Life As Teacher

By Eugene Cash

Conventionally, when we think “teacher,” we imagine people. Usually these are people who have mastered a skill or technique or capacity we seek. Often these are people who have traversed a path or way of being that we aspire to for ourselves. It is very helpful to have teachers. They provide instruction, guidance, feedback and inspiration, but they are not the only teachers.

As we develop, clarify, purify the capacity to be mindful and it becomes more internal, we can begin to metabolize our life experience as a teacher of dharma. Part of mature practice is the capacity to meet life on all levels—good/bad, happy/sad, rich/barren—not simply the levels that satisfy our ego needs. Some of the most sought-after qualities in a teacher are a sense of having made peace with human life and engaging in a fully human manifestation.

Recently I met the teacher in the form of a serious bicycle accident.

I have been riding bicycles since I was a child. As an adult in San Francisco I always had a bicycle for errands and light riding to visit with friends. About six years ago I was introduced to road biking. Road bikes are well-designed, fluid cycles made to traverse the roadways of our world. They are fun and fast and an efficient way to travel the beautiful landscape of California. I quickly grew to love road riding. Part of the joy of cycling was doing some long group rides around California.

Recently I met the teacher in the form of a serious bicycle accident.

One of the most beautiful rides I discovered was the Buddhist Bicycle Pilgrimage (BBP). The BBP was satisfying because it is based in values so important to me: bicycling, dharma practice, sangha, as well as a diversity of teachers, temples and practice places.

The BBP starts each year at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Marin and rides north for two days, stopping at Buddhist temples and retreat centers along the way, ending at Ahbayagiri Monastery in Ukiah.
Inside This Issue

1 • Feature: Life As Teacher
  Eugene Cash

8 • Ten Lessons Learned on the Yoga Mat
  Beth Hamlet

10 • Three Meditation Hall Haiku
  Kitty Costello

15 • Notes From the Board
  Kitty Costello

18 • Ellie Ely Memorial
  Anita Kline

20 • Haiku
  Kitty Costello

20 • Teacher Bios

22 • Artist Statements

23 • Classes and Retreats

11 • Dear Eugene & Pam
  Laura Albert

13 • Thanks Giving
  Gary Gach

17 • Ten Thousand Things
  Joe Shakarchi

19 • Leaf
  Ellie Ely

Sangha News is an all-volunteer newsletter

Sarah Anderson ........................................... Editor
Beth Hamlet .................................................. Editor
Lonnie Lazar .................................................. Editor
Jill Morrison .................................................. Graphic Designer
Kitty Costello ................................................ Consulting Editor
Geoff McNally ............................................. Proofreader

Contact SFI

website: www.sfinsight.org
online sangha: groups.yahoo.com/group/SFInsight
voice mail: 415-994-5951
snail mail: P.O. Box 475536, SF, CA 94147-5536
The first morning of the 2011 ride I was asked to give a talk on the theme “Don’t know.” When we take a ride or begin any activity we don’t really know how it will go or what will happen. Part of mindfulness practice is to be open and awake to whatever life brings us. So on this ride I not only gave a verbal dharma talk but, in addition, I lived the talk in my direct experience.

I didn’t expect to have a serious fall, but we don’t know what is going to happen or what difficulties life may present us at any time. Part of our training is to learn to be open and respond to reality however it presents itself.

While descending from the peak of a big hill, I had a problem with the bike, lost control and fell. During the fall I hit my head (with my helmet on) and suffered a concussion and some broken bones and ribs. The accident was serious enough that I was airlifted to the hospital.

The accident required a series of hospital stays and treatments for my injuries. Many people were involved: family, friends, medical teams and caregivers. Treatments were varied. We didn’t always know if a treatment would work, or how I would respond to it.

After a week, I was moved from the trauma unit in Santa Rosa to Kaiser Hospital in San Francisco. After 10 days there, I moved again to a recovery hospital, where I spent three weeks. Family and friends helped ensure that I was getting the appropriate care and medication at each setting. Often I would find the medication inappropriate or “too much” and my loved ones would advocate for me to the appropriate authorities.

One of the difficulties for my family was my release from the recovery hospital before I was fully recovered or able to function conventionally, as they had known me previously. For me, the return home and back to my customary world was very positive. It gave me some orientation that was recognizable and helpful. At the same time, I began to recover without having to reify or return to who I had been. I actually began to recover before I had the usual or familiar sense of self.

The first four weeks following the accident were the most difficult period. During that time I was dealing with a lot of physical pain and discomfort as well as a sense of disorientation and confusion with the external circumstances of hospitalization and the lack of familiar brain functioning. As I regained some familiar orientation, my recovery came clearly and consistently to me and was easily recognized by my loved ones and friends.

As the recovery developed and deepened, the role of dharma and meditation practice clarified significantly.

In the hospital, I was verbal and expressed my discomfort with difficult treatment and staff, but I wasn’t vocal about my inner experience during that period. I just wasn’t able to communicate the transcendent experience I was having or to clearly speak to the transcendent reality that I was often in touch with. When I did try to speak about these experiences, many people, staff or friends, could not grasp or understand what I was talking about.

It was clear to me that the skills I had developed through the dharma and as a meditator and contemplative functioned well during much of my post accident experience. One way the accident impacted
me was that I didn’t have the same identification as a meditator or Buddhist, but the wonderful and liberating skills that I had learned and practiced functioned even without the usual self-identification. Mindfulness functioned without anyone “doing” it.

After the bike accident I had a new life. Much of my recovery included the recognition of dharmic values that I had studied and practiced. I discovered that the values and capacities I had learned were innate or inherent; the accident gave new life to many facets of dharma practice. Many of my realizations and recognitions were simple or uncomplicated, but they were also hard to express.

One of the revelations was that mindfulness is naturally heartfelt. I experienced it functioning organically with a quality of metta or loving-kindness. I already believed metta was good; now I know that the power of metta is inherent in the meditative process.

Another part of my relearning was about the nature of human life. We assume we know so much about life or practice or liberation. One of the great teachings for me has been how little I know. (Remember the theme of my dharma talk the day of the accident was “Don’t Know.”) Or maybe it is more accurate to say that I recognized how limited or underdeveloped my understanding was before the accident.

From this perspective and the perspective of my accident, I clearly see that dharma practice means that learning, growing and maturing don’t end. Illumination is not a finite event. Freedom naturally includes openness, learning, growing, discovery and mystery. Dharma practice offers us a shift in perspective and the skills to accept living reality and mature a life that is truly alive.

As we accept that reality is not based on our assumptions, beliefs, wishes, expectations or history, we begin to accept ourselves as an expression of reality, as a manifestation of life. We are the dharma. This realization is both humbling and liberating.
Teachers

My son, my teacher for twenty-four years, is not the sort who makes the lesson easy to learn, nor the type who inspires confidence in this old student, whose progress is unsteady, who learns too little from her mistakes.

He really knows his stuff though, likes to pull the occasional pop quiz, excels at making my gray matter scatter, offering black-and-white multiple choices with None-Of or All-Of-The-Above always a possible response.

In the meditation hall, my Buddhist teacher perks up when I confess a fear of failing the final in my chosen course: Maternal Perfection. Now it’s getting interesting, he smiles, always encouraged by disillusion and identify theft.

Like my son’s, his wisdom’s a riddle: Keep asking the question. The answer is none of your business.

—Anita Kline, April 2006, January 2012
I took this workshop ages ago, in 1989 to be exact, and still use the teaching I received: to become the experience of painting. It was not an easy task because it involved bypassing the chatter of my critical mind. But as I learned to do this—working from my heart and gut—I experienced trust, and then play, a childlike play in which I discovered and rediscovered the evolution of the painting.

The first day of the workshop I was excited and nervous. I sat for a moment next to my materials, closing my eyes to still my mind. When I opened them, my attention went to the center of the room, to the paint station, which held many rows of colorful paint, all calling to me. I walked over and stood next to them. I made the intention not to think about the colors before me or what I wanted to paint. I focused instead on the emotional and physical experience of being with all the colors. As my brush hovered over the many rows of paints, I became fascinated rather than overwhelmed. I allowed my heart, not my mental processes, to inform me; I dipped the brush into a color pot.

With brush in hand, I sat down next to a blank sheet of paper. I paused only to make an intention: to soften my judging mind. The brush then became an extension of my hand, my body and my heart, marking the surface without mental commentary. I settled into a rhythm of making marks with color.

I found it helpful, as I painted, to keep in mind the essence of the Buddha’s teachings: In the seen, there is just what is seen. In the heard, there is just what is heard. In the sensed, there is just what is sensed. In the thought, there is just what is thought.*

As I painted, my eyes absorbed the colors. I applied the paint with my brush and I felt in my hand and body the energy of making strokes. As I kept the brush to the paper, not allowing it to leave unless I needed more paint, I sensed marks as they unfolded into images. Throughout the day, the comings and goings of life passed through me. I held a soft awareness of thinking and I experienced “form conditioned by different causes, constantly changing,” another main teaching of the Buddha.

Up to this point in my life, a mental dialogue had been part of my painting process. But this new experience was different, more intense. I witnessed something larger than before as I became aware of thinking, feeling, and body sensations, all happening so quickly and in such a random, chaotic fashion. I was able to transform this potentially frightening situation by letting go into the rhythmic flow of each unfolding moment; I saw that things were okay. Breathing with each moment, myriad possibilities appeared and an exuberance for life embraced me, allowing me to play in ways...
I had never played before. As in a Tai Chi dance, I softened sensitively to incoming stimuli, casting images onto the paper like a child who is free of self-imposed limitations, who knows only that mystery begs to be expressed.

At the end of the workshop, I was exhausted. The ongoing effort to train my mind to function as an observational tool, to stay with my body and heart, was work. But the results of this effort excited and amazed me. I had learned how to engage with penetrating interest and attention the mystery of creativity, becoming the very act of painting.

*From The Udana, a collection of the Buddha’s utterances.*
Ten Lessons Learned on the Yoga Mat

By Beth Hamlet

1. Effort counts. Listening and responding in each moment is the only controllable part of the practice; the rest is karma.

2. The way will teach you the way. Practicing chaturanga is the only way to learn chaturanga.

3. Discomfort arises: You want me to put my foot WHERE? But joy does too: Handstands are FUN!

4. The best teachers never stop learning. Grateful and humble bows to their example of boundless courage and curiosity.

5. It takes nine months of actively thinking about drop-back, urdhva dhanurasana (back-bends) before fear allows the attempt. Even then, it’s messy.

6. Contemplating the body from the inside is much more interesting, sexy and profound than from any other angle.

7. Hauling luggage and taking long flights in coach are much easier with strong arms and flexible hips.

8. Grace emerges from some intimate yet impossible-to-name place that dances along the edge of effort and surrender.

9. “Practice and all is coming.” —Sri K. Pattabhi Jois (1915-2009)

10. Regularly forgetting and remembering lessons one through nine IS the practice.
My First Meditation Teacher

By Bill Scheinman

My first meditation teacher had really big ears. This was useful when he gave dharma talks, because the ears would give his face a fierce otherworldly quality as he spoke, as if he were some Cambodian temple guardian who had suddenly transformed himself from stone to flesh to share the teachings.

As an eager student in my very first meditation class, one of the first things I remember asking him was, “What about love?”

My first meditation teacher gave amazing dharma talks that went beyond the dry fare of suttas and precepts and entered the realm of enchantment, wonder and mystery. His talks always pointed you into the depths of what the dharma was all about; depths that began to surface and become known even as he was speaking.

His talks were so good that I am convinced they must have formed an archetype of the great dharma talk somewhere in my brain.

I liked and admired him, but was a bit afraid of him, too. I remember once being an organizer of a retreat he was leading, and my heart sank when he complained that I had forgotten to get black tea; Earl Grey just didn’t cut it!

One of my strongest memories was a story he told us about the time he went on a three-month ordination retreat. At the end of the retreat he felt completely at peace, all conflicts in his heart eliminated, all hindrances abandoned. He left that retreat feeling like a new person, convinced that from then on there would be peace in his life and interpersonal conflict would be a thing of the past.

He left that retreat feeling like a new person, convinced that from then on there would be peace in his life...

My father once saw him give a talk and thought he was wearing fake ears to give things more of a theatrical effect. (Only dad could have made such a possibility seem plausible!) He wore multiple earrings in both ears, had a strong London accent, and told some very funny jokes about the Pope. He had a tendency to scowl and shoot you a mean stank-eye, but he was actually a very kind person.

As an eager student in my very first meditation class, one of the first things I remember asking him was, What about love? Like a lot of people I know, I had come to the dharma as a result of one heartbreak too many, and I wanted to know what Buddhism said about romance. I forget the answer he gave me, but I remember it didn’t quite satisfy me. (I’m still trying to figure out the love thing—I’ll keep you posted.)

One of my strongest memories was a story he told us about the time he went on a three-month ordination retreat. At the end of the retreat he felt completely at peace, all conflicts in his heart eliminated, all hindrances abandoned. He left that retreat feeling like a new person, convinced that from then on there would be peace in his life and interpersonal conflict would be a thing of the past.

Feeling really good about himself, he returned to London and within 24 hours got into a bar fight.

He told us this story to illustrate how hard it is to change our personalities and that our conditioning runs very deep. I think he was telling us to go easy on ourselves. A typical sign of his compassion.

One of the things he loved to do was read poetry for us on retreat. He introduced me to so many of the poets I love reading today, like Ryokan and Mary Oliver. With his deep, somewhat melancholy voice, he could turn any poem into a discourse. In a way I think what he was really telling us is that the dharma is a kind of poetry, too. 😊
three meditation hall haiku

buddha statue smiles
wonder what’s not on his mind
are we so funny?

perched on its cushion
empty bell holds only air
utters not one sound

first rains are falling
and me with open-toed shoes
my socks go squish squish

—Kitty Costello
Dear Eugene & Pam,

I woke up at four-something a.m. I did not have to get up until 6:45 a.m. to get my son ready for school, so I tried going back to sleep. But I kept imagining Eugene in the hospital, even though we have never met. So I just got up to put these words down.

I started going to the Sunday night meditation only in the last few months. I had been hearing about mindfulness meditation for a few years, and increasingly in the form of a suggestion that I try it. My response to that irritating proposal looked like something like this: I don't have time. I can sometimes just be quiet and pay attention to stuff, so why do I have to learn to meditate? It will take too much energy. But it kept coming up, and with a certain pull, as if I knew it was what I'd end up doing eventually. But just not yet.

Finally, one day I asked a friend who went to the Sunday evening meditation if I could go with her. We walked to the church and came in late and sweaty. I sat in that stifling hot room wondering if this was just Bikram yoga without the movement. I couldn't keep my eyes closed. I was grateful for the folks standing, swaying like clock pendulums, ticking off time. I kept glancing at my friend and wondering how she could just sit there. I knew if I took her hand, she would laugh and we could both run out screaming.

Somehow, I survived until that blessed gong went off. I thought, Now I get to leave. But no, there was tea. And then you talked, Eugene, about how hard it is to sit; you went through the blocks of wanting to escape, to run out screaming. Hearing your words allowed me to move past the illusion of my separateness, to know that my experience was not wrong, that it just was. It had been two months since my mother's unveiling and you talked about loss and death. I absorbed what I could. I remember you speaking of some enlightened folks experiencing just “now, now, now, now,” and I felt spirit moving within me, wanting to expand into
something larger. Every week I resisted going back to the church and yet felt some unexplainable pull to return. I’d tell myself I was going for the walk, to be with my friend, or to go to Whole Foods after to get something really good, but still kind of healthy. And when I didn’t go, I felt something was missing. While I still have a hard time sitting still, I don’t imagine running out screaming any more.

When you spoke, I was so hungry for what you offered, as if I’d been waiting my whole life for those teachings. And I felt safe. I’ve experienced folks in positions of power, where boundaries are not clear. But you were so solidly there to be of service, offering your knowledge, humor, and wisdom; everything you said about doubt and fear resonated. I felt angry at myself for not taking notes as you talked. I’d go on nights even when you weren’t there, and it was still good. I couldn’t even use your absence as a reason not to show up.

I ride my bike as a form of meditation. The last time you spoke before the pilgrimage, I had wanted to ask about how to manage my anger when I’m on my bike. I can reach a state where I feel that experience of "now, now, now," but then a car does something dangerous and a primal rage overtakes me. I want to educate them, and not in an enlightened fashion. I am grateful a driver did not hit you, because I would want to avenge that accident. It would be easier to feel rage than this pain of your absence.

You’ve created a sangha where it is possible to be in communion with spirit, to come in faith, to ask to be willing. When I am with this sangha my perspective of self lifts, even if for a second. I experience grace when I am released from the bondage of self into a faith that what you teach is true and available for us. I want to be a vessel for this love and to pass it to others. Even to crazed drivers when I want to avenge a loss I cannot name.

Sending love and blessings.

Namaste, Laura Albert
Thanks Giving

My buddy stopped
sat down alongside
the houseless beggar
& giving him some
small change they talked

—whereupon the battered guy
said Thank you for stopping,
man! I mean, the money’s
great but I thought I was gonna
like lose my mind! Nobody’s even

looked at me all week! I was like
starting to feel like I was on
Mars!—whereupon my buddy
smiled and thought Thank you, man—

for giving me an opportunity to practice
generosity

—Gary Gach
Seeking a Volunteer Teacher

Are you a chi gung or yoga teacher, willing to help with offering mindful movement practice before Sunday night sits?
If so, please contact kittycostello@earthlink.net
Since incorporating as a nonprofit more than a year ago, the SFI Board of Directors has been exploring various venues for communication with the sangha. This column is and will be an ongoing effort to keep sangha members informed about the structure and functions of sangha leadership and aware of ways to “plug in.”

Programs at SFI
Some members have been curious about how classes and daylongs are arranged, and more recently about how decisions were made in Eugene and Pam’s absence. Here is a thumbnail sketch of how the process works.

About seven years ago Eugene established a Programming Committee, in recent years consisting of Eugene, Pam, and our Board President, Paul Irving. Over time the Committee developed the following template for yearly classes and daylongs: three beginning meditation classes, two intermediate classes, six daylongs, and a special class series two to four times annually. The calendar for the coming year is decided each fall. If or when we find a space for a new SFI home, programs will be greatly expanded.

Following Eugene’s bike accident in late September of 2011, we were fortunate that Paul could step in to finish sketching out the programs for 2012, based on Eugene and Pam’s explicit and implicit wishes. As he continues to recover, his input and guidance are re-emerging.

Teachers for Classes, Daylongs and Series
The teachers for the beginning and intermediate classes are largely graduates of, or current participants in, Spirit Rock’s Community Dharma Leaders program, and most are long-time sangha members.

Over time Eugene has invited various guests to teach daylongs and class series: Frank Ostaseski taught a series on service; Anushka Fernandopolle recently taught a series on the Brahma Viharas; Lee Lipp and Martina Schneider have led daylongs and a series on mindfulness and depression; Kittisaro and Thanissara co-taught a “sandwich retreat” with Pam and Eugene on the Five Spiritual Faculties; and Martin Aylward led a weeklong non-residential retreat called Money, Sex, Work, and the Dharma.

The Teaching Team
Anticipating the future needs of SFI, Eugene invited three younger teachers to be part of a teaching team to lead the sangha: Anushka Fernandopolle, Martina Schneider, and Will Kabat-Zinn, all graduates of the teacher training program with Jack Kornfield. The need for a larger teaching team arose partly in response to Eugene’s vision of SFI finding its own home for sits, classes, and programs every day of the week. It also came from the desire for younger, more diverse teachers to reflect our growing sangha.

In the days and weeks following Eugene’s accident, we needed to turn rather suddenly to the teaching team. The Board determined that it would be better to have a consistent teacher rather than an ever-changing line-up of guest teachers, and we were fortunate that Anushka, after clearing some room in her busy calendar, was able to step in as the lead teacher in Eugene’s absence.

Changes in Board Membership
Many dedicated sangha members have served over the years on the Steering Committee, and more recently on the Board. None has been more generous or dedicated than Gayle Markow, who ended her service on the Board last year after more than 15 years of helping to lead the sangha. She initiated and led a host of community activities ranging from the monthly potluck to fundraisers for Woza Moya and Khuphuka, two AIDS relief projects in South Africa launched with SFI’s support. Gayle also recently passed the baton as
leader of our monthly orientation sessions after years of offering wise and dedicated guidance to newer sangha members. Bill Scheinman, Board vice-president and SFI’s webmaster, is currently organizing a team to teach the orientation going forward.

**Community Building**

Over the past year or so we have initiated several new venues for communication with and among sangha members:

- **Volunteer Coordinator Gathering:** In November 2010, we held a meeting of about 20 people who help to coordinate volunteers and keep the sangha running through activities such as staffing the phone, editing the newsletter, overseeing setup and managing the daylong crew. We reflected on service as practice and initiated an ongoing dialogue between the Board and other sangha leaders.

- **Kalyanna Mitta (Spiritual Friends) Gathering:** In April 2011, our KM coordinators, Ed Ritger and Dawn Neal, gave a presentation on SFI’s current KM groups and on how to set up and host a KM group, with time for socializing and Q&A.

- **Volunteer Appreciation:** In 2010 and 2011, there were two gatherings for the volunteers who do Sunday and Wednesday night setup and greeting, and the volunteers who manage daylongs and classes. They were treated to dinner as a way to say thank you and to give people an opportunity to connect in a more relaxed way.

- **Open Board Meeting:** Our first “5th Sunday” gathering on October 30, 2011 was planned as a way to keep sangha members informed, to have dialogue about what sangha means to us, and to seek input from the community. Planned before Eugene’s accident, it turned out to be a timely opportunity for reflecting on how we were practicing in the aftermath of Eugene’s accident and our wishes for the sangha now.

- **Community Gathering:** Our second “5th Sunday” gathering on January 29, 2012 was a creative brainstorming session for all interested sangha members, and an opportunity to explore new ideas and foster support for our current programs.
Ten Thousand Things

I have traveled ten thousand miles
to see ten thousand things
the stupas of Kathmandu
the monasteries of Bhutan
the streets of Bangkok
the rice paddies of Bali
the untouchables of Calcutta
the farmlands of China
the seaports of Japan
the dusty streets of Laos

the ten thousand things are the same:
all living and
dying
impermanent and
eternal

and I walk through them
also living and dying
invisible yet always present
gazing at the smoke
of the incense
the candle
the funeral pyre

children keep playing
lovers keep making love
the dancers keep spinning

—Joe Shakarchi
After three years of living and practicing with the cancer that ended her life, Ellie Ely, a member of our SF Insight community, died at home in San Francisco on January 26, 2012, surrounded by friends and family. Only a week before, she played joyously in the surf at Ocean Beach. She was 64 years old.

An endlessly curious scientist and a fine poet, she was known and loved for being fully present in her one precious life, for her open heart and wide smile, and for letting go of life itself with remarkable grace. She often talked about the value of whole-body breathing that she learned from Eugene. Even after most people had moved on and the group itself no longer existed as such, Ellie and I would email and phone and take walks and slide so easily into what some might call ‘serious’ and meaningful conversations. Serious and yet we’d be laughing! I learned so much from Ellie about listening, being present, honesty, and the incredible gift of friendship in the dharma.”

Following are excerpts from a personal essay of Ellie’s, “Three Years Later.”

The work is to love my body, all of it. Whole & entire. The whole aging mortal troublesome failing miraculous intricate breathing doomed cancerous warm mortifying unreliable hardworking imperfect beautiful appalling living struggling tender frightened frightening living dying living breathing temporary wondrous mystifying afflicted mortally ill assemblage of the atoms of the universe that is my self, is me, for this space of time. This body that is screwing up...that is failing in the one essential job of life, to stay alive, to stay alive.

My work is to find an attitude to take.

My work is to live until I die.

My work is to make peace with my body and to love it, whole & entire, so that from that stable core I can reach out with strength, compassion and generosity.

My work is to know that we do not know the future, and acknowledging that, to see clearly the near certainty that I have only a short time to live. And then, in the light (or shadow) of that clear knowledge, to know how to live. How to live now.

Now I’m able to feel generous, to think I’m maybe—it sounds weird, maybe Pollyanna-ish—maybe a kind of pioneer of dying for my friends and siblings who are of an age where they do think of it as something still a ways off, but coming into closer view.
Leaf

turning her back on the unwashed dishes
she pushes aside bills and catalogs on the kitchen
table to make space for a writing tablet
vaguely considers the notions of choice and free will
looks out at the tree in the backyard
invites the familiar, pleasurable, jarring idea:

that each leaf, smooth and soothing to our eyes
is millions of dance halls, each with its orchestra
its trapeze flyers leaping fast and fluid
changing partners a thousand times a second
bending and whirling
but not in frenzy—

each move constrained, each atom
scripted precisely

in the doorless chambers where
pattern is life
freedom is death
and death, freedom.

—Eleanor Ely
Teacher Bios

Pamela Weiss
Pamela has been practicing Buddhism since 1987, including several years of Zen monastic training. She recently graduated from teacher training with Jack Kornfield and is also a student of the Diamond Approach. Pamela is an executive coach who offers mindfulness classes and leadership development programs inside organizations. Her passion is in bringing the richness and depth of Buddhist teachings to the world of work and relationships, as well as articulating a feminine expression of the dharma.

Eugene Cash
Eugene is the founding teacher of the San Francisco Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco. He teaches at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and leads intensive meditation retreats internationally. His teaching is influenced by both Burmese and Thai streams of the Theravada tradition as well as Zen and Tibetan Buddhist practice. He is also a teacher of the Diamond Approach, a school of spiritual investigation and self-realization developed by A. H. Almaas.

beloved teacher
reincarnating here, now
in this very life

—Kitty Costello
(written the morning after Eugene’s first talk, January 2012)
Anushka Fernandopulle
Anushka has trained in the Theravada Buddhist tradition for over 20 years in the U.S. and Asia. Other influences have been mystics from various cultures and traditions, creative arts, nature, service work, progressive social change movements and modern urban life. Anushka teaches retreats at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Insight Meditation Society, and around the country. She has an MBA and works as an organizational development consultant and executive/life coach.
www.anushkaf.org

Will Kabat-Zinn
Will has practiced Vipassana meditation intensively in the U.S. and in Burma and teaches regularly at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and The California Institute for Integral Studies. Will has taught meditation and awareness practices to incarcerated youth since 2001. He is in teacher training with Jack Kornfield and also works as a Marriage and Family Therapist intern in private practice.

Martina Schneider
Martina has been a student of the Dharma since 1996. She has studied and practiced Vipassana meditation in the U.S., India and in Burma, where she was ordained as a nun. Martina also completed teacher training with Jack Kornfield. She combines her practice with social engagement and has worked extensively with homeless and underrepresented populations, counseled incarcerated people and volunteered with the Zen Hospice Project. Martina combines mindfulness practices and psychotherapy in her work as a Marriage and Family Therapist.
www.martinaschneider.com
Artist Statements

Ledevina de Lara
In Maui I was very receptive the entire time. On arrival, my mind flowed and swirled like the wind. After a couple of days, the wind settled, and with it my mind and heart. The ocean’s breeze became my lullaby. Watching the sunrise, listening to poetry and dharma talks, meditating anywhere and everywhere, experiencing unexpected bursts of laughter, stargazing at night, being intimate with the land, eating what is grown there, sitting in my sweet spot looking over the cliff, watching the ocean crash through the rocks—all of it was heaven on earth. Recalling it still makes my heart quiver intensely. By the end of the retreat, I was one with nature; the wind and I breathed the same air. And I fell in love with the cliff. I learned to listen deeply and have the courage to live fully.

Tina Valentine
Traveling offers many lessons, not only in culture, history, and environment, but also in mindfulness. My husband Mark and I find we always learn as much about ourselves—how we show up in the world—as we do about other people and places. We also enjoy sharing our experiences and insights through photos and stories.

At the end of 2011 we spent four weeks traveling through Cambodia, a Buddhist country graced with lovely landscapes and stunning archeological sites, as well as a recent history of violence. Despite the horrific tragedies inflicted by the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s, the Cambodian people we encountered were compassionate, warm and gracious.

Dreams, sometimes, can also be a source of inspiration or learning. The cartoon “Enlightened One” came to me one night in my sleep. All I saw was my hand drawing the image. I was happy to be able to recreate it again in waking reality.
Introduction to Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation
Five Thursday evenings from 7–9 p.m.
May 24–June 21
Teachers: Trip Weil & Rebecca Katz
This class will explore the basic teachings of the Buddha in both meditation practice and daily life. We will introduce and deepen the practice of Mindfulness, with the aim of integrating Mindfulness into all aspects of our lives. Each session will include guided meditation instruction, talks on fundamental Buddhist teachings, and time for questions and discussion.
For details, visit www.sfinsight.org

Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation Daylong
Saturday, June 16, from 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.
Teachers: Trip Weil & Rebecca Katz
This daylong is part of the five-week Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation class starting on May 24. The cost for this one-day retreat is included as part of the class. If you are not taking the whole class, you may still attend this one-day retreat.
For details, visit www.sfinsight.org

SF Insight Residential Retreat
May 30–June 3, 2012
Teachers: Eugene Cash, Pamela Weiss and Anushka Fernandopulle
Santa Sabina Center, at Dominican College, San Rafael
A traditional Vipassana retreat is a wonderful way to deepen your meditation practice. Retreat practice offers an opportunity to immerse yourself in the teachings of the Buddha, to open to the Dharma of liberation, and to develop Sangha—a community of Awakening. This four-night retreat will include meditation instructions, meetings with teachers, and talks on Buddhism and the relationship of practice to the unfolding Dharma in your own experience. Each day will integrate sitting and walking meditation as well as metta (loving kindness) practice. Santa Sabina, at Dominican College, is a lovely retreat facility, used by the Insight Meditation Community for many years before the purchase of Spirit Rock.
For details, visit www.sfinsight.org

All SFI classes are located in the First Unitarian Universalist Church (UU), on the corner of Franklin and Geary (1187 Franklin) in San Francisco, unless otherwise noted.
For details, visit www.sfinsight.org
San Francisco Insight (SFI) is dedicated to offering the teachings of the Buddha as they develop in the West. Our specific orientation is toward intensive householder (lay) practice. We offer weekly group meditations and dharma talks (lectures), plus classes, meditation retreats, and other events as a community of spirit devoted to the embodiment of awakening in our lives.

Our Weekly Meetings
Our sangha meets Sundays and Wednesdays from 7–9 p.m. at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1187 Franklin (at Geary). Each meeting begins with a meditation, followed by a dharma talk and discussion. To allow us to pay rent to the UU Church, compensate the teacher, and cover other expenses, we ask attendees for a donation; whatever you can give is greatly appreciated. If writing a check, make it out to SFI.

Beginning Orientation
Second Sunday of the month, 6 p.m.
A brief introduction to Vipassana meditation and our sangha, led by a senior student.

Vegetarian Potluck
First Sunday of the month, 5:30 p.m.
Socialize informally with your dharma friends. Homemade and store-bought dishes welcome.

Chi Gung
All Sundays except first, 6:15–6:45 p.m.
Pre-sit gentle movement practice to enliven and settle energy flow. No experience required.

Seeking a Volunteer Teacher
Are you a chi gung or yoga teacher, willing to help with offering mindful movement practice before Sunday night sits? Please contact kittycostello@earthlink.net.

Dana Practice
Dana means “generosity.” The Buddha’s teachings are considered priceless but traditionally are given freely in a spirit of generosity. Offering dana (a donation) gives students an opportunity to express their gratitude for the teachings and to cultivate the joy of giving. Most SFI retreats and classes are taught by dana.

Kalyana Mitta Groups
Kalyana mitta means “spiritual friends.” These small groups (typically 6 to 12 people) meet regularly to study and share experiences in support of each other’s practice. Meetings usually include a short meditation and discussion. For more info, contact Ed Ritger at kminfo@sfinsight.org.

Other Ways To Get Involved
Sangha members often engage in outside activities and service projects. Past activities have included homeless outreach; fundraising projects for an AIDS-related community outreach program founded by Buddhist friends in South Africa; the compilation and sale of sangha cookbooks to raise money; picnics in Golden Gate Park; and bike rides. To learn more, visit www.sfinsight.org or our Yahoo Group (groups.yahoo.com/group/SFIinsight).

Got a dharma story, poem or work of art?
To contribute to Sangha News, email sfisanghanews@gmail.com.