



## PROFILE OF MATTHEW SMALL

By Gary Farrell

When one casts one's gaze upon the grandeur that is Tashi Choling—the gardens, prayer flags, and temple—the question inevitably becomes: “What was the motivation way back in the 1970s that produced this beautiful creation dedicated to the spirit of enlightenment?” Who were these early pioneers who planted the Bodhi seeds that have grown to become this “Forest of Enlightened Activity” that is Tashi Choling?

Matthew Small is one of the few pioneers who witnessed and participated in the birthing and early development of Tashi Choling. To this day, Matthew calls the Colestin Valley home. The grandson of a Scottish stone mason and son of an Airforce officer with an MD in psychiatry, Matthew was the eldest of four, born in 1954 in San Francisco.

While his early childhood took him and his family to Boston, Florida, and the Philippines, he returned to his beloved

San Francisco at age 10. This was the height of the “Consciousness Movement” and Mat soon found himself in the middle of the anti-war movement. After high school graduation in 1972, Mat threw himself into a number of jobs that allowed him to live in the epicenter of San Francisco's hip culture and progressive movement. While chaos and protests surrounded this young man, it was in house painting that Matthew found the contemplative enjoyment that, as he says, “allowed my mind to be free and roam all day while I painted.”

At age 14, Matthew discovered a book that became a watershed to his spiritual development. It was the Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu, the great elucidator of Daoism. At age 16, Mat had a Hindu teacher, Sant Keshavedas, who taught from the Bhagavad Gita.

In 1976, Matthew was living in San Francisco with some very creative folks in an artists' collective at the historic Goodman Building. It was a utopian kind of experiment until a developer broke his promise to the collective and everyone was forced out. But Mat didn't leave empty-handed. While living in the collective, he found his soulmate, Carolyn Myers. Soon Carolyn was pregnant with their first child. The couple decided to leave the city and get back to nature.

Oregon was a hip place for the “Greens” of that era, so in 1978, Carolyn Myers and Mat moved in with their friends Starkywolf and Virago, who lived in the Pyramid House, a building on the hill south of where the temple now stands. The Rainbow Star commune was quite active at that time on land that now

houses Tashi Choling. After the birth of Uma, their first born, Mat and Carolyn moved to Ashland.

In late 1978, Gyatrul Rinpoche and Sangye Khandro came to Ashland at the invitation of Gaea Yudron and Shandor Weiss. The land on which Tashi Choling now stands was purchased through the generosity of Richard Schwindt and Marlee Heathcote. Soon Gyatrul Rinpoche and Sangye Khandro magnetized an enthusiastic sangha, and the Dharma indeed “came to the Land of the Redman.”

Matthew and Carolyn had checked out many teachers at this time, but no one compared to Gyatrul Rinpoche and the lamas who began to come to the land and the place called Tashi Choling. “They just blew my mind,” says Mat about those early years. Matthew received an Amitabha empowerment from Gyatrul Rinpoche, took refuge, and never looked back.

In summarizing why he has stayed for so long, Mat reflected: “It has really been incredible. Dudjom Rinpoche was here. The Karmapa came to Portland. They planted the seeds and Rinpoche invited so many great lamas, Yangthang Tulku Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche, and on and on.”

In 1996, Mat was authorized by Gyatrul Rinpoche to present teachings on the Dudjom Tersar Ngondro. He offers these annually at Tashi Choling, usually during the summer season.

Mat said he truly has enjoyed laboring on the temple and East Wing. It was a labor of love. He added, “I would have



*1998 photo at the East Wing shows Mat (right) with Nick O'Connor and Chris McKinnies. Mat and Chris were the main builders of the East Wing*

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been in all kinds of trouble if I was not preoccupied with being part of Rinpoche's construction team.”

To this, those who know Matthew Small might add that Mat's name really should be “enormous.” His labor, his dedication to the Dharma, his hearty laugh and appreciation of humor are indeed enormous contributions to the history and future of Tashi Choling.

# Sangha News June 2017

Here are a few recent photos of Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche



*This photo was taken recently at Orgyen Dorje Den, where Rinpoche enjoyed a beautiful new addition to the shrine room area.*



*Gyatrul Rinpoche, Lingtrul Rinpoche, and His Holiness Getse Rinpoche at Gyatrul Rinpoche's residence in Half Moon Bay.*



*Gyatrul Rinpoche looked over a recently published booklet that describes the leadership and administration of Tashi Choling.*



*Okay, it's true that this one doesn't really qualify as very recent, but isn't it a great photo of Rinpoche and Tendar, Lama Chonam's son?*

# Sangha News

## June 2017

### ***An Open Letter to the Tashi Choling Sangha and Our Beloved Dharma Teachers... from Christian and Renee Altman***

We would like to express our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude towards our Vajra family at Tashi Choling, as well as our deepest and humblest thank you to our Teachers, Lama Chonam and Sangye Khandro.



Some of you may have been aware that on April 1st of this year, we had a large wedding celebration in Los Angeles. It was an amazing time for us for so many reasons. We were able to celebrate our love with our immediate families. We were able to see friends and family that had been distant for as long as 7 years. We reconnected with friends. We gave gifts to people we cared for and got to share our joy and gratitude for all of the support we have experienced during the entirety of our relationship. From start to finish, the wedding and reception went off well and everywhere that we looked on our wedding day, we saw smiling, happy, and content people. We had already been married for a year, so this was a second run for us!

Lama Chonam and Sangye Khandro allowed us to come to Tashi Choling just over one year ago and they gave us an empowerment, offered their blessings,

and allowed us to exchange vows. Because we had one marriage under the belt, we felt prepared and rooted in our union before we even got to Los Angeles. Lama Chonam gave us a wonderful teaching that we return to often; he told us to keep things “uplifted.”



Our Geku, Nick, shared a brief story about the Ven. Gyatrul Rinpoche on a wedding occasion many years ago. Nick told us that Rinpoche looked at the bride and groom and said: “The marriage vows are vows to Samsara. But you can make a vow today to practice the Dharma.”

Every bit of what we have learned from the Sangha and our Excellent Teachers helps us in every possible aspect of our lives. We truly feel that our relationship, our health, our opportunities, and all of our joy come as gifts from the Triple Gem. This letter is to express our gratitude, especially to Rinpoche, who constantly teaches us and reminds us to return to the Dharma, who motivates us toward the Path, and who Embodies all of the Highest Qualities we could ever hope to attain.

Thank you to the Triple Gem and Tashi Choling for allowing us to Practice.

# Sangha News June 2017



Photo by David Gordon

## Monthly Meditation Gatherings with Lama Chonam and Sangye Khandro

For the past 2 years, Lama Chonam and Sangye Khandro have been offering monthly Guided Meditation gatherings on the first Sunday of the month from 10:30am-noon. These meetings attract many curious new comers and longtime students.

About 25-30 people attended the May gathering. With a focus on the book, *Our Pristine Mind*, by Orgyen Chowang Rinpoche, Sangye Khandro gave an eloquent and inspiring talk on Dzogchen, the Great Perfection.

"This book makes the teachings accessible to anyone, even one who is not a Buddhist. Dzogchen is unique. It can be accessed right now...We were born with this. It is our birthright. When we die, the nature of mind never dies," Sangye said.

Using the book as a reference, she continued, outlining the role of primordial fear in solidifying a fixation on self as truly existing.

In this process, Sangye said, our connection with our primordial mind has been eclipsed. "We are lost in mental events," she noted. "We think that mental events are normal."

"We overvalue and even cherish our own thoughts, taking pride in them," Sangye said, suggesting that "clearing away the mental debris we have hoarded for so long" is a necessary step in relaxing into our pristine mind, which is open and stainless.

Lama Chonam spoke and led a meditation. The gathering concluded with questions and answers.

The book, *Our Primordial Mind*, is a beautifully written doorway into Dzogchen, and these monthly gatherings provide a unique and intimate way to connect with Sangye and Lama Chonam in order to deepen your dharma practice. Highly recommended.

---Gaea Yudron

# Sangha News

## June 2017

### **Diane Taudvin and Regen Armstrong Wed in May at Tashi Choling**



Amidst a happy gathering of family, friends, and sangha members, Diane Taudvin and Regen Armstrong were married at Tashi Choling on May 27th. H.H. Getse Rinpoche officiated. A reception at Temple Emek Shalom followed. Soon after their wedding, the couple departed for a honeymoon in Europe. On their return, they will continue to cultivate amazing gardens at their home in rural Phoenix, Oregon.

### **Philip Thomas**



Philip spoke to a full house at the Ashland Independent Film Festival recently about the making of the classic western, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, and

his career as a set designer in Hollywood.

### **Brian Pittman**



Brian Pittman recently became board certified in orthopedic nursing. Brian got his RN in June 2014 and is working at Providence Hospital on the spine and orthopedic floor.



# Sangha News June 2017

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Tormapalooza

At the Tormapalooza, sangha members gathered to create a month's worth of tormas for daily offerings made by Ani Baba. With a month of retreats coming up, the ready-made tormas make it easier for our dedicated Ani Baba, who has been doing daily practices at Tashi Choling for many years.



*from front left, Alexis, Keith, Ani Yeshe, and Christian*



*Taking a lunch break together*



*Ani Baba at work*

## Mahdu Coats and Rain Howell Hang Prayer Flags



On the full moon day in May, Mahdu and Rain hung new prayer flags at the main entry to Tashi Choling on the Colestin Road. The flags were donated by the Dorje family.

# Sangha News June 2017

## Laurie Gadbois' Mosaics at Bandon Library Show



*This is a detail of Laurie Gadbois' mosaic titled, "Indigo Beast," one of several of her pieces on exhibit at the Bandon Library's June mosaic show.*



*Photo by Billy Wisdom*

## Meditation Gatherings Offered in Siskiyou County

Shamatha-Vipassana meditation sessions are offered monthly at Gary and Vira Farrell's home. The Farrells recently converted their garage from being the Light of Berotsona's California fulfillment center into a

shrine room. According to the couple, they are continuing here what they began twenty-five years ago when they developed a "living room sangha" in their country home outside of Bakersfield. It became connected to Tashi Choling in the mid-1990s with Gyatrul Rinpoche, Lama Chonam, and Sangye Khandro all presenting teachings.



Gatherings meet monthly at 10 am and include two 20-minute sessions interspersed with walking meditation. After meditation, participants enjoy snacks and tea outdoors overlooking the Klamath River and Mt. Shasta. Contact Gary and Vira at [2yogisonklamath@gmail.com](mailto:2yogisonklamath@gmail.com) for the next monthly gathering date.

# Sangha News      June 2017



*photo by Billy Wisdom*

## THE NEXT ISSUE OF SANGHA NEWS WILL APPEAR IN AUGUST

Please email your suggestions or news for the August issue to [gaea.laughing@gmail.com](mailto:gaea.laughing@gmail.com) by July 15<sup>th</sup>.

## Last but not least.... CARTOON CORNER



*Thanks to Linda Jo Enger for this cartoon.*

## SANGHA CLASSIFIEDS

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