
O N E N E S S

Quarterly Newsletter of BRIGHT DAWN: Institute for American Buddhism

Vol. 10 No. 2 Summer 2006

KUBOSE DHARMA LEGACY ADDS DBA

BRIGHT DAWN: Institute for American Buddhism.

In reflecting upon the Kubose Dharma Legacy's Tenth Year Anniversary this spring, we have decided to add a new organizational name. Although we will retain our legal name of the Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy, we have adopted a DBA (Doing Business As) name **BRIGHT DAWN: Institute for American Buddhism**.

At the time of our incorporation in 1996, we chose our organizational name in honor of the appropriate person whose approach we wanted to carry on. Ten years later, we feel the need for the organization's "public" name to emphasize Rev. Gyomay Kubose's pioneering work in Americanizing Buddhism. The name **BRIGHT DAWN** has a fresh, expanding quality. In addition, it is especially fitting since Bright Dawn is the translation or meaning of "Gyomay" which is Rev. Kubose's Dharma Name. The phrase, **Institute for American Buddhism**, clearly puts the focus on Rev. Gyomay Kubose's vision as expressed in his seminal statement made over 30 years ago,

I have always dreamed of establishing an American Buddhism — different from Indian, Chinese, or Japanese Buddhism — a uniquely American Buddhism that could be easily understood and

practiced by Americans and that would contribute to American life and culture. This Buddhism can be explained in simple, everyday language and practiced in every aspect of our daily life. Yet, it is a uniquely Buddhist life-way — non-dichotomized and non-dualistic — that will bring about a peaceful, meaningful, creative life, both individually and collectively.

Bright Dawn Institute will continue to emphasize the Way of Oneness. Although Oneness, as non-duality, is a core teaching in Buddhism, there are a variety of ways it can be presented. The manner of presentation is important for clarity and impact. The nature of our presentation can be seen in books such as Rev. Gyomay Kubose's *Everyday Suchness* and *The Center Within*; and in his son, Rev. Koyo Kubose's recent book *Bright Dawn*.

Rev. Koyo is working on another book, with a tentative title of "Way of Oneness." This book will systematize and organize his father's teachings for those looking for a little more structured guidance with their everyday spirituality.

Moving forward in actualizing Rev. Gyomay Kubose's vision/dream, a Lay Dharma Teacher and Lay Minister Program is being established (Page 5).

On May 28, 2006, Zenyo Richard Brandon became the Bright Dawn Institute's first Lay Minister. The induction ceremony took place at the Bright Dawn Home Spread Retreat Center in Plymouth, Wisconsin.

Three more Lay Ministers will be inducted this year. Cynthia Brooke on June 17th and Asayo Horibe on August 5th, following the Heartland Sangha Service at Lake Street Church in Evanston. James Morford's induction will be on October 1st at the Bright Dawn Home Spread, following the Heartland Sangha Fall Retreat.

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HAVE DHARMA, WILL TRAVEL

By Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

The months of April and May found me traveling to Seattle, Washington; West Palm Beach, Florida; and Honolulu, Hawaii. As is usually the case whenever I go someplace as a guest speaker, I receive far more than whatever I may be able to give. I hope my personal sharing will be of benefit to you, newsletter readers, in your own spiritual journeys because the theme underlying my experiences could be titled, “Being a Seeker.”

Let me begin by describing my trip to the beautiful Northwest. One never tires of seeing a majestic mountain like Mt. Ranier. The inspirational power of nature is awesome. I didn’t visit Mt. Ranier but I did go to the top of the Space Needle, which gave a good panoramic view of the area. Balancing the being “up in the clouds” was the earthy atmosphere of Pike’s Fish Market, where sold fish are thrown and “fly” around. We had a Chinese dinner with friends from my college days, which go back over 40 years. Underneath the cheerful reminiscing was the subtle reminder of the relentless passage of time. I thought about where I’ve been and what I’ve been able to do, and where I still want to go and what I still need to accomplish.

I spoke at the Seattle Buddhist Temple’s Hanamatsuri, the celebration of Gautama Buddha’s birth. After the service, there was a luncheon in the social hall. Decorating each table was a vase with flowers and a cut-out of a baby Buddha that had been colored with Crayons. Each of these table settings had been made by a Dharma School child. As the luncheon ended, children went around, each finding the table setting they had made to take home. At a table near me, was a young girl, about five or six years old. She was crying because she couldn’t find the table setting she had made. My heart went out to her and I wanted to give her something. I didn’t have any candy or toys. All I had was an extra copy of my Bright Dawn book left over from an earlier book signing. Although it was not age appropriate, I gave what I had—asking her name and autographing the book to her. At this time someone came up to her and gave her two vases that had gone unclaimed. I thought this was an example of “seek and ye shall find.” You may not find what you were seeking originally, but other riches come your way. There was also a nice symbolism here of someone who couldn’t find her Buddha. Tears flowed. Young children react to things with their total being! How many of us adults exhibit such sincerity in our spiritual searching? In any case, the young girl, in return for my book, gave me what she had to offer in thanks—a big hug. I definitely got the better of the deal!

Searching in general, means that one is lacking something and is searching for it. In other words, one has a problem and is seeking to resolve it. Isn’t this what life is all about? All

human beings are flawed; we are not perfect. This is what being human means. Recognition of our suffering was the first teaching of the Buddha, and he called it the First Noble Truth. There is a nobility in the struggling with one’s own human fallibility. I was reminded of this when talking in Florida to social workers and therapists who dealt with addiction and 12-Step Recovery programs.

I recall an article on “Dharma Drunks” that mentioned a Zen Master in California who had a drinking problem. His history and struggles were well known to his disciples. One disciple recounted how she once was preparing for a formal ceremony when she dropped one of the lacquered wooden cups. The cup was chipped, exposing an ugly scar of raw wood beneath the smooth surface. She wanted to get a replacement but when she told this to her teacher, he said, “Why? With the chip it is more valuable.” This became a great teaching to her. A chipped cup is valuable, just as it is. Each of us is broken and chipped just by virtue of being a human being. Realizing this, one can value one’s imperfect life and see the nobility in the teaching of Suchness, things as they are. Thus, one can become more understanding, caring, and less quick to judge, criticize, and blame. The teaching of Suchness is a good provision to have on one’s spiritual journey.

Speaking of provisions, I love the food in Hawaii! I slurped up home-made “tsukamen” noodles at the Taishokan restaurant near Ala Moana Center, had loco-moco at L & L’s near Diamond Head, and fried-rice omelet at Rocky’s in Waipahu. I didn’t get around to Rainbow Drive-In but I love to eat like a “local.”

I was in Hawaii to officiate a wedding held at the Kahala Resort, one of the most posh hotels on Oahu. My father used to tell a story about when he was traveling with his teacher, Rev. Haya Akegarasu. They would stay at different kinds of lodging places and eat at different kinds of restaurants because Rev. Akegarasu said that one should make a point of experiencing both the common, local level and also the elegant, ritzy level. I remembered this story while having a gourmet breakfast in a beautiful open-air patio restaurant at the Kahala. Something made me miss my late father because I broke down sobbing for a few seconds. My wife said, “What the matter?” I just replied, “I’m crying.” In thinking about this later, I started wondering about emotions and why people often get teary eyed at weddings. I think we want to honor the idealness of love and new beginnings. Indeed, may we never get so jaded or cynical about life that we lose the sincere spirit of seeking.

May we always meet each day as a fresh, new day. Such a spirit fills the heart with gratitude for having found a direction

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in life. Being mindful and aware of this spirit is what helps us keep going. This “keep going” is one of my personal catch phrases and I associate “keep going” with the symbol of a turtle, which also happens to be one of the symbols of Hawaii. I have a lot of turtle stories and my recent experiences added some more.

While in Hawaii, I spoke at the Wahiawa Hongwanji Temple. One afternoon the resident minister, Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki, took us for a sight-seeing tour of the North Shore. After a lunch of garlic shrimp, we drove to an area known for turtles. I saw a huge turtle swimming in the ocean. The turtle was about 200 yards away but you could tell he was of a good size. I was reminded of the Buddhist story of a blind turtle swimming in the vast ocean. Being blind, he could not find a place to rest. Fortuitously, he bumps into a floating log. What are the odds of encountering this one log in the vast ocean? This story is a teaching that one should be grateful for being able to encounter the Dharma in the vast ocean of birth and death. One should not take for granted all the varied causes and conditions that enable one to receive and benefit from the Dharma teachings. One should show one’s gratitude by constantly renewing one’s sincere dedication to living the Dharma mindfully each and every day.

Talking about fortuitous coincidences, upon returning from Hawaii, where I had taken a stuffed puppet turtle to use in my Dharma talks, I received a stuffed puppet turtle in the mail. Imagine my surprise upon opening the package, and seeing a turtle’s head peeking out from the tissue paper. The synchronicity of this confluence of karmic influences really reinforced the special significance of turtles for me.

A lady who lives in New Mexico sent me the turtle in appreciation for a videotape we had sent her as part of her participation in our Video Loan Program, which works just like Blockbuster or Netflix, except our program is free. The videotape was of my Dharma talk titled, “Green is the Buddhist Color.” I talked about how green is the color of spring and how this relates to the teaching of “Every Day is a New Day” and to the reality of constant change in life and nature. Although the stuffed puppet turtle I received was a desert tortoise, his back was a bright green. The lady enclosed a letter, which is reprinted with her permission.

A Happy Spring to you too! Thank you for the videotape on greenness. You gave me more than the idea of fresh Spring green. You gave me the feel of it, and all

that was blessed with the affectionate humor in the video of how you taught Kermit to put his hands together in Gassho. After watching, I would face the wall in Zazen and invite the seeds the videotape planted to grow as they would. Or I would go for a river walk. To be with the Spring green, bull-frogs croaking in the pond, and turtles sunning on a log.

Last Saturday I drove 60 miles to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge to soak up the green, the wild flowers and wild life. My heart full of laughter and joy. Freedom. Walking a little path between tall Coyote Willows, a real coyote walked out from them and stood before me. Neither of us was afraid.

All the hours I spent there I celebrated and thought of the animal puppets in the gift shop. I felt a strong desire to send you one as part of my celebration. And part of my thank-you. I told the volunteer at the shop why I wanted a puppet. She really took interest in helping me find it. I taught this little green turtle to Gassho before buying him. He does it very well for a turtle. She agreed. Maybe the turtle will give you a Dharma talk and maybe he won’t. Who knows what a green turtle will do? I do hope that he will keep his word to share our Spring celebration with you. In gratitude, Beverly Manley.

That turtle sure knew how to make me smile and chuckle. That’s just the kind of seasoning I like to sprinkle on the Dharma teachings. As I laughed, I thought of a humorous story told to me by a friend who grew up going to my father’s temple. On the temple’s altar table was a brass candle holder of a crane standing on a tortoise. Because of my father’s accent, whenever he addressed the children and said, “The Buddha taught us...” My friend thought my father was saying, “The Buddha tortoise...”

Well, anyway...in a P.S. to her letter, Beverly Manley said she would not burden me with a long letter every time. However, to me, I am always so impressed seeing how people “work” with the teachings. When the teachings are expressed in ways that interact with everyday life experiences, there’s a naturalness and an aliveness that makes the teachings real and down to earth. This is exactly the kind of approach my father became known for through his talks and books like Everyday Suchness.

This article on my travels is getting long, but one last sharing, uh... maybe two. One has to do with teachings I

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Oneness Newsletter Summer 2006

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The purpose of the Bright Dawn Institute is to offer a non-sectarian, non-dualistic approach, the Way of Oneness, to deepen individual spirituality in everyday life for people of all backgrounds.

received that are related to circles. A circle is a symbol that has many meanings such as the dynamic change of constant cycles in nature, harmony/unity, oneness. In Japanese Zen Buddhism, the circle (enso) is an important icon signifying *sunyata*, emptiness, “zero,” or absolute negation; especially negation of dualisms such as good-bad and life-death. It is said that Shunryu Suzuki, a pioneering Zen Roshi in America and founder of the San Francisco Zen Center, when asked on his death bed if he had any last words or teaching, simply drew a circle in the air with his index finger.

I don’t know whether the story of drawing a circle in the air influenced me or not, but I invented a hand gesture I call “doing the wheel.” It begins with making a circle in the air with one’s hand, and then making four crisscrossing hand movements to make the eight spokes of the Buddhist Dharma Wheel. Doing the wheel can be used in a variety of ways. You can do it with the steering wheel of your car as a mindfulness practice before driving off. You can do the wheel on your bedroom pillow before laying your head down for the night (this is called sleeping with the Dharma).

Rev. Kuniyuki of the Wahiawa Hongwanji and I had a conversation about circles and the gesture of making a circle. He mentioned that another minister told him that he once overheard a Dharma School child say to a friend, “Circle my heart...” Apparently this phrase was used in the way that in our Christian-influenced society, children learn to say, “Cross my heart...” when emphasizing the truth or sincerity of what they’re talking about.

I was so impressed by this account of a Dharma School child’s “Circle my heart” that I found myself doing a “Circle my heart” gesture whenever I felt something strongly. For example, I used the gesture of circling and tapping my heart with my hand and then extending my arm out in a salute when waving good-bye to a friend when he dropped me off at the West Palm Beach airport. In a later communication he asked about the gesture and said he liked it; it had power and gave him a good feeling. I told him the truth that I just did the gesture subconsciously and that I don’t do it on any regular basis. I did the gesture to express my heart to heart feeling about our friendship, which has lasted over 30 years although separated by thousands of miles and not getting together more than 3 or 4 times over the years. We do keep in touch by telephone or email because we make friendly bets with each other on major sporting events. Speaking of sports, remind me to tell you someday the story of my imagining a Buddhist football player celebrate his making a touchdown by spiking the ball, and then “doing the Wheel” in the end zone.

Back to another circle story from my Hawaii trip. After giving a seminar for the Oahu District at the Wahiawa Hongwanji Temple on a Sunday evening, we relaxed over refreshments in the social hall. I had talked about how to do

all kinds of Gassho’s related to everyday activities. A lady came up to me and said, “I want to Gassho to you” and she made a small circle on my cheek with the side of her hand. She also had me autograph my Bright Dawn book, which were sold earlier (proceeds going to the Shin Buddhist Project). While signing the book, I mentioned a story about how after a talk to a senior citizens group visiting my temple, a lady came up to me and said, “Is it okay if a grandma gives a Buddhist priest a hug?” As I finished telling this story, the lady I was signing the book for said, “Well, I played it safe and just did this...” and she again made a circle on my cheek. Needless to say, I immediately gave her a big hug. These little gems of sharing life together are tremendously rewarding benefits of the Dharma in action.

Some people had read my book previously, and came up to talk to me about the book, as well as having me sign it. I noticed some of the books had extensive notes written in the margins and one was tabbed with several Post-It type markers. Frankly, I was quite awed and humbled by the sincere earnestness of how these people were studying and applying the teachings. Compared to them, I felt “shallow.” The only thing I could do was tell myself to be sincere and to re-dedicate myself to be a worthy sharer of the Dharma.

As I mentioned earlier, I receive so much when I travel and share the Dharma. My treasure chest is full of a special kind of souvenir—the Dharma kind. And we don’t have to go on a special trip. With awareness, we can make everyday trips (such as driving to work, visiting friends, going shopping) a time to discover and enjoy the Dharma teachings.

Reader Reply

I had a wonderful encounter with a turtle on Memorial Monday morning. I was driving through the forest preserves early at about 7 am and saw some movement on the side of the road (a narrow 2 lane road with not much shoulder). I stopped to take a look and here was a turtle, a big one, the size of the circumference of a basketball or bigger. He was trying to cross the road to get to a pond; actually he was trying to go from one pond to another. I took immediate action and pulled my car diagonally to stop any traffic, and to watch this turtle cross the road. After he crossed the street I pulled my car over to the side of the road, granted I stopped three cars from moving and proceeded to watch this turtle go about his business and get to the side of the pond before plopping in.

It was one of those wonderful moments, taking time out to witness this and to think of what the turtle was thinking when setting out from the one pond to get to the other. What an odyssey it must have been for him to travel about 125 yards!!! Robert Sypniewski (Palos Heights, IL)

see Reader Reply on page 6

NEW LAY PROGRAM

We envision a three-stage process. First is the Ti Sarana or Three Treasures Confirmation in which an individual makes a formal declaration of one's intent to follow the Buddhist Path. The second stage is certification as a Lay Dharma Teacher, which involves a period of formal study and of gaining experience in the preparation and giving of Dharma talks. The third stage is induction as a Lay Minister, which involves continued in-depth training and experience in communicating and sharing our Way of Oneness approach.

Two points help describe our Lay Program. The first is that our purpose is not to provide religious training to prepare a person to become a minister in the traditional sense of a profession or occupation. This is the meaning of "lay." A Lay Dharma Teacher or Lay Minister does not function within the context of being employed by a congregation or temple, as is the case for traditional clergy. Both cases, that of lay ministry and that of traditional clergy, have their pro's and con's. It is not suggested that a lay approach is better than the role of traditional clergy. Our Lay Program simply offers a viable and important option that we feel can make a significant contribution and provide a valuable service.

Our focus is on everyday spirituality, rather than activities at a formal place of worship. Our focus on individual spirituality in everyday activities should not be considered to conflict or compete with an individual's existing religious tradition and the way it functions. We want to add something, not take anything away. We consider our approach to complement and enhance any traditional practices that an individual may be following. In fact, we see no need for there to be any promotion of exclusivity. A person could be a student or teacher in several traditions or approaches, perhaps integrating different aspects for optimal benefit.

Of course, our approach can stand on its own for those persons who have no need to integrate it with any existing practices. In such cases, there is nothing wrong with individual spirituality expanding to form a Sangha with like-minded persons. In any case, it is not necessary to be judgmental and criticize other approaches in order to justify what one is doing. We want to be as supportive, open, and inclusive as possible with regard to the "how" of making the teachings available. We recognize that what is "best" varies with time, place, and person.

A related second point about our Lay Program is that it explicitly endorses the concept of lay spiritual teachers. This differs from the usual situation of a sharp separation between lay and clergy, where the clergy delivers the teachings and conducts the religious rituals, and the congregation receives the teachings and is led in the rituals. Instead of this kind of sharply defined dichotomy between lay and clergy, our Lay Program proposes that lay persons be empowered to actively

provide religious teachings and practices rather than just be passive consumers or receivers.

Such empowerment will undoubtedly enhance an individual's spiritual growth. It is quoted, "If you really want to learn something, teach it." This is true because in order to teach and communicate something clearly to others, one's understanding has to be much deeper and more comprehensive than when one is just the consumer of said teachings.

All ministers when reflecting on their spiritual paths, will agree that a deep understanding of the teachings occurred through their ministry, rather than during their earlier years of studying. Although such prior study and training may have laid a necessary foundation, the building of a beautiful temple of understanding, so to speak, took place when, as ministers, they had to express and share the teachings with others.

Our Lay Dharma Teacher and Lay Minister Program involves serving others, and at the same time, is a most effective means to deepen one's own spirituality. The two go hand in hand. Anyone who is serious about his or her spiritual path, is encouraged to become a Lay Dharma Teacher and Lay Minister. The motivation to do this is important because it changes one's attitude toward the teachings. When one takes an active role of responsibility, the teachings are deeply internalized, often in creative ways that make the teachings uniquely one's own.

Interested persons can request information about our Lay Program by contacting us at Bright Dawn Institute, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

American Buddhist Services

The Heartland Sangha holds 11 A.M. Saturday services at Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston (use courtyard entrance on Chicago Avenue). For more information, please call Heartland Sangha at 773-545-9972. Rev. Koyo Kubose's upcoming Dharma Talk titles are:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Jun 17 | Pet Memorial |
| Jul 1 | Religious Freedom
Implications of political issues |
| Jul 15 | Fireworks of Criticism and Anger
How the Buddha handled rude people and verbal abuse |
| Aug 5 | Major Life Changes
Stress and the difference between pain and suffering |
| Aug 19 | Talking to Oneself
Introspection and your inner teacher |
| Sep 2 | Spiritual Plateaus
The good and bad of doing nothing |

Editorial Comment: We received the Reader Reply (page 5) just as we were working on the other turtle stories. Another amazing example of synchronicity! Needless to say, may all these turtle Bodhisavattas inspire us to “keep going” on our own spiritual odysseys. R.S. directly experienced the power of that turtle’s message. I felt it because he sent me his email about it, and now I am forwarding it onto you readers. Even though you are several links away from the direct encounter that R.S. experienced, please do not consider the story as just something interesting that happened to someone else. Instead, take it personally; that is, each of us should feel, “the turtle’s message is for ME!” You can do this by mindfully taking the time to allow the story to sink deeper into yourself; that is, from your head, down into your heart, and then finally into your gut. Allow the story to have the transformative power of really impacting your life.

Great teaching always requires great listening. Is your Awareness Switch on?

NEW ON-LINE SANGHA STORE

1. **Calligraphy** by the late Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose of Japanese Buddhist sayings. An exact color reproduction is mounted on a 4" X 19" brocade holder for wall display; comes with explanatory translation sheet and teaching commentary. \$30.00.
Two sayings available:
“Ichi Go Ichi E” translation: “One Lifetime; One Meeting”
“Nichi Nichi Kore Ko Jitsu” translation: “Every Day is a Good Day”
2. **Oneness T-shirts** available in four colors: black, royal blue, forest green, and charcoal grey; four sizes: S, M, L, XL; black also available in 2XL and 3XL. “Oneness” printed in white script (1 1/2" X 3") over left chest area. \$15.00
3. **Mindfulness Bell Set:** brass bell (2 3/4" diameter), support cushion, and wooden striker. \$32.95
4. **Dharma Wheel Jewelry:** pin, tie clip, or tie-tack, \$25.00; mood-stone necklace or tie clip, \$40.00; 10 k. gold pendant, \$90.00; cross ball-point pen, \$20.00; letter opener, \$5.00
5. **Home Altar Items.** Brass Altar Set: vase, candle holder, incense burner \$40.00 or items also sold separately; ceramic incense burners (from \$15 - \$25)
6. **Wooden Dharma Wheel** (12" diameter) for wall display. \$40.00

The above items can be viewed and purchased at www.brightdawn.org.
We can also take credit card orders by telephone, 847-677-8211. Satisfaction guaranteed!

Acknowledgements with Gratitude Supporters from Sales and Donations

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Change Service Requested

YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES	
JUN	<p>Theme: Body and Mental Posture Purpose: To improve posture and promote an alert, "open" mental attitude Method: Opening-Up Gassho: Starting with palms together in front of heart, move palms apart and elbows backwards. With palms facing forward, try to pinch shoulder blades together. Hold position, then repeat. This exercise is a remedy for rounded-shoulder syndrome resulting from too much sitting at a desk or computer.</p>
JUL	<p>Theme: Shoulder and Mental Tension Purpose: To relax stiff neck and shoulders, and "let go" of unnecessary worry Method: The Yoga Shrug: Lift shoulders, thinking "I don't know;" then let shoulders down, saying "Drop it!" (Courtesy of S.G., Evanston, IL)</p>
AUG	<p>Theme: Spiritual Fitness Purpose: To do a push-up "spiritually" Method: Gassho Push-Up: As you push upward, clap hands together in Gassho (saying a desired recitation is optional). Repeat three times. Most of us will find it necessary to do this exercise as a modified push-up with knees on the floor!</p>

Mailing List Update

If you are already on our mailing list and wish to remain on the list, no action is necessary. We are happy to continue sending our newsletter to all interested persons. If you know someone who would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please indicate below and send to: Bright Dawn Institute, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

Please add to your mailing list Name: _____

Please remove from your mailing list Address: _____