



September 2008 through February 2009

Emptiness Includes Everything - by Heather Sundberg

It is quite humbling to sit down to write an article about emptiness at the end of a 70+ hour work week. But it is also the perfect time to write about it. When I am dead tired, my patience spent, and my mind questioning why I chose to do so many things for others this week, all the lofty ideas about emptiness being revealed through some special state or conditions are laughable, utterly irrelevant.

In moments like these, I remember the words of Lama Tsultrim Allione as she said, "When we look for our true nature, it's indescribable, but what we do find is a kind of warmth, which is compassion." This reminds me of the warm quality of heart which originally motivated me to run my partner's business this week in addition to my job and teaching responsibilities, so he could go to Thailand. Reminding me that I knew in advance, this week would be full, but that it would come and go through a vast space of heart which contains the warmth of happiness for him on his journey.

We have so many ideas about emptiness. We try to wrap our minds around it, intellectually

understand it. Emptiness... empty of what? Why would I want to be empty?

One way I experience emptiness, as 'empty of clinging;' another way to say it is 'empty of struggle.' Now that's something worth getting excited about. We could all probably benefit from a little less struggle in our hearts and lives, certainly in our world.

Personally I prefer using the words 'awareness,' or 'spaciousness' to describe emptiness, these words only pointers to something which can only truly be understood through direct experience.

A radical insight for me about this teaching arose when I realized that emptiness includes even the moments in which I am totally caught—in wanting, aversion, anger, fear...anything. Emptiness does not flee into a dark corner when a challenging mind state comes—in fact emptiness is the warm invisible womb, cradling the whole mess of our humanness. It is simply a question of whether I am viewing my experience primarily through the lens of confusion or the lens of empty awareness. What is coloring my view of this moment?

Each activity, each mind state, each moment of leaning forward or resisting our experience, arises and passes away in empty spaciousness. In this way, emptiness includes everything. As Ajahn Sumedho, abbot of Amaravati monastery in England said, "Awareness is the one-point which includes everything."

I did not always understand emptiness this way. In the early years of my practice, I was on a quest for emptiness, for some exalted awakening, and primarily directed my search within the realms of meditative states which I deemed 'special.' Later, I observed my teacher at the time, Thai forest meditation master Ajahn Jumnian, working with his students. He teaches about MahaSati, the great mindfulness, which is mindfulness of emptiness. I noticed how everyone was talking about emptiness, but that there seemed to be a wide range of experiences and interpretations connected with the word. It was very helpful to me when I discovered a teaching on the "stages of emptiness" from the Vajrayana tradition, which offered levels of emptiness ranging from seeing the self as made

(continued on page 3)



**DHARMA STREAM**

is the newsletter of  
Mountain Stream Meditation Center,  
a nonprofit corporation.

We invite you to send a \$10 or \$25 donation to help defer some of the costs of production and mailing. If you send us your email address we can email your newsletter instead of mailing it. Saving on the rising costs of printing and postage is gratefully appreciated.

Please send generosity checks and mailing list additions/deletions to:

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We appreciate and consider all contributions to the newsletter. Please send articles, commentaries, book reviews, photos, art and poetry to the above address or email articles to [newsletter@mtstream.org](mailto:newsletter@mtstream.org). Submissions may be edited to fit the format of the newsletter.

Other contributions to Mountain Stream are gratefully appreciated. We can exist and continue to work on community due to your generosity. Our teachers and staff at retreats also are dependent on your dana as well.

Dana is a Pali word meaning **GENEROSITY**. Dana is traditionally offered at sitting groups, classes, and retreats to support the teachers and retreat staff to continue their Dharma work. Registration charges do not cover the teachings which are freely given because they are considered priceless. Nor does registration cover the retreat cook or manager. Donations to Mountain Stream may be tax deductible in accordance with the law.

## What Generosity Has Accomplished

by Susan Solinsky



It brings such joy to share this news and to express this gratitude. For the first time, Mountain Stream is able to offer a dana retreat, thanks to the financial generosity of others. This means that we can offer one of this year's upcoming 9-night residential retreats as a dana retreat, that is, based on what retreatants are able to pay.

Many people have been truly generous in giving dana at the end of retreats. Other sangha supporters have contributed to our Retreat Fund. We can now use those donations to offer a retreat to people who might otherwise not be able to come.

Even though we have worked hard to keep residential retreats affordable, the cost of food has risen along with the cost of renting facilities. Our wish is to offer the teachings to as many people as possible at a reasonable rate. In the past, we have used a sliding scale fee at several retreats, and we were awed by the generosity shown to Mountain Stream.

In the deepest sense of the word, dana, brings both the joy of giving and the joy of receiving. All comes from the heart. In gratitude to those who helped create our very first dana retreat.

## We're Going Digital

Starting in 2009 we're going to produce our newsletter for email distribution. We're hoping that we can get many of you to participate online. We would like to hear from you so that we can enter your email into our database.

In order to get your newsletter by email, let us know your name and address. You can:

Email us your address to: [newsletter@mtstream.org](mailto:newsletter@mtstream.org)

Use the enclosed envelope to let us know your email address

or go to [www.mtstream.org/newslettersignup.html](http://www.mtstream.org/newslettersignup.html) and type in the requested information.

Thanks for being part of our community



Emptiness Includes Everything - *continued from front page*

of components which are changing, to experiencing the Buddha nature of all beings. Of course, why would there just be one experience of emptiness?

When I taught a daylong on the topic of emptiness recently in Nevada City, I framed it as 'spacious mind, spacious life.' This experience of emptiness has an everyday flavor, but in my view is no less profound, because it is always available to connect with throughout life's circumstances—ordinary awakening, available moment by moment.

These days, when I teach on this topic, I talk about the teaching of the mala. A mala is made of beads connected by a string. The beads represent the events of our lives. The string represents the awareness running through every event. Are we primarily in relationship with the string of awareness, or have we become fixated on the beads of life's events? I invite my students to develop an ongoing relationship with the element of space: space in the body with each in-breath; space permeating the physical world, which at first glance appears to only be filled with objects; space between thoughts as they pass through the mind. I emphasize ordinary awakening; those moments when we are caught in some mind state, and can we just allow the mind state to live its life unimpeded, without resistance or grasping? Can we allow even the resistance and the grasping to live their lives, without struggling with them, as big as they need to be? Can we be heartfelt and fearless like that?

I am continually inspired by the teaching of the Heart Sutta, which describes the intimate union between emptiness and form. It feels like this article was the 'form' of what I wanted to offer for your reflection and the following poem is the 'emptiness' or the essence of that reflection. May the truth within it stir the truth within you.

Awareness doesn't care if... You are sitting or walking, if you are on retreat at all. If the body hurts, if the mind is being particularly neurotic, If you are alone or with others, moving slowly or quickly, leisurely or rushed, Awareness is not affected by any of that.

*Awareness is ever-present... Available in the midst of all conditions, Completely ordinary. Not dependent on any special state. Until this is realized, and stabilized... One is forever caught in the world of form and convention, of duality, Rushing around searching and clinging endlessly. To that which does not bring peace.*

*Once realized, and stabilized... No matter what the conditions, One always has the choice, the possibility, to simply release clinging to whatever is happening, in habit mind... in outer world. Into Awareness... Which includes everything, but is not caught up in it. Not imposing anything extra upon experience... One is free, to be who one is, the largeness and the smallness, without apology, without explanation or meaning, living out this precious human life.*

*With all it's pitfalls and grace.*



*Between Becoming*

by Francesca Gentile

Between darkness and dawn  
At moments of wakeful sleep  
As thoughts wander in and out  
of stillness

I sense. .

The potentiating night  
The fertile winter  
The nourishing windswept  
nature of grieving  
The hollow cup longing for  
refreshment

Can you feel that spacious place  
wherein everything becomes  
no-thing  
Of which nothing can call forth  
any-thing?

There we dance, you & I,  
without movement  
about to become, or not, some  
thing  
and I know that I know nothing  
in its fullness

A barren plain gone to seed



Bali

by John Travis

Hindu Island, somewhere along the equator  
the gecko's awesome call, birds happy with life;  
singing loudly in the mango tree.

People, knowing the simple heart of spirit;  
rituals- calling out for prosperity and protection.  
Nature and their gods kindly giving them both!

the body softens from humidity and heat.  
This mind with its restless nature,  
seeking refuge from its habits;  
one small longing; cascading into torrents of  
imaginings.  
finding the center - a small boat tossing back and  
forth.

At first it seems so solid, this center of centers;  
but from stillness, one senses, one feels!  
Oh! the little boat of awareness,  
rising and falling, moving and shifting,  
never one place.

Where is the safety in this?  
standing on shifting sands.  
Life slipping through ones fingers.  
okay, okay!  
this little boat has only a sea anchor;  
drifting on the currents of karma.

stepping back from this rising and falling,  
mind as wide as the ocean;  
heart softens.

Kanji Symbol

Ku



Japanese Calligraphy  
by  
John Noel

Beginning Meditation Classes

Auburn

**Sept 30 - Oct 28**

5 consecutive Tuesdays

5:30 to 7:00 PM

Sutter Roseville Hospital

\$40 for the series

Maeve Hassett /Mary Helen Fein

530-887-9400



Grass Valley/Nevada City

**Oct 19 - Nov 23**

6 consecutive Sundays

5:30 - 7:00 PM, \$30 for the course

Wild Mountain Yoga Center

574 Searles Ave.

Nevada City

Margo Cooper/Susan Sugarman

(530) 470-0609





# Mountain Stream Meditation Center

## Retreats & Events

Sept 2008 through Feb 2009

### Sept 8, 9 - Mon - Tues 7:30-9:00pm

Guest Teacher at Sitting Groups  
Shanti Soule  
Monday, Nevada City, Wild Mtn Yoga  
Tuesday, Auburn, Canyon Spirit Yoga  
Sacramento Buddhist

### Sept 8-14, Mon - Sun

Residential Retreat  
Sacramento Insight Meditation  
John Travis & Dennis Warren  
Angela Center  
Santa Rosa, CA  
(916) 447-9999

### Sept 29 - Mon - 7:30-9:00pm

Guest Teacher at Sitting Group  
Tony Bernard  
From Davis, CA Sangha  
Nevada City, Wild Mountain Yoga Ctr

### Oct 11, 12 - Sat - Sun

Cooking and Dharma:  
Lessons in Cooking  
Registration start Wed, Sept 10  
2 Daylongs  
Michelle and Amy, Spirit Rock Cooks  
Auburn, CA  
Mary Helen 530-887-9400  
maryhelen@parallaxdesigngroup.com

### Oct 24 - Nov 2, Fri - Sun

Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Granite Creek Ranch  
Jackson, Wyoming  
Jan or Peg Mathiesen 307-733-1966  
or Heidi Harrison 307-739-8813

### Nov 7 -14, Fri - Fri

Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Selma, Indiana  
Pat Dolan 513-921-5377

### Nov 8, Sun 9 -5

Daylong  
Heather Sundburg  
Nevada City  
Susan 530-470-8902

### Nov 18, Tues 7:30 - 9:00

Guest Teacher at Sitting Group  
Tony Bernard  
From Davis, CA Sangha  
Auburn - Canyon Spirit Yoga Center

### Nov 23 - Nov 30, Sun - Sun

Thanksgiving Retreat  
7 Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis, Robert Hall, Anna Douglas,  
Wes Nisker  
Spirit Rock, Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164

### Dec 1 - Dec 6, Mon - Fri 7:30 - 9:00 Sat 9 - 5

Household Retreat  
5 Weeknights  
Daylong Saturday Dec 6  
John Travis  
Nevada City  
Susan 530-470-8902

### Dec 16 - Dec 21, Tues - Sun

Solstice Retreat  
5 Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis, Donald Rothberg and  
Others  
Spirit Rock, Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164

### Dec 26 - Jan 3, Fri - Sat

New Year's Retreat  
8 Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis, Gil Fonsdal, Sharda Rogell,  
Adrienne Ross  
Spirit Rock, Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164

2009

### Feb 13 - 22, Fri - Sun

9 Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Shasta Lake, near Redding, CA  
Jenna 530-756-4494  
jenna@mtstream.org

### Mar 2 - Mar 29, Mon - Sun

Month Long (27 Nights)  
Residential Retreat  
John Travis, Jack Kornfield, Gil Fonsdal,  
Trudi Goodman, Maria Mannschatz,  
Adrienne Ross  
Spirit Rock  
Woodacre, CA  
415-488-0164

### Apr 17 - 26, Fri - Sun

9 Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis,  
Granite Creek Ranch  
Jackson, Wyoming  
Jan or Peg Mathiesen 307-733-1966  
or Heidi Harrison 307-739-8813

### May 2, Sat

Daylong  
John Travis  
Chico, CA  
Tracy 530-893-3438

### May 9, 10, Sat - Sun

Sat Daylong  
Sun Evening Talk  
John Travis  
Sacramento  
Cynthia 916-768-3415

### May 28 - 31, Thurs - Sun

3 Night Residential Retreat  
John Travis  
Bodega Bay, CA  
Amy 530-204-8314  
ajboyer@gmail.com

For the most up to date  
retreat information, please  
visit our website at:  
[www.mtstream.org](http://www.mtstream.org)



*Contributions of any amount are  
always welcome. We especially  
appreciate dana earmarked for  
our Residential Retreat Fund.*

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Last year's leaves remain on  
the ground

woodpecker knocks at my  
heart

frog sings in the pond



-Coram Yogi

Nevada City Sitting Group Topics

Wild Mountain Yoga Center - Monday 7:30 - 9:00 pm.

- Sept 8 Shanti Soule - Visiting Teacher
- Sept 15 Mary Helen Fein - Delusion
- Sept 22 TBA
- Sept 29 Toni Bernard - Visiting Teacher
- Oct 6 David Judd - Zen philosopher and poet, Huang Po
- Oct 13 Margo Cooper

Auburn Sitting Group Topics

Canyon Spirit Yoga Center - Tuesday 7:30 - 9:00 pm.

- Sept 9 Shanti Soule - Visiting Teacher
- Sept 16 David Judd
- Sept 23 Mary Helen Fein - Delusion
- Sept 30 Susan Sugarman
- Oct 7 TBA
- Oct 14 Margo Cooper
- Oct 21 TBA
- Oct 28 Susan Sugarman
- Nov 4 TBA
- Nov 11 Mary Helen Fein
- Nov 18 Tony Bernard - Visiting Teacher
- Nov 25 Maeve Hassett
- Dec 2 Mary Helen Fein
- Dec 9 Anita Hansen
- Dec 16 Linda Franklin

Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to all. Please be sure to call as the locations listed are tentative. Potluck at 6pm, meet at 7pm.

- Sept 14 Maeve Hassett (530) 8781332
- Oct 12 Linda Franklin & David Judd (530) 823-7952
- Nov 16 John Travis (530) 263-4096
- Dec 14 Susan Ford (530) 885-9495

Dharma Talks by John Travis

John Travis's Dharma talks are available on our website. Please visit our website, [www.mt.stream.org](http://www.mt.stream.org) for more information. You can download and listen to over 60 of our talks. Enjoy!

Area Sitting Groups

**Auburn**

Canyon Spirit Yoga Ctr  
538 Auburn Ravine  
Tues—7:30–9:00 PM  
Mary Helen 530-878-9400  
maryhelen@mtstream.org

**Carson City, NV**

Dharma Zephyr Sangha  
Mon—7:00–9:00 PM  
Christy 775-882-1662  
strawgold@att.net

**West Wind Sangha**

Thurs—6:30–8:30 PM  
Nevan 775-841-1695  
nevan@powernet.net

**Chico**

Thurs—7:00–8:30 PM  
Dharma Study Group  
Nancie 530-898-9139

**Heart of the Lotus Sangha**

Tues—6:30–8:15 PM  
Tracy 530-774-4580  
moonchuckle@sbcglobal.net

**Davis**

Thurs—7:00–8:30 PM  
Chuck 530-750-3132

**Mon—7:00–9:00 PM**

and 2nd Saturdays  
9:00 am–12:30 PM  
Tony & Toni 530-758-2904

**Minden/Gardnerville, NV**

Minden Meditation Group  
Tues—6:30–8:00 PM  
Constance 775-267-2850  
calexander@gbis.com

**Nevada City/Grass Valley**

Wild Mountain Yoga Ctr  
574 Searls Avenue  
Mon—7:30–9:00 PM  
Barbara 530-272-6425  
barbara@mtstream.org

**Paradise**

Ctr for Spiritual Awareness  
789 Billie Road  
Thurs—6:30–8:00 PM  
Eileen 530-872-3916

**Placerville**

Placerville Sangha  
Monday 7:00-8:30  
Will 530-626-6579  
mettaphoto@mac.com

**Reno, NV**

Wed—7:00–9:00 PM  
Janet 775-690-0752

**Tues—6:00-7:30 p.m.**

One River Sangha  
Rainbow Place  
oneriversangha@gmail.com  
or 775-813-7155

**Rocklin/Roseville**

Rocklin Montessori School  
5250 Fifth Street  
Mon—6:30–8:00 pm  
Maeve 530-878-1332  
Mary Helen 530-887-9400  
maryhelen@mtstream.org

**Sacramento**

Sun—7:00–8:45 PM  
Sacramento Buddhist  
Meditation Group  
Voice Mail 916-491-4788

**2nd & 4th Thurs**

7:00–9:15 PM  
Sacramento Insight Meditation  
Dennis 916-447-9999

**Truckee**

Thurs—6:45–9:00 PM  
Cathy 530-587-0948

**South Lake Tahoe**

Sun—7:00–9:00 PM  
Steve 530-541-4956

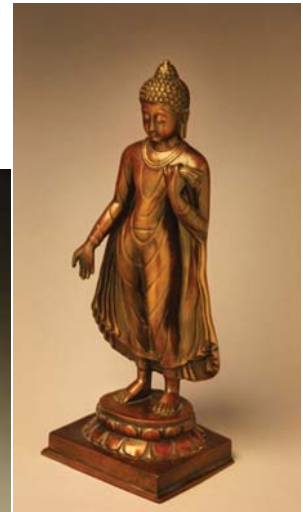


If you would like to be taken off of our mailing list and receive future newsletters by email, please contact us at: [newsletter@mtstream.org](mailto:newsletter@mtstream.org)

## Sculptures

Artist John Mowen has created a bronze sculpture inspired by and dedicated to Mountain Stream. The piece is a representation of a mountain, a stream and the Buddha. The bronze sculpture embodies the stillness and strength of the Dharma. It is 7 ½ inches high.

The sculpture may be purchased for \$350. Foundry costs to produce each piece is \$150; each sale will generate a \$200 contribution to Mountain Stream. The standing Buddha and the Medicine Buddha are cast bronze reproductions of very old Nepali Buddhas, and are \$550 per piece. John has graciously donated his creativity, his work and his time.



We invite you to contribute and have "Mountain Stream" in your home. Make checks payable to Mountain Stream and send your order to P.O. Box 4362, Auburn, CA 95604.



KU - Gyosho

The human world flies impossibly  
fast outside my window.  
It leaves no trace  
This world seems distant, if not apart  
from me at times.  
But it's the prime of your life, they say.  
I smile, light a candle, and sit and medi-  
tate someplace.  
Someplace far from that window.

Japanese Calligraphy and Poem  
by  
John Noel



## Emptiness

by Patricia Coia

Emptiness to me is the merging, the dove-tailing, if you will, of two truths: conventional reality and ultimate truth. Other terms sometimes used—although I wonder if they mean exactly the same—are: secular and sacred; material and spiritual; manifested and un-manifested. Conventional reality (all that appeals to our senses) is the emerging flow and disappearance of momentary phenomena in and out of emptiness. Conventional reality by itself is illusory. The true nature of all conventional reality, then, is emptiness, the eternal, ultimate reality where there are no separate identities, no distinctions, no separate self, no dualities at all.

Somehow in our lives we try to hold together these two truths—conventional reality and ultimate truth—simultaneously, often moving back and forth, paying attention and being mindful of it all.

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## Emptiness

by Tom McCormack



Emptiness is not a state of merely allowing the astral sediment to settle to the bottom of ones microcosm. It is a pure (centrapetal) flowering field where all astral residue is vacuumed out of ones personality figure. Through this non-dual etheric process, a deep void is created where silence and stillness reside. This is true Kung which leads one the place of samadhi and nirvana.

The basis of this sacred work is a triadigm. Observing ones dreams and practicing vacuumed meditations before bed. . . and implementing one-pointed prayer upon waking. Advanced initiates use cold water meditations to purify their microcosm and hot-water bath meditations to deepen their receptive modes. The use of water in meditation allows one to magnify and multiply their practice!



## Grateful Emptiness

by Jenna McAsey



What is full in my mind must empty  
What is hard in my heart must soften  
and empty  
what beckons in space is every thing  
and no thing  
All that desires form is longing to be free of form  
more empty  
more ordinary  
not this  
no words to describe this emptying out..  
emptying in....  
grateful emptiness

*The Ground of Emptiness* - by Maeve Hassett

I was out walking during a retreat one morning recently and a memory came back to me. It was of being in my high school science class. The teacher pointed to a desk and explained that although we experienced the desk as solid, it was actually filled with the movement of atoms and the protons and neutrons that comprise the atoms. In other words it was filled with space and movement.

Walking that morning experiencing a felt spaciousness, and remembering the shift in my understanding that began all those years ago in science class elicited a further shift in my understanding. I got to thinking about the line from the Heart Sutra "Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form." It occurred to me that it is about foreground and background. If we put our attention on form, emptiness recedes. If we put our attention on emptiness, form recedes.

We have a choice. We can experience through the familiar container of forms, concepts and ideas or we can experience through emptiness. Besides emptiness, other words used in translating the Sanskrit word sunyata are boundless and open. When we choose to experience through the lens of form we get the familiar—sometimes comforting, sometimes stressful, sometimes tedious, but always bound in our conditioned learning. When we choose to experience boundless, open emptiness the now

becomes wild and free. We become part of the arising and passing of all phenomenon, and we can experience the raw beauty that is our true essence. This is the ground of emptiness that is our true home.

Cultivating and nurturing a deep knowing of emptiness facilitates the infusion of spaciousness into the conditioned world of form just as all those years ago the desk in my high school science class was revealed to be filled with movement and space.



"Illusion"  
Photo by  
Kristin Rosenqvist



Mountain Stream  
Meditation Center

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### **Mountain Stream Meditation Center**

is a nonprofit organization, a vipassana community of Buddhist meditation groups dedicated to open heart, open mind. Retreats are held in various locations from the Sacramento Valley to the Eastern Sierras. Local meditation retreats are small and intimate. They feature vipassana instruction, sitting/walking meditation, group or individual meetings with the teacher, opening and closing circles, vegetarian fare, and dharma talks.

### **John M. Travis**

has been teaching meditation since 1986. He studied in Asia with senior teachers of both Theravada and Tibetan traditions and completed a four-year teacher training with Jack Kornfield. He is the founding teacher of Mountain Stream Meditation Center in Nevada City, California, and a teacher for Spirit Rock Center, a Buddhist retreat and training center in Marin County. John has a private practice as a meditation counselor and has trained in Hakomi body-centered therapy. For appointments call (530) 263-4096.

### **Insight Meditation**

is a simple and accessible vehicle for opening the heart, clearing the mind, and living in a peaceful and free way. It is based on a 2,500 year old Buddhist practice which trains a clear awareness of breath and body, heart and mind, and the universal laws which govern our lives.