere much deeper."*

This is just one more step on the path. I still have a long way to go, but now I no longer feel any reason to get discouraged because progress has been made. With continued practice in daily life, my ability to understand my own nature and the causes and conditions that are unique to me will allow me to more clearly make choices that will enable me not only to lead the life that I hope to, but to be more prepared to face the challenges that I will meet along the way. And when the time comes, I will dig a little deeper, pull out the roots that cause my suffering and, with whatever time is left to me, show others how to do the same.



*Dr. Thynn with students who attended our weekend workshop in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

## Benefits of Daily Life Mindfulness Practice (Insight Meditation)

By Patricia T. Kelly

I have been studying Theravada Buddhism and practicing Daily Life Mindfulness Practice with Dr. Thynn Thynn at Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Center for several years, have participated in her retreats, and have taken her Introduction to Abhidhamma course. Most recently, I have been following online her senior class on the integration of Abhidhamma teachings in everyday life. Before this, I studied with a Zen teacher and did some sitting meditation for a number of years.

I have experienced many benefits and extra-ordinary experiences in day to day life since beginning my studies with Dr. Thynn. For example: I had a kind of breakthrough on New Year's Eve, 2006, which I was planning to spend with an old and dear friend. At the last minute, my friend said that she wanted her son to join us for dinner (and I thought into the New Year). I was sorely disappointed to think that the quiet, reflective time we had planned was not to be. My friend clearly wanted her son to be with her just then, so I said nothing.

Her son came earlier than expected, was extremely talkative and uncomfortable for me to be with. I found myself having very negative thoughts about his efforts to please, which were wearing. So, I absented myself and focused on my negativity. When it waned, I re-joined them. I then began to see my son's friend in a different light, without judgments. I could accept him for who he is at this time, without being put off by his mannerisms, nervousness and (to me) insincerity. We wound up having a most lovely time dinner, all three of us together. I could see that he is young and insecure, that he very much wants his mother's and my approval. By the end of dinner, I began to feel great warmth for him.

After dinner my friend drove her son home, so she and I were able to have our quiet, contemplative New



*Our new entrance parapet designed and constructed by Dr. San Lin.*

Year's Eve together as we so often do, and stayed up way past midnight (we usually are lucky to last until 11). Now, when I have a negative feeling about a person, I often remember my son's friend and am able to be more loving and accepting. This experience was very powerful. I felt that the negative thoughts I had initially were so uncomfortable, I needed to find a way out of them for my own sake, not just those of the people around me.

I do feel that my mind is becoming more and more still. And yet, there are times when I do become exasperated, such as when my old dog kept me up for hours the other night. Recently I have had several rapture experiences, similar to those I've had while sitting, but these later ones seem to have lasted longer and were stronger. However, the duration is hard to tell. These experiences start with a feeling of lightness in the body and breath. In fact, the breath and body seem to disappear. When I was walking, for example, somehow the body moved along, but didn't seem to touch the ground for a bit and then wasn't there at all. Yet somehow, at the

end of it, there I was still walking along. I experienced a great sense of euphoria and spaciousness, peace and yet rapture at the same time. These experiences were surprising and fun. I could definitely get attached to them! I'm glad to have the benefits of Dr. Thynn's teachings so I can appreciate that while these experiences are most pleasurable, they are temporary, and not the aim or end point of our practice.

I have been sitting in silent meditation off and on even after beginning my studies with Dr. Thynn. However, my daily life mindfulness practice did not really take off until I realized that I was not fully putting all of my effort into this practice, but was hanging back a bit, not fully trusting in the daily life practice, and using sitting meditation as a crutch. When I began to fully engage in the daily life practice, and stopped doing a bit of both, the daily life approach crystallized, mindfulness became stronger, and I was able to understand in a new way, which enabled me to practice more effectively in my day to day life.



*Dr. Thynn with Venerable Ajahn Amaro, co-abbot of Abhayagiri Monastery, addressing cyclists visiting Sae Taw Win II for the 2007 Buddhist Bicycle Pilgrimage.*



*Over 90 bicyclists take a well deserved break during their 137 mile, two day pilgrimage from Spirit Rock Meditation Center to Abhayagiri Monastery.*

## **- 2008 Calendar of Events -**

**April 18**

Benefit Concert - Sebastopol Comm. Hall, 7p - 12a

**May 24**

Buddha's Birthday Celebration, 3-6 p.m.

**July 26 - 30**

5-day Workshop for New and Beginning students

**September 13**

10th Anniversary Celebration, 3-6 p.m.

**September 20**

Graton Day, 3-6 p.m.

**September 27**

Visit by Buddhist Bicycle Pilgrimage, 11-2 p.m.

**October 18**

Festival of Lights, 6-7 p.m.

**November 15 - 17**

Intermediate and Senior Students Intensive

**December 31**

New Year's Eve Gathering & Gift Exchange, 6-9 p.m.

Schedule subject to change.

Please visit our website for updated schedule: [www.saetawwin2.org](http://www.saetawwin2.org)



*(Above) Dr. Thynn teaching a Five-day Abhidhamma course in Nevada City, California.*

*(Right) Rick Heizman playing Burmese Harp during our December Fundraising Luncheon where funds were raised for the Foundation for the People of Burma and the Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Foundation.*



## MANY THANKS to these friends who kindly supported Sae Taw Win II with donations in 2007.

Suzanne Adams	Rick Heizman	Susan Miller	Mischa Steinbruck and Darlene Taylor
Heidi Adler	Aung Myint and Than Than Hla	Kim Monser	Elizabeth Stinson
Steven Aung	Stanley Hoffman	Daw Tin Myint	Corina Stoicescu
Win Aung	Andrew Holroyd-Sills	Dr Ohn and Tessie Myint	Susan Sugarman
Constance Ayers	Kyaw Aung and Yin Yin Htay	Elizabeth Myint	Leon Sun
Cynthia Bailey	U Myat and Hnin Maung Htoo	Richard and Aye San Myint	Janejira Sutanonpaiboon
Michelle Bailey	U Kan Htun and Daw Thein Kywe	Thain Myint	Sisi Takaki
Alysson Baker	Daw Aye Kyi Kyi and Ma Thet Su Lynn Htut	Michael Nehm	Brian and Christine Tan
Elizabeth Barnes	Deborah Huth	Itay Neta	Victor Tan
Robert Becker	Patricia Indries	Carol Newhouse	William Hoke Yin and Stella Su Khin Tan
Ron and Jacqui Beiden	Angela Irving	Khin M. Nyo	Pam Taylor
William Bennington	Shirley Iwane	Than Oo	U Aung Thein and Daw Than Than Aye
Mary Bernardi	Ariel Janda	Elsa Paju	Dr. Tun Thein and Sindy Ngoot Wah Wong
Jack and Judith Bleicher	Marie Johantgen	Michael Paris	Mya Thoug and Ohnmar Kyaw
Anna Bonas	Susan Jones	Stephen Parsons	Thanda and Betty Tin
Zeke and Wayne Britton	David J. Judd	Lynn Payton	Dr. Maung Tin Wa, PhD and Dr. Anna M.
Eileen Burmmal	Susan Kayser	Denny Petersen	Spielvogel, MD
Tom and Elinor Burnside	Michelle Keip	Anne Peterson	Adam and Melissa Titone
Annette Casar	Patricia Kelly	Christy Pichel	Crissie Trigger
Thida Chan	U Soe Khaw	Teri Pohl	Jane Tan Tun
Dr. Stanley Chang and Thin Kay Khaing	Meredith Kieschnick	Tapanee Poon	Nancy Unger and Bob Oshetsky
Shao-ying Cheng	Patti Kirby	Tun Kyaw Nyein and Susanne Prager-Nyein	Jan Vannatta
Debbie Churco	Adelle Kohl	Charles Pullen and Christine Miller	Anje Waters
Richard and Wendy Chu	Doret Kollerer	G. N. Radhakrishnan	John Weber
Bill and Linda Clopton	Carol Meredith and Luis Kong	Rob and Ingrid Reade	Sandi West
Mikel Cook	M S Koprak	D'Arcy Reynolds	Jonathan Westphal
Al and Sherri Couture	Mg Han Soe and Phyu Phyu Kyaw	Harry Reynolds	Jim Wheaton
Jim and Nina Cunningham	John Handley and Dr. Khin Khin Kyawt	Ishwara Riffard	Melissa White
Vicky Darnell	Than Than Kyi	Doyle Rood D.C.	Tim Wickens
Laura Deane	Daw Ohn Kyi and Family	Shannon Rose	Mahendra and Chandrani Wijayasinghe
Laura DeGasparis	Barbara and Bill Larsen	Sandra Rosso	Barbara Wilt
Jane DeMartini	Kelvin and Kin Mu Law	Catherine Sagan	M. Shein Win and Ven. Gunasari
Louis Distasio	Cathy Lawrence	U Khin San and Daw Saw Win Tint	Tin and Maureen Win
Barbara Downie	Dr. Khin Swe Lay	Nora San Felipe	U Win and Thida Win
Arlene Dumas and Frank Muckerman	Samuel Leader and Barbara Gray	Dr. Wah Wah Saw and Daw Thin Thin Saw	Peter Winn
Karrin Erecius	Richard Levin	Tom Schamp	Irene Wisniewski
Madelaine Fahrwald	Joyce Lindgren	Susan Schroeder	Kenneth Shain and Cynthia Sein Wong
Jane Frances	Sherrie Lovler	Wendy Schwartz	Tony Wong
Judith Goodman Fuchs	Zaw Han and Aung Nyunt Lwin	Barbara Shapiro	Ann Wright-Parsons
Dorothy Giller	Jana Lynn	Erin Sheffield	Nellie Lee and Sam Tin Soe Wu
Debra Goldman	Sein Aung Lynn	Spencer Sherman	Annabelle Zinser
Susan Goldstein	Diane C Chayra Macias	Barbara and Jim Shubin	Bay Area Burmese Youth
Cristina Goulart	Elisabeth Mallary	Alexander and Emily Sia	Far West Trading Co
Krista Gruhl	Armando Martinez	Jane Sipe	Good Search
Daniel Gurney	Nyi Nyi Aung Maung and Myint Kyu	Doug Snow	Harmonic Systems, Inc.
Aung Gyi-Sama	Suzanne Maxson	Penny Snyder	IMRTF
Megan Hagler	Jackie McAuliffe	Kyaw Kyaw Soe	Mountain Stream Meditation Center
Louise Hallberg	Macy McFarland	Mi-Khin K. Soe	Tractors Mobile
Barbara Harris	Mary Ann Meredith	Stephen and Susan Solinsky	
Jain Hein	Robert P. Miller	Amalan Stanley	...and those who chose to give anonymously

### Dear Students and Friends of Sae Taw Win II:

Many blessings to each and every one of you! We thank you for your support of the center. Your support makes Daily Life Mindfulness Practice instruction available so more people can learn how to end suffering.

We have offered many classes and workshops in 2007. This was accomplished through countless hours of student volunteering, generous food donations and the continued financial support from our students and friends like you. These contributions were crucial in planning and carrying out the purpose of the Center -- offering Dr. Thynn's teachings on Buddhism and her unique way of practicing mindfulness in daily life to as many people as possible. The results of which you can read in the Student Voices section in this newsletter.

Please help us to continue this work. Your support is especially needed during this time of Dr. Thynn's absence.

To mail in a donation, please fill out the donation card on the back of this newsletter and send it with your check in the envelope provided. Please remember that these donations are tax-deductible. You can also use your credit card, if you'd prefer, for either a one-time donation or to schedule a monthly automatic debit. Just click the button below to go to the donation page on our website.

Metta, The Fundraising Committee

[I'd like to Donate Now](#)



Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Foundation  
8769 Bower St.  
Sebastopol, CA 95472  
(707) 824-4456  
www.saetawwin2.org

## Pledge for 2008 *Sae Taw Win II* - Dana

*As a tangible commitment to the continuation of Dr. Thynn's work & the services of our Dhamma Center,  
I pledge the following tax-deductible contribution for 2008:*

I am enclosing my donation for  1,000  500  100  50  Other Amt: \_\_\_\_\_.

I prefer to pledge a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_ and I plan to make my payments on the following basis:  
\_\_\_\_ monthly    \_\_\_\_ quarterly    \_\_\_\_ semi-annually    \_\_\_\_ annually

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (to be used by STW II only)

Sae Taw Win II, 8769 Bower Street Sebastopol, CA 95472 - Tel: (707) 824-4456 - [www.saetawwin2.org](http://www.saetawwin2.org)

**Sae Taw Win II is a 501 (c)(3) charitable tax-exempt organization**  
*Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent provided by law.*