

Sae Taw Win II News

Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Center 8769 Bower St., Sebastopol, CA 95472 www.saetawwin2.org/~stw2

From Dr. Thynn's Desk

Fall 2004

After a few years of birthing pains and the struggles of creating a Buddhist center with empty hands, I am happy that I can now take some deep breaths and settle into a routine and rhythm and look back with gladness and gratitude. Meeting the challenges of teaching Americans and young Burmese and building a bicultural community I find are most stimulating and rewarding, though not without some inevitable pitfalls in learning to bridge the great cultural divide. But I'm very glad I have the opportunity to do what I am doing, especially as a migrant woman teacher from the Far East.

Classes Our regular classes are on a set course now, beginning with 18 weeks of lectures on Fundamentals of Buddhism, with practice sessions of small groups of 12-16 students wherein students are taught basic skills of mindfulness in daily life. This is followed by several weeks of practice of mindfulness on the Five Aggregates (Five Khandas). Senior students then move on to studying the Noble Eightfold Path in depth and learn to use the path as the guide to their practice. The knowledge and practice of the Noble Eightfold Path then leads on to integrating the elements in the conflict resolution workshop (Bringing Harmony to Conflicts seminars) which is taught several times a year. This is a very crucial element in our community-building process.

So in all, a student who comes to study here is exposed to a well-rounded training program of theory and practice from the Theravada tradition, as well as an ongoing, intensifying, in-depth training. The cur-

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rent senior classes have been going on for between two and three years already. There are also plans for resident students and teacher trainees to study the Suttas regularly. A ten-day Abhidhamma course is offered once a year and integrated into the weekly classes and retreat teachings wherever possible to help students understand their practice.

Retreats The highlight of each year has been the "On the Cushion – Off the Cushion" seven-day retreat at the center. This is the culmination of four years' ef-



fort between Grahame White, Lynne Bousfield (both from the Mahasi tradition), and myself in our collaboration to link silent sitting with daily life mindfulness practices. I think we now have it down to almost an art, as we see retreatants making amazingly good progress. We have taught in Hawaii and also in Nevada City, and have seen similar results. I was happy also to have John Travis, a Spirit Rock teacher, join our collaboration in April of this year, and comment that the daily life practice is "the Missing Link" for the silent sitting practice to continue into daily life.

This past August 3-5, we had the first Abhidhamma camp for 14 students from the Buddhism Club of City College of San Francisco. It was the most lively and upbeat group of young Burmese, and it was a delight teaching them the basics of Buddhism and Abhidhamma. Daily discussion sessions were most engaging.

I am also very happy to see that gender bias is not a major issue in our community, and that both men and women are earnestly studying Buddhism and practicing mindfulness in their lives. Overall, it is like a dream come true. Three bows to each and every person who helped to make this happen.

Thank You, STW Volunteers

All of us at Sae Taw Win II are extremely grateful for the support we've received during this last season's events and workshops. We had many helpers who: set up the large tents, tables, and chairs; prepared and/or donated food; shopped; preserved the events in beautiful photos; housed out-of-town students; provided flowers; and so much more. We had a successful time at Graton Day this summer thanks to volunteer help, and so are able to have a presence in the local community, which is an important part of being a Dhamma Center. With our small staff here, we most literally could not do it without you.



Kitchen practice, "On the Cushion – Off the Cushion" retreat

July "On the Cushion – Off the Cushion Retreat" Elinor Burnside

This year's OTC/OTC retreat greatly enhanced my 18-month-old daily life practice in many unexpected ways. The pleasure of being there belies the serious work that was done. The environment throughout was caring, supportive and informal, from Dr. Thynn's stimulating lectures on Buddhist philosophy and psychology and Grahame White and Lynne Bousfield's deeply nuanced introductions to the sitting and walking meditations, to individual meetings with the teachers, challenging daily-life activities and social lunches and, at each day's end, the deeply introspective reporting sessions wherein students of all levels could learn from each other under the guidance of skilled teachers. The joy was palpable, the exhaustion at the end of each day complete.

This evolving process, pioneered by Dr. Thynn, Grahame, and Lynne, helps sitters bridge the gap between sitting and daily life while allowing those in either practice to benefit immediately from the other. Despite limited sitting practice, I experienced a major breakthrough in dealing with a deep-seated fear, first noticing the onset of a cycle of conditioning and then forcing myself to return to, and stay with, the fear until it fell away. I credit the previous day's session with Grahame wherein the ways to catch the beginning of a cycle and prevent its full blossoming had been explored.

As usual I had ample opportunities to watch both my judgments and my speech: for example, on arriving home the fifth night I found the garden gates open and a deer munching away inside. A moment's sharp anger, then a dropping away at the realization that the person responsible would be doubly upset: that the veggies had been eaten and that he'd been responsible. I also knew the deer was only doing what deer do. Still, I couldn't believe the anger was really gone, but after looking for anger or clinging and finding only sadness I could then approach my husband Tom without blame. His response confirmed that my speech had indeed been skillful and an angry confrontation avoided.

Early in the retreat I had trouble staying in the moment. However, during the seven days of intensive mindfulness my practice built up gradually to a final breakthrough into right speech and conduct when I averted a potentially disastrous encounter by invoking a concept from Dr. Thynn's previous day's session: that habitual kamma can be stopped in its tracks by just one nanosecond of recognition. It worked twice in one 30-second interaction, first to suppress a startled Stop! Where do you think you're going with that? and give me time to just call out a name. And then, with two startled people not knowing what to do next, the space opened for right speech and conduct to emerge.

I am grateful for this opportunity to expand my practice, and to everyone whose good work, good spirit, and good humor contributed to the many special qualities of the retreat.

Buddhist Club Abhidhamma Camp

Contributed by several Club retreatants

“The experience of the Abhidhamma camp gave me a better understanding of how the mind and mental factors work through our senses. I also learned how to incorporate the Daily Life Meditation Practice in my everyday life,” says one of our students from the Abhidhamma Retreat. Another found that the Dhamma discussions in the retreat gave him a broader knowledge of other world religions besides Buddhism, like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

One student expressed that the retreat bridged her knowledge gained by reading the Dhamma books into actual practice. Actually, learning Abhidhamma has led us to a better practice of (sitting) mindfulness meditation, and shown us how to stay in the moment without mental distortions.

Special thanks to Dr. Thynn Thynn and Sae Taw Win II.

“On the Cushion-Off the Cushion”

Dr. Ohn Myint

In the last 25-30 years I had, on a number of occasions, meditated at Vipassana Centers (Yeiktha). During the meditations, my mind was at peace. However, as I returned to the drudgery of daily life (off-cushion), I was not able to apply the mindfulness that I had experienced during the sitting meditations (on-cushion). My life reverted back to one of stress and anxiety.

Last July, I participated a week’s “On the Cushion – Off the Cushion” retreats at Sae Taw Win II Dhamma Center. It was an eye-opening experience for me to learn how to switch over mindfulness of sitting meditation (satipathana) to daily life. Though it is a starter for me, in a period of 8 days, the practice of off-cushion mindfulness became clearer, when the conventional sitting Vipassana meditation sections led by Graham and Lynne were complemented by the Abhidhamma lectures and transition to daily life mindfulness discussions delivered by Dr. Thynn Thynn. They provided me with a more practical way to practice mindfulness on a daily basis.

Calendar of Events

October 10 – Festival of Lights: 1,000 Lights offering at the Cedi

October 17 – Sunday morning sitting, dhamma talk, and potluck lunch

October 30 – Abhidhamma Daylong teaching at Spirit Rock Meditation Center

November 14 – Sunday morning sitting, dhamma talk, and potluck lunch

November 20-21 – “Bringing Harmony to Conflicts” weekend Intensive

December 12 – Sunday morning sitting, dhamma talk, and potluck lunch

December 31 – New Year’s Eve party

February 6 – Dr. Thynn’s Birthday Celebration

April 16-20 – Abhidhamma Introduction Course

April 23-26 – “On the Cushion – Off the Cushion”

STW Updates

Penny Snyder has officially left her position here in the Center office and is hard at work as director of Middle Way, a non-profit employment center for developmentally disabled workers in Sebastopol. We miss her here, but she will still be a presence at events, classes, and retreats. Everyone is delighted that **Roger Burns**, a longtime student and student teacher, will be moving to this area and taking her place in October alongside Madelaine, helping Dr. Thynn run the Center’s day-to-day business as well as events and Center planning. In the meantime, **Carol Meredith**, a Board member and student teacher, is working as a “temp” in the office and helping with event coordination.

A new Beginning Class started October 7. Contact us if you’re interested in attending. A warm welcome to new students from this past years’ events, and to those who will be beginning their study with Dr. Thynn this month.

U. of Northern Texas Mindfulness Club Retreat

Carol Meredith

It is always interesting to hear stories from students on how they connected with Dr. Thynn and the Dhamma Center. The Mindfulness Club at University of Northern Texas was formed two years ago based on their curiosity of what is meant by “being in the moment”. After typing “being in the moment” into Google, Dr. Thynn’s name popped up! They discovered her book and began communications via email. At their request, Dr. Thynn flew to Texas in 2001 and gave a lecture that truly inspired the students to study and practice mindfulness in daily life. Last year, Myrna Miller led the 2-day retreat and this year, Dr. Thynn gave me the opportunity.

We had a good turnout of nine students. Half of the students were members of the Mindfulness Club, who meet faithfully once a week. The other attendees were attracted by the flyers that were posted around campus.

For example, one flyer read: “Stressed out? Finals getting you down? Can’t seem to find any peace of mind? It sounds like you could benefit from a Mindfulness Retreat”, and at the bottom of the flyer is a definition for Mindfulness.

Over the two days, I presented the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and used experiential exercises to help bring focused attention to their practice. The group was very dynamic and open to sharing their experiences and questions. All of the students were artists of various forms (e.g. writer, dancer, singer) which brought about interesting discussion on the application of mindfulness and the creative process. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to teach and share my experiences with this enthusiastic and dedicated group of practitioners. I want to thank Angela Irving, President of the Mindfulness Club, for arranging my trip. I was happy to see her at the July “On the Cushion – Off the Cushion” retreat.



Offerings of flowers, incense, and candles to the Cedi at the annual Buddha’s Birthday Celebration in May 2004. The actors in the children’s play (about the Buddha’s birth) are shown here leading the procession and making the first offerings.

The Cedi, a sacred monument found throughout Buddhist Asia, traditionally enshrines relics of the Buddha.

Thanks to the generosity of our students, friends, and all of our donors, for the first time, in 2003, the Dhamma Foundation is “in the black” financially. Please read on! The remainder of this newsletter contains our annual Pledge Drive letter, our last two years’ financial reports, and a note from Dr. Thynn and the foundation Treasurer.

Dear Students and Friends of Sae Taw Win II:

Many blessings to each and every one of you! Each year, at about this time, we like to let you know how things are going here at the center and ask for your continued support.

We're very happy to let you know that this year, for the first time, our Dhamma Community has been successful in operating without a deficit, while still offering many classes, workshops, and retreats. This has been accomplished through countless hours of student volunteering and the continued financial support from our students and friends. This support was crucial in planning and carrying out many much-needed projects in 2004, including the following:

- ◇ Upgrades to the office computer system, made this past winter.
- ◇ A full-time position (shared by two students) in the office, created in February.
- ◇ The replanting of the garden, completed this summer.

Still on the calendar for this year are repairs to the roof and other major repairs of the house as well as continuing the filing process for use permits for future building plans.

We would like to thank all the students and friends who have given so generously both in volunteering and financial support. Without you we couldn't have come this far.

With your generosity, we were also able to complete the Photo Journal. This publication celebrates and documents the first five years of the Center. Please let us know if you haven't received a copy, and we will send one to you.

In keeping with the Buddhist tradition of dana, since 2003 no fees have been charged for the seminars, retreats, or classes, nor for Dr. Thynn's book. We instead depend on the generosity of our students and friends like you and we hope you will continue to support our teacher and the Dhamma Center. Please give what you can to help make Dr. Thynn's teachings available to everyone.

To mail in a donation, fill out the donation card on the back page of this newsletter and send your check in the envelope provided. Please remember that these donations are tax-deductible.

We thank you for your ongoing support.

Metta — The STWII Fundraising Committee

**Annual Financial Report
2002 and 2003**

<u>Income</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
General Donations	\$13,161	\$8,783
Pledges	(Nov & Dec) 3,615	(Jan-Dec) 6,175
Residency Fees	31,908	26,890
Weekly Classes	4,310	6,398
Retreats	2,560	4,303
(Retreats \$2,220/Seminars \$2,083 for 2003)		
Books/Tapes/Gifts	284	378
<u>Interest on Savings</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>58,253</i>	<i>66,134</i>
Special Projects Donations	3,895	3,150
<i>Income – Total</i>	<i>\$62,148</i>	<i>69,284</i>
<u>Expenses</u>		
Rent	\$31,936	\$29,371
Payroll	11,489	6,941
Office Expenses	8,042	12,402
Advertising	1,189	440
Maintenance & Repair	3,052	5,650
Utilities	2,031	1,449
Property Tax	943	1,924
<u>Interest & Bank Charges</u>	<u>5,540</u>	<u>1,593</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>66,642</i>	<i>62,211</i>
Special Projects	639	4,886
<i>Expenses – Total</i>	<i>\$67,281</i>	<i>\$66,097</i>
Net Income	- \$8,389	\$3,187
Average Monthly Deficit	- \$700	

Special Projects Donations include donations for the following:

- ◇ Cedi project
- ◇ Front gate and fence
- ◇ Use Permit fees
- ◇ Dr. Thynn's book project
- ◇ Yogi Fund – this consists of any direct donations to Dr. Thynn, which she keeps in the Yogi Fund for personal use. At present, she is using the fund to finance the publication of her Dhamma book in Burmese

Notes to Financial Report

Dr. Thynn Thynn, President of the Board and Christy Pichel, Treasurer of the Board

In 2002, we reported the half-year income/expenses in June of that year, but we were not able to present the financial report for the entire year in early 2003, as we were still trying to streamline our cash-flow reports. I'm pleased at this juncture to present both the 2002 and 2003 annual financial reports. The Board of Directors and I are happy to report that for the first time, we were able to beat the odds and close our monthly deficits in 2003, and have a little left over.

The Board must be credited for their very stringent scrutiny and revamping of our financial accounting system; now we have a very clean and clear system in place. Thanks to past Board members Pat Murphy, Tim Gonzalez-Martin, Bob Davidson, Paula Arico, Deb Cowen, and Myint Myint Sein.

The closing of the financial gap is primarily due to pragmatic fiscal management, prevention of waste, an increase in donations (general and for retreats and other teachings), and an effective pledge drive by our student pledge team.

In 2004, we will have higher expenses due to some new projects:

1. Roof repair and other major repairs of the Dhamma House
2. Replanting the garden
3. Use Permit applications

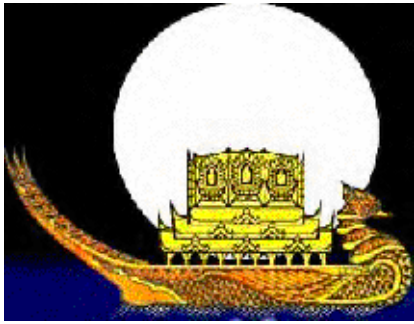
The funds for these projects will be drawn from the residue of \$40,000 cash derived from the 2003 refinancing of the property, as we do not foresee a major increase in our operating budget this year or in the near future.

The reduction in residency fees in 2003, beginning in mid-July, was due to a policy change to allow for some resident-students to work at the Center in exchange for rent and utilities.

There was a hefty jump in our donations for the "On the Cushion – Off the Cushion" retreat (four-day retreat '02 and seven-day retreat '03), which was the culmination of three years' attempt to design the combined sitting and daily life practice between Dr. Thynn, Grahame White, and Lynne Bousfield. In addition, all three teachers donated the dana given to them by retreatants to the Center.

We have also seen that, since the institution of the Pledge Drive by students in 2002, bulk donations at year's end are alive and ongoing. Pledges are also gratefully received throughout the year.

Keeping to the Buddhist tradition of dana, no fees are charged for the seminars, retreats, classes, or Dr. Thynn's book. We are also happy to report that dana meals and cash dana for the retreats and events have increased in 2003 from Burmese friends and supporters and from our American students.



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*It takes a community to build a
Dhamma center.
Here is my donation for 2005....*

Monthly Pledges

- Basic** Contributing Sustaining Other
\$10/month \$20/month \$60/month \$_____
- One-time donation \$_____

Please provide information about including

Name:

Sae Taw Win II in my will or trust.

Address:
