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The Treasure Vase

By Carolyn Myers

I first met Gyatrul Rinpoche in September 1978 when he visited Ashland and gave teachings at Gaea and Shandor's house and at the local college. At that time, I was living in a tipi next to the Pyramid House at the top of the meadow on the very land that would become Tashi Choling. The first time I stepped upon the land, coming to visit friends at the Rainbow Star commune, I felt as if a bolt of lightning went through my body. Of course, I could never have imagined all that would unfold in that precious place.

By June of 1980, I had, through the advice of Gyatrul Rinpoche, traveled to the Bay Area to attend talks and ceremonies given by both the Dalai Lama and His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, begun what must have been a very cursory reading of that first English translation of the Dudjom Tersar Khandro Tuk Tig, and assisted with a few preparations for the visit of

His Holiness to Ashland. But I had not yet taken refuge. I was a Fencesitter, as Gyatrul Rinpoche called me then.

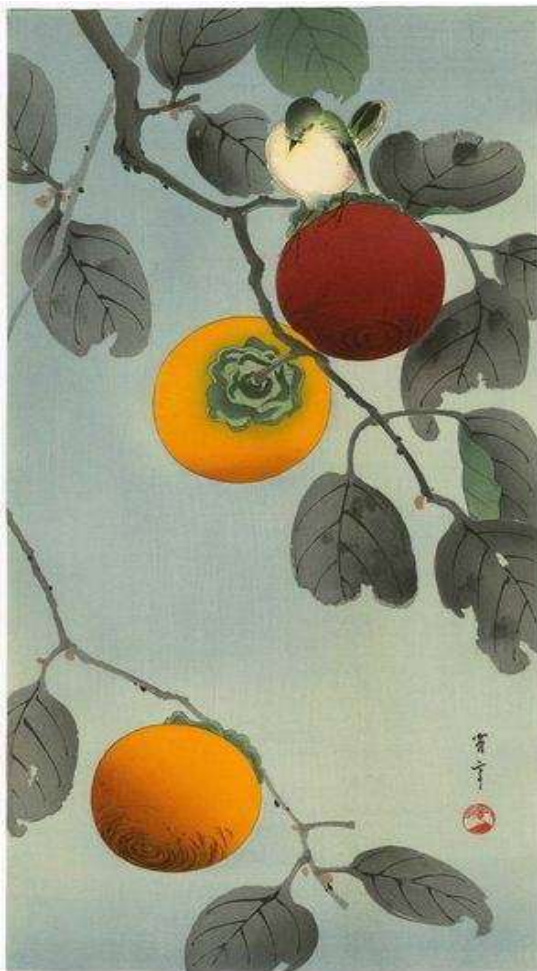
This story is much more about my own naivete than about Rinpoche, but I will share it anyway. Maybe two days before the day of the land blessing, we were invited to contribute to a treasure vase that would be used in the land blessing ceremony. Rinpoche told us to bring jewels of real value, whatever we could. Now I was only one step removed from my tipi-living self of the year before, and jewels were not a big part of my belongings. However, I did have a snake-headed gold ring that my grandfather had acquired on a trip to China, and a necklace that had belonged to my grandmother's mother, which my grandmother had managed to keep through a traumatic passage to America in the 1870s—including the cinema-like story of sewing it into her clothes when she spent time in an orphanage in New York.

I gladly and with total open-hearted generosity brought these family treasures to be added to the treasure vase—BECAUSE it never occurred to me that they would not be returned to me after the ceremony! That's how much I didn't know. When His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche buried the treasure vase in the ground, my jaw dropped. I accidentally met the eye of Gyatrul Rinpoche, and he started laughing and made the mudra

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one makes when offering the mandala. During the subsequent years, I have often thought of that day when doing mandala practice.

Gyatrul Rinpoche is my precious root teacher. But that moment with His Holiness was the first pointing-out instruction that I was able to take in. The beginning of the end for Fencesitter had blossomed. It's ridiculous how the memory still makes me tear up in gratitude.



SANGHA SPOTLIGHT: DOUG COL

by Gary Farrell



Doug Col was born in east San Jose in 1948. He came of age in the 1960s at U.C. Santa Cruz so perhaps it is not surprising that he describes his father as being “politically to the right of Attila the Hun.” Doug’s best friend became a Hell’s Angel. A few years later that friend became infamous as the Angel who stabbed a man at the Altamont rock concert. While his neighborhood was becoming a hotbed for Mexican gangs and the Hells Angels, Doug maintained a good rapport with both groups, as well as the “country club set,” some of whom went on to become PGA golfers.

At U.C. Santa Cruz, Doug threw his heart, body, and soul into the psychedelic and radical left

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movements. The faculty preceptor in his dorm was the minister of education for the Black Panther Party, and soon Doug was hiding guns for the Panthers while dealing drugs with the Hells Angels and studying quantum mechanics and neurobiology.

He started an underground radio station in his dorm that played Grateful Dead music. He and his radical friends were outraged when then Governor Ronald Reagan fired UCLA professor Angela Davis for being a communist. When Governor Reagan came to U.C. Santa Cruz to give a speech, Doug and his friends chased Reagan into a utility closet and kept him there, along with his security people, until he agreed to answer their questions.

The list of Doug's "monkey-wrench" activities goes on and on. At one point, he was kicked off a bus full of Vietnam War-era inductees because he was deemed to be "undesirable" for military service. At another point, he got involved in experimental theater work with Steve Kent from the L.A. Company Theater, and became the principal player in an avant-garde theater piece that later traveled widely across the U.S. and Europe.

By that time, Doug's feelings about life and reality shifted. He had taken LSD at a friend's party and then had sex for the first time and realized that reality was much bigger than anyone had imagined. He continued to use

psychedelics for several years, and committed himself to exploring new dimensions of art, consciousness, and reality.

After earning Bachelor's degrees in psychobiology and mathematics at U.C. Santa Cruz, Doug went on to a graduate program in psychobiology at U.C. Irvine. While there, he met and studied shamanism with Carlos Castaneda, who was a guest lecturer. Doug was in Castaneda's graduate seminar and met with him individually on a regular basis. While he realized that there was power to Castaneda's teachings, he eventually saw that this path lacked wisdom, so he pulled out. (A couple of years later, Doug ran into Castaneda again and realized that Castaneda had ended up losing his humanity in his pursuit of powers).

Years later, Doug went back to school, completing his Master's and Ph.D. degrees in clinical psychology, after which he did postdoctoral work with Elkhonon Goldberg, one of the world's foremost neuropsychologists. While his mainstream educational path was concluding, his spirit was seeking something more. He read a book by Rolling Thunder, a native American healer, whom he met and who in turn introduced him to Grandfather Semu Huaute, a Chumash medicine man. Semu decided Doug needed a wife, performed his medicine, and soon a woman, whom Doug had known but lost contact with, arrived from England with the intention of marrying

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him--a native American arranged marriage! (While the marriage didn't last, it did give him a wonderful daughter, Laurel.)

Soon after marriage, Doug contracted a crippling form of arthritis. He sought out Chagdud Rinpoche, who diagnosed him with demonic possession and gave him a Red Hayagriva practice to solve the problem. A few months later, Doug met Gyatrul Rinpoche and Sangye Khandro and ended up moving to Ashland to study with them. His Hayagriva practice was refined by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, and soon all symptoms of crippling arthritis disappeared.

During this time, construction had begun at the Yeshe Nyingpo temple in the Colestin (now Tashi Choling), and Doug received a letter from H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche asking that he be the treasurer of the project. He was the town center's umzed for several years and worked to compile practice texts, recordings and teachings, and the first comprehensive Mirror of Wisdom audio-video archive (now Vimala Archives).

Wanderlust was still alive within him, so in the year 2000, he led a group of pilgrims on an epic trek over the Himalayas to Mt. Kailas in western Tibet. There were numerous auspicious signs when he practiced while doing kora around the mountain. On Drolma-la, he led a

White Tara puja that included 100 monks and yak herders.

At this point, Doug is very much at home in Ashland where he works as a psychotherapist and pediatric and geriatric neuropsychologist. He also supports Sangye Khandro and Lama Chonam's work with Light of Berotsana, recording their events and producing CDs, DVDs, and practice texts related to their dharma activities.

While some may consider him a rebel, it is good to remember that Siddhartha Gautama Buddha himself was considered a revolutionary. The Buddha said that enlightenment is for all, not just Brahmins, and he attracted followers from all castes of society. In the same way, this radical nature is true for so many of the cultural creatives within our sangha. Many have challenged conventional norms and explored the deeper nature of consciousness. For Doug Col, this includes living a life that has been devoted to healing, therapy, and the saving of human lives, whether or not his patients are Buddhists.

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Photo by Gaea Yudron

The Casellis Have Moved!

Barbara and Renato Caselli, two dear sangha members who have contributed so much over the years, recently moved to the east coast. This is our loss on many levels. We send them love and wish them well!

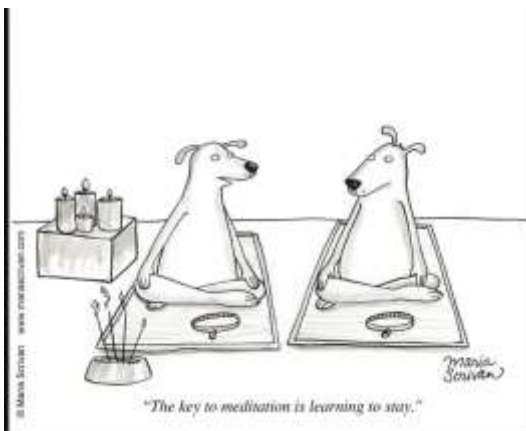
Tibet Treasures is Closing



Photo by Ani Yeshe

After 17 years, Thubrig Dorje and Sonam Drolma have decided to close Tibet Treasures at the end of December. Fortunately, Sonam and Thubrig will remain here within our local sangha. May this change be of benefit to them on all levels. Stop by to say hello and do some holiday shopping before they close!

CARTOON CORNER



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Lama Bruce Newman Begins Fifth Cycle of Marig Munsel

By Gaea Yudron



Photo by Ani Yeshe

Lama Bruce is one of those pioneers who began his dharma career in Nepal and India in the 70s. Over the years, he has contemplated how he might contribute to making the dharma accessible to Westerners. “I think many of the people of my generation who began studying then always felt they were destined to be bridges in that way,” he said in a recent conversation.

During our talk, Lama Bruce pointed out that people raised in Asian Buddhist countries are raised to automatically have faith, trust, and devotion. However, Western people raised in a busy secular/materialist society bring various concepts and beliefs with them when they enter the world of dharma. A process of unlearning and letting go needs to

happen so that faith, trust, and devotion can blossom. Also, in traditional cultures there is a fairly strong division between the monastic community and the laity with their own clearly defined view and practices. In the West, that is not the case. He likes to quote the Zen master Suzuki Roshi about the situation of Western dharma students. “You’re not monks, but you’re not exactly laymen either,” Suzuki Roshi noted.

Lama Bruce had already been teaching at Tashi Choling for seven years when he developed a 4-year program that was given the name Marig Munsel (Clearing Away the Darkness of Ignorance) by Gyatrul Rinpoche. I was among those in the first Marig Munsel, which began in the fall of 2001 and included quite a few established sangha members as well as some newcomers. It was a rich experience in terms of study, practice, and lively dialog.

“Part of my inspiration for forming the program is that other centers had been doing similar things and students were responding well,” Lama Bruce said. “A great many people have no spiritual community. I wanted to create a place where people could feel safe, protected, and nourished.” Marig Munsel meets one weekend a month in the afternoons. Its scheduling is designed to accommodate students’ busy lives while providing a structure for study and practice. Each year the program has a different focus. The first year

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provides an overview of dharma through study of *The Jewel*



Ornament, a classic text by Gampopa. Mindfulness meditations are taught. The focus in the second year is bodhicitta, and in the third year, devotion. In the fourth year, the focus is on pure perception. Texts and meditations align with the yearly focus. Marig Munsel provides a natural doorway into further dharma engagement. For example, four people who completed Marig Munsel became ordained as nuns, and one of those is in a three-year retreat. “The program did provide some of the bridging for that to happen,” Lama Bruce said. Other Marig Munsel students have become creatively engaged in Tashi Choling, through retreats, teachings, and sadhanas. “I

am not a recruitment officer for Tashi Choling, but I am always happy when anyone in the program deepens their commitment to Tashi Choling and Gyatrul Rinpoche,” Lama Bruce said.

The fifth Marig Munsel 4-yr cycle of classes just began in October at Dechen Ling in Ashland. Some students are repeating the class because they found it so meaningful the first time. Others are complete newcomers. If you are interested in deepening your understanding of dharma in a supportive community environment, you may want to consider joining in.

Lama Bruce completed a four-year retreat at Kagyu Samye Ling in Scotland. He is the author of *A Beginner’s Guide to Tibetan Buddhism*. You may contact him at brucejaynewman@msn.com or at 541-897-4290.



Photo by Ani Yeshe

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Healing Buddha Workshop

by Ani Nyima

When an email announced an upcoming Healing Buddha workshop with Lama Bruce Newman, I signed up. A weekend at Tashi Choling with a favorite lama and a book I treasured. Count me in! But as the time drew near, so did the doubts. Could I carve out a weekend from an overly busy schedule? Besides, I rationalized, I was already using the meditations from the designated text, *Boundless Healing: Meditation Exercises to Enlighten the Mind and Heal the Body* by Tulku Thondup. I wavered then rallied, and now I hope to convey a snippet of the experience to you. As it's a course that Lama Bruce intends to offer again, perhaps it is one you might consider attending; or perhaps you'll find the text of value.

Tulku Thondup has brilliantly synthesized the essence of Sutric and Tantric teachings into twelve meditations to evoke the Medicine Buddha's healing through the power of our mind. His start is foundational: "Feelings such as calmness and peace are concepts created by the mind and experiences felt by the mind. So let your mind generate the thought and feeling of calmness in your body."

Given this ground, each of the following meditations progress so that we increasingly experience the

warmth, healing light, and bliss streaming from the Healing Buddha into our very cells. Lama Bruce would read one of the short visualizations and then we would practice. His pithy directions exhorted us "To orient our meditation so that it leaves no place for the ego."



But one student observed, "Isn't our aim to turn the mind's eye toward the meditator?" In response, Lama Bruce asked, "Where is the location of that observer? Is it in the head, heart, behind the head? If you try to visualize that location, you can't abide there and so it pulls the rug out. Here we're using visualization to overwhelm the meditator, to zap him off of his perch."

Lama-la then observed how ironic it is that popular meditation is depicted as navel gazing, but in fact this familiar inward gaze describes our samsaric and obsessive self-preoccupation. He said, "Samsara's activities contract us

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and put tension in the body and energy channels. Whereas with visualization, we populate the space around us; this stretches our minds outward and weakens our propensity to contract. As we cultivate expansion, then our hearts open with devotion and love.”

Lama Bruce has taught this course multiple times in the past three years and in several countries. Given how this material helps the student get a taste of clarity from an experiential vantage point, he’s enthusiastic about continuing to offer it and plans to do so again this winter at Dechen Ling. Most of the students in the workshop were repeating it. There’s something contagious about experientially tasting the warmth and bliss. Kate Nehrbass, for example, took the course three years ago and it gave her a “meditation breakthrough.” I’ll second Kate as she added, “I am very grateful to Lama Bruce for this course.”



Photo by Ani Yeshe

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Facility News: A Seismic Retrofit and Other Issues

by Gaea Yudron

In their role as staff members, Tony Reitz and Samantha Cheney both oversee grounds and facilities at Tashi Choling. Last fall, Tony and Sam had four meetings with a group of sangha members to discuss needed repairs and maintenance.

The group, called the Construction Project Review Team (CPRT), included Philip Thomas, Matthew Small, Richard Schwindt, Mike Osugi, Brad Boucher, Gary Farrell, and David Gelfand. Sangye Khandro and Lama Chonam attended some of the meetings, as did Nick O'Connor and Lisbeth LaCoste.

Tony remarked, "Initially, the group wanted to investigate what to do with the Guru Rinpoche site. But soon some team members pointed out how valuable it would be to take an overview of everything that needed to be done at Tashi Choling, and then to

prioritize those projects." In following meetings, the CPRT outlined about 10 pages of needed repairs, maintenance, and potential future construction work. *(More news about this in a future issue, along with ways you can participate in this process.)*

One project floated to the top of everyone's list. Citing damage from settling on the north and northwest sides of temple, the group suggested consulting with a structural engineer to determine what was needed for "seismic retrofit." The structural engineer, Allan Goffe of ACE Engineering, confirmed that we have a serious situation that needs to be dealt with—the sooner the better. Once it became clear how important it is to deal with the temple-residence structural issues, the board approved moving forward and fundraising to accomplish it. *For more details on structural problems at the temple that demonstrate the urgency of a seismic retrofit, please [read the recent email](#) that gives details.*

The CPRT represents a group of sangha members working together to consider how to keep Tashi Choling's grounds and facilities vital and strong for many years to come. Sangha participation has always been an essential element at Tashi Choling, and the CPRT meetings are a great demonstration of why it's so valuable. With winter approaching, these meetings are on hold until spring.

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Tony and others on the board and staff want to develop ways for more sangha members to participate in discussions of Tashi Choling's well-being and how we can work together to assure it. As Tony said, "It's good for everybody to know what's going on and to have the opportunity to participate." So stay tuned for more news in this area, and please consider making as generous a donation as you can to the seismic retrofit project, which is so vital to safeguarding the structural integrity of our precious temple, constructed with such dedication and faith to shelter our spiritual practice.



Photo by Tom Glassman

P.S. I suggest reading the booklet *Our Tashi Choling Community* that was produced last Spring. There are print copies in the East Wing that you can pick up and take with you the next time you're there. It's also available for download on the front page of the Tashi Choling website. The booklet describes who is on the board, who is on the staff, and what the roles of the staff and board are. Some people wear two hats, being both board members and staff members. Tony is

one of them, as are Samantha Cheney, Nick O'Connor, and Lisbeth LaCoste. It can be very helpful to understand more about the administration, people who devote enormous efforts to caring for the center.



Trisong Detsen

BOOK REVIEW

The Just King

by Jamgon Mipham, translated by

Jose Ignacio Cabezón

by Gary Farrell

Back in 2011, Governor Jerry Brown of California gave his State-of-the-State address to the Legislature in Sacramento. The assembly hall was packed full of lobbyists, Democratic

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and Republican Senators, and Assemblymen. All wanted to get a piece of the budget surplus for their pet-projects. California had just weathered the worst of the Great Recession, and thanks in part to Governor Brown's austerity measures, the State was in the black and had a surplus. The Governor really got my attention when he began his address with this: "When I was a Buddhist monastic studying in Japan, every morning we would chant from a sutra that said:

"The world is full of desire. May I be freed from desire!"

The assembly roared with laughter, but the Governor had eloquently made his point to the legislature and lobbyists that desire was a problem, for them and for the political process. This was the first and only time that I have heard an American political leader quote from a Buddhist text. I have often wondered since then about what Buddhism has to say about how we should be governed, about the qualities of our leaders, and what it might say about Dharmic truths regarding these questions. While I was contemplating such thoughts, a newly published book was auspiciously handed to me. The book was *The Just King* by Jamgon Mipham, a Tibetan work on the theory and practice of Buddhist kingship and political ethics.

Mipham composed this treatise (*On Ethics for Kings*), in 1895 at the

behest of Ngawang Jampel Rinchen, a prince of the kingdom of Derge in Kham in eastern Tibet. Although written in the form of advice to a Buddhist monarch, Mipham touts the work's relevance to anyone who is in a position of authority, and even to people who live a solitary life: "When one trains one's mind to care for living beings, one eventually becomes a Dharma King oneself."

While the book does have passages that are unique to a kingship or monarchy, the core of its ethics are clearly universal calls to leaders in any form of governing. Much of the writing within these pages could easily be adopted as the basis for what we call Engaged Buddhism. As Mipham states, "rulers and politicians have a special responsibility to uphold high moral standards, to serve as an example for others, to protect society and the environment."

What does the book have to say about the qualities of a monarch (or President)? "Being human and fallible, monarchs need to be educated. They have to engage in a program of self-cultivation that will give them the intellectual and ethical wherewithal to be effective rulers, they must study the classical texts, and associate with wise and upright people, and distance themselves from the wicked. They must learn to distinguish right from wrong, cultivate a long list of virtues and eschew an equally long list of sins, and have the

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will to act in accordance with what is right and just.”

Regarding his demeanor, the king must be energetic, truthful, humble, patient, even-keeled, compassionate, sweet-spoken and charitable. By ruling his kingdom in this way, the gods show favor, sending timely rains, providing abundant harvests, and so forth. His cities flourish, the country garners vast wealth and enjoys a good reputation in the world.

While all of these qualities concern the leader’s “horizontal-relationship” with the polis (citizens), the text also has lots to say about the king’s “vertical-relationship” with the non-human world. The text states that the gods only assist virtuous sovereigns, withholding their support from evil kings. In this way, natural disasters and civil strife can be interpreted as a consequence of a leader’s disregard for the vertical relationship to the non-human.

The Just King has many messages for our time. One important theme is this same quality of a king’s or leader’s “vertical-relationship” to the non-human realm. It reminds me of the Grail Legend literature of King Arthur, where the noble knights all begin their spiritual journey to answer the great secret...”What is the secret of the grail?” In the end, it’s the humblest of knights, Perceval, who reports back to the king and correctly answers the riddle or koan, “The king and the land are one, my Lord.” Upon

hearing this, the king’s soul is restored, and the kingdom that had descended into darkness due to the king’s ignorance is awakened with the king, who now remembers his noble (Buddha) nature, seizes his sword of wisdom, and restores justice and light to the kingdom.

The Just King is a timely translation that comes to us at a time when the loss of civility is pervasive throughout our land. While it may be too much to ask of our political candidates to quote from Buddhist texts, it would bode well for them to exhibit these same noble qualities and characteristics that Mipham Rinpoche outlined as essential for any leader 125 years ago.

Vajrakilaya Retreat Album



Getse Rinpoche and Lingtrul Rinpoche

We had a wonderful Vajrakilaya retreat, with both His Holiness Kathok Getse Rinpoche and Venerable

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Lingtrul Rinpoche in attendance, as well as Sangye Khandro, Lama Chonam, and many sangha members. People arrived from all over—Ojai, Montana, Canada, Portland, and the Bay area. It was peaceful and harmonious, a truly sweet, powerful gathering of dharma brothers and sisters practicing together.

Thanks to Susan Goldberg for these photos:



Ani Yeshe offering the remains



Ani Baba and Bill Kanemoto practice the long horns



Susan Goldberg and Julie Wellings making the tsogtor



Samantha Cheney and Michele Deakin making tormas

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**THE NEXT ISSUE OF SANGHA
NEWS WILL APPEAR IN
FEBRUARY**

Please email your suggestions or news for the February issue to gaea.laughing@gmail.com by JANUARY 15th.

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who contributed writing and photos to this issue, including Gary Farrell, Ani Nyima, Ani Yeshe, Laurie Gadbois, Carolyn Myers, Tom Glassman, and Susan Goldberg.



Photo by Laurie Gadbois



**TASHI CHOLING WILL BE
CLOSED FROM DECEMBER
THROUGH MID FEBRUARY.**

**Classes and pujas will take place
at Dechen Ling.**

**Happy Holiday
Season!**