

## **A Temple Retreat**

**By Steve Murray**

I was one of a small group that attended the recent retreat on Buddhist Wisdom. There was some cold weather and warm friendship; a few snow flurries, and a lot of teaching. It seems to me that this retreat, perhaps all retreats, have elements of our shared past, the training of the present, and commitments for the future.

Saturday morning Maryanne, Bruce and I worked on removing weeds from around the Stupa. (There is more to be done during future work days: volunteers would be welcome.) Our beautiful Stupa is a physical reminder of our heritage: Reverend Master Jiyu, the Ancestors in our lineage, and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Reverend Masters Phoebe and Seikai, Maryanne, of the lovely precenting voice, and those attending the retreat are also parts of our past, the Sangha we have trained with for years and decades. Without this heritage, we would not have the teaching, the Temple, and our practice. I continue to be grateful for this heritage, for the leadership and commitment of Reverend Masters Phoebe and Seikai, and for the greater Pine Mountain Sangha.

For me, coming to the Temple means letting go of my routine. At home I am used to rising later, meditating, eating brunch, answering emails, doing afternoon chores, watching television, and sleeping in my own bed. When I know I'll be going to the Temple, a resistance to letting go arises. Yet often it is only by getting out of that routine that I can see the training of the present. Sometimes my routine dulls my awareness of what needs to be addressed in training. Once I allow the resistance to pass and make the effort to come to the Temple, the obstacles dissolve. When I am at the Temple, I rise with the monks, eat and meditate and work with the community. There is no problem. I don't find myself thinking that I would still be asleep now or at home I would be watching a film. I simply rise and meditate, eat oatmeal, weed around the Stupa, listen to the teaching, get greeted by Jasper the dog—the present life of the day..

Often on the last day of the retreat, before leaving, there will be some talk of the next time we will meet or of things that we'll be doing as a community. Judy and I may be taking a trip to the Abbey during the summer; the Temple schedule may have future work days or retreats; Reverend Master Phoebe may ask for help with our website or even writing an article. It's all part of the flow of training.

Buddhism and our practice does not teach that a Retreat or visit to the Abbey is better than our routine at home or that lay practice is inferior to monastic practice. My understanding is that all of this—past, present, future, resistance, the schedule, my favorite television program, cold mornings, washing the dishes, resting in the afternoon—all is part of the great flow of our lives. It is all good. All of it contains precious teaching. And it is good, once in a while, to exert the will and come together with the Sangha at the Temple.

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