

FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

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What's in a Name?

by Ajahn Amaro

We recently celebrated our tenth anniversary, and it was a very wonderful occasion. During the weekend events, we featured a documentary film made by some friends of ours, Tony Anthony and his son, Andrew, from Ukiah. The title of their film is *Fearless Mountain*. That's what the name Abhayagiri means. In the Pali language, the prefix *a* indicates a negative, *bhaya* means "fear," and *giri* means "mountain." So Abhayagiri translates to "fearless mountain."

This name was chosen for a variety of reasons. First, it was the name of an ancient Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka that was founded around 50 B.C. and flourished for several hundred years. This earlier Abhayagiri was known as a very welcoming ecumenical center, and many different forms of Buddhist practice were followed there. Part of the reason our own Abhayagiri Monastery ended up in this particular spot was thanks to the generous gift of half the land from Master Hsüan Hua of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He was also ecumenically minded and wanted to support our group of Southern, Theravada Buddhists even though he hails from China and the Northern, Mahayana school. Another curiosity of history is that the bhikkhuni order that developed in China originally came from Sri Lanka,

from a branch of Abhayagiri Monastery back in the fifth century, so there's a loop of connection that's been made over the centuries. To reflect this spirit of generosity, mutual respect, and mutual support the name Abhayagiri was chosen.

It wasn't entirely due to these reasons that we settled on the name for our monastery. I also discussed it with Ajahn Pasanno, my co-abbot. I said, "I'm thinking of calling the place Abhayagiri. How does that sound to you?" He thought it was a good idea not only for the name's ecumenical spirit, but also because of the potency of the spiritual practice of Buddhist meditation in working with the quality of fear itself. During my own life, particularly my early years, I was a very fearful person—very insecure and afraid of instability. Ajahn Pasanno had a similar background. He told me, "I had ulcers when I was sixteen. I was so anxious; I was a very nervous little boy."

We both felt it was important to reflect on fear and how the practice of Dhamma—Buddhist meditation, Buddhist teachings and ethics—can lead to a quality of fearlessness. How valuable and how marvelous it can be to live without fear. This was something that had been significant in our own lives, and it would be a good flag to wave for the world—to encourage and point to the quality of fearlessness. Thus, our monastery is called Fearless Mountain.

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FROM THE MONASTERY

COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

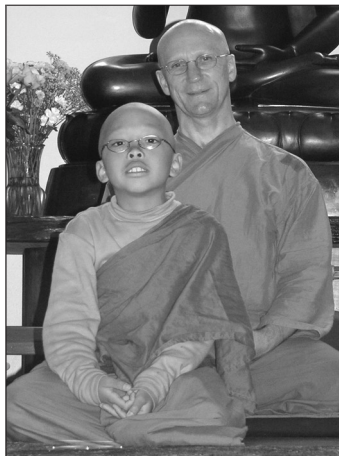


Landslide at Casa Serena Requires Extensive Work

This past winter and spring brought unusually heavy rainfall to northern California, and our monastery was not immune to its effects. A portion of the land surrounding Casa Serena, the residence for female guests, suffered extensive damage. About fifty feet of the backyard and garden gently slid down the hill to the parking lot below, severing sewage lines in the process. Of even more concern is the possibility that future landslides could threaten the house when the rains return this fall. To address this concern, contractor Heath Garman completed repairs to the damaged hillside this summer. These included excavating soil, installing drainage, and placing large rocks stabilize the ground.

Todd “Piyasilo” Tansuhaj Passes Away

On Thursday, April 27, ten-year-old Todd Tansuhaj died of complications associated with the disease thalassemia. In keeping with Thai tradition, Todd had spent some time as a novice monk at Abhayagiri during the summer of 2005. Todd was the youngest member of our community, and sadly, the first to pass away. A memorial service was held in the forest of Abhayagiri on Vesakha Puja and attended by Todd’s parents, Chusak and Patriya, family friends, and the Abhayagiri Sangha.



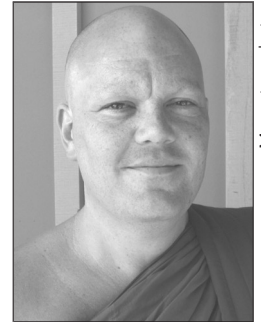
Piyasilo and Ajahn Pasanno

Building Phase I Ends, Phase II Begins

Sometimes going through a phase is a good thing! The Sanghapala Foundation, the organization that provides requisites for the support of the Abhayagiri monastic community, happily announced that the first phase of development and construction at Abhayagiri has been completed to coincide with the monastery’s tenth anniversary. Abhayagiri has now officially begun its second phase of development. Phase II will consist of entirely new construction, including eleven new cabins, a meditation and reception hall complete with bell tower, and a utility building in the monastic area of the forest. To learn more about ongoing construction at the monastery, see the Building Committee article on page 10.

Ordinations of Sampajano Bhikkhu and Samanera Kassapo

On July 16, an auspicious event took place at Wat Buddhansorn, a Thai temple about 140 miles south of Abhayagiri, in Fremont, California. Samanera Sampajano received higher ordination, becoming a fully ordained bhikkhu, and Anagarika Minh An took novice ordination, becoming Samanera Kassapo.



Sampajano Bhikkhu & Samanera Kassapo

Two New Anagarikas

Lee Mintz joined the Abhayagiri monastic community as an anagarika on April 29, and Whit Myers on October 7. The ceremonies were officiated by Ajahn Amaro and attended by friends, family, and well-wishers. Anagarika Lee served as support staff during the 2005 winter retreat before joining the community. Bruno Casolari also took anagarika precepts on April 29 but has since left the community.

COMINGS & GOINGS

In the past few months, we welcomed the arrival of old and new friends to Abhayagiri, some for a brief visit, and others to join our community. We also offer warm regards to those who have moved on.

The community welcomes back Nyaniko Bhikkhu, who returned on June 23 after spending a year in Thailand.

While there, he was in residence at Wat Pah Nanachat, the International Forest Monastery, as well as at other branch monasteries.

Originally ordained at Wat Pah Nanachat, **Dhirapañño Bhikkhu** arrived at Abhayagiri on July 9 from Bhavana Society in West Virginia. Tan Dhirapañño will be staying at Abhayagiri through 2006.

Having spent four years as a member of the Abhayagiri community, **Dhammadaso Bhikkhu** returned to his native New Zealand on April 11. He is now residing at Bodhinyanarama Monastery in Wellington. The community heartily thanks Tan Dhammadaso for his numerous contributions to Abhayagiri and wishes him good health and much happiness.

Ajahn Prateep left for Thailand on June after receiving word that his mother was seriously ill with a brain tumor. He will stay near her in Thailand to offer support. His return to Abhayagiri is for now uncertain.

It is the Abhayagiri tradition that bhikkhus have the option of spending their third year visiting one of our branch monasteries, and so **Ahimsako Bhikkhu** departed Abhayagiri on June 16, traveling to Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in Hemel Hempstead, England. We wish Tan Ahimsako safe travels during the coming year.

Both **Satimato Bhikkhu** and **Pasuko Bhikkhu** disrobed this summer and have returned to the lay life.

Abhayagiri Monastery was recently blessed with the first-time visit of **Bhante Yogavacara Rahula**, the senior disciple of the Sri Lankan monk Bhante Gunaratana. A native of Riverside, California, Bhante Rahula visited for nine days at the beginning of April, taking time between teaching engagements. Residents and visitors here at Abhayagiri greatly appreciated his presence and hope to be able to host him again in the future.

Ajahn Candasiri, a senior nun (Siladhara) in the Ajahn Chah lineage, visited Abhayagiri Monastery from May 22 to 28. She was one of the first four women to be ordained under Luang Por Sumedho at Chithurst monastery. Ajahn Candasiri was joined by **Sister Cittapala** on her trip to the U.S.

Ajahn Visuddhi, one of the founding monks of our monastery, spent three weeks at Abhayagiri arriving on May 31. This was Ajahn Visuddhi's first visit to Abhayagiri since he departed almost eight years ago. During his visit he shared many stories about his travels through Sri Lanka, Thailand, and India, which proved quite entertaining. Ajahn Visuddhi subsequently disrobed and returned to the lay life.

Ajahn Chandako, the abbot of Vimutti Vihara, a new monastery near Auckland, New Zealand, visited Abhayagiri from June 3 to 9. While here, Ajahn Chandako also had a chance to take a trip north, exploring the forests surrounding Mount Shasta and visiting Shasta Abbey.

SPREADING THE DHAMMA

Throughout 2006 Ajahn Amaro, and other community members have offered numerous public teachings. Here are a few highlights:

- Weekend Meditation Retreat led by Karunadhammo Bhikkhu and sponsored by Bodhi Tree Dhamma Center, in Tampa, Florida, May 12–14
- Daylong Meditation Retreat led by Karunadhammo Bhikkhu in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, May 21
- “Devotion in Buddhist Practice” daylong retreat led by Ajahn Amaro at the Sati Center, June 17
- “The One Who Knows” daylong retreat led by Ajahn Amaro at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, July 2
- Weekend Retreat and Talks in Portland led by Ajahn Sudanto and sponsored by Portland Friends of the Dhamma, July 4–11

For information on upcoming talks and retreats, please visit our website at www.abhayagiri.org

DEVELOPMENT

Cloister Buildings Completed

By April 1, the cloister buildings, consisting of offices for the abbots, senior monks, Sanghapala Foundation, disabled accommodations, and men's and women's restrooms, were ostensibly completed. To ensure that the facilities were disabled-accessible and in compliance with county regulations, as well as to add to the overall functionality of the cloister area, it was decided to add cobblestone paths. The paths connect all primary areas of the lower cloister and add greatly to the pleasant atmosphere. Installing the paths, which consist of over 8,000 paving stones, was no easy feat. The entire community worked on this project for ten days, sometimes late into the evenings, preparing the rough gravel surfaces for the stones, cutting the stones using a water-cooled saw, laying the stones and pounding them into place, and finally vibrating sand into the cracks between the stones in order

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Monastery photo

FROM THE MONASTERY

(continued from page 3)

to fill in the spaces. The end result is an extremely durable surface which all agree is esthetically pleasing, and will last for many, many years. What a great idea, Ajahn Sudanto!

Solar Project Underway

Installation has been completed on a solar array in the cloister area of the monastery. Solar panels measuring roughly three by five feet were hoisted onto the roof of the Dhamma Hall and main house. They were then affixed to a light-weight aluminum frame. Each panel is capable of producing approximately 208 watts of electricity. In total these sixty panels are capable of producing close to 12.5 kilowatts, however no storage batteries are used in this system. Instead, the system ties directly into Pacific Gas and Electric power lines. This intertie allows the monastery to “sell back” unused electricity, thus offsetting the cost of electrical usage during times when solar power is unavailable.

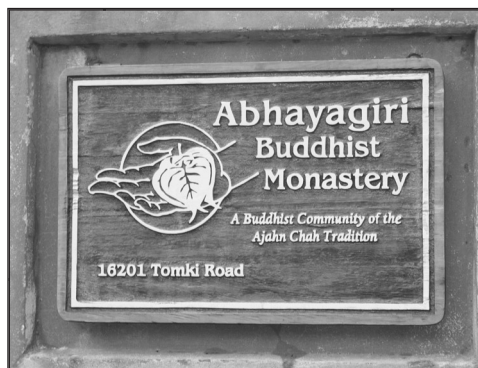
Four New Cabins Nearly Complete

Four new cabins are being built this season, two for the abbots and two for junior monks. At 320 square feet, the elders’ cabins are slightly larger than our regular monks’ cabins, and they also have restroom facilities. The two monks’ cabins are approximately 260 square feet. All four new cabins use high-tech, fire-resistant materials—outdoor decking made from recycled plastic, and Hardipanel siding made from a composite concrete material. The cabins were framed and roofed by Bob Madlem’s crew, and our able-bodied community installed the siding, windows, doors and other exterior features, as well as completed all of the interior carpentry.

—*The Sangha*



New abbot’s kuti in the forest



Abhayagiri Monastery Reaches Ten Years, 1996–2006

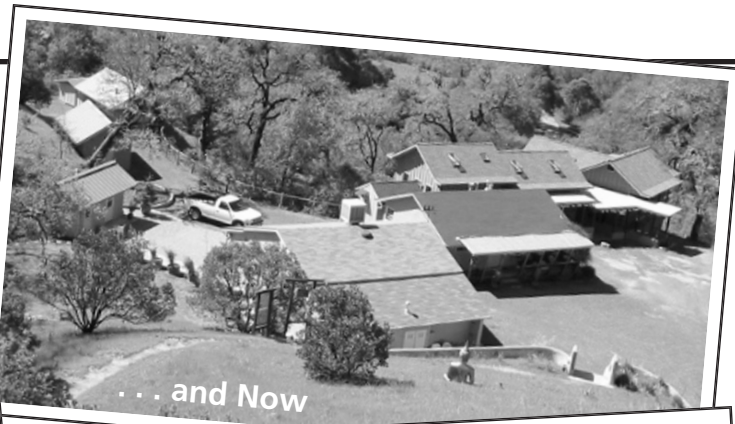
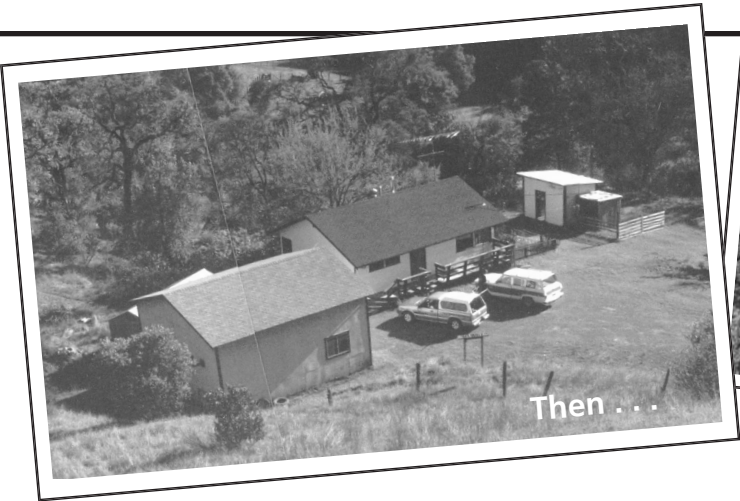
Tenth Anniversary Celebration, June 3–4

Abhayagiri celebrated its tenth anniversary this summer with a two-day extravaganza. Activities included tours, talks, photo displays, delicious meals, and the premier of the documentary film *Fearless Mountain* by Ukiah filmmakers Tony and Andrew Anthony. Guests arrived from near and far to join the festivities and to reminisce and tell stories from the monastery’s first ten years. Included here are a few photos, old and new, and reflections from three long-time monastery supporters.



Ajahn Maha Prasert (left) from Wat Buddhanusorn in Fremont, CA, offers his blessings at the anniversary ceremony.

Monastery photo

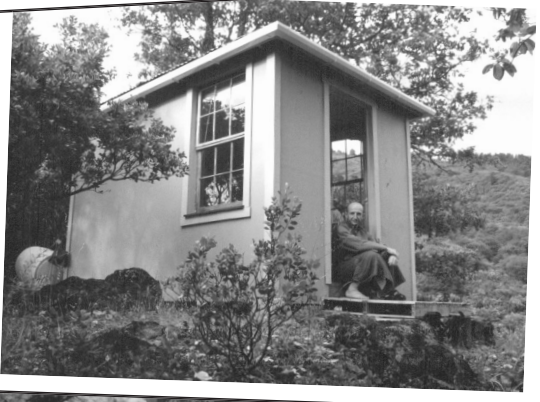


I made my first trip from Portland, Oregon, to Abhayagiri Monastery in 1997, one year after they landed in Redwood Valley. The parking lot fit only a few cars and butted up against a small ranch-style house where most of the daily events took place. We noticed the converted double-car garage/shrine room just to our left. Rustic, dusty and small (if not downright cramped) were the abodes; kind, polite and humorous were the residents.

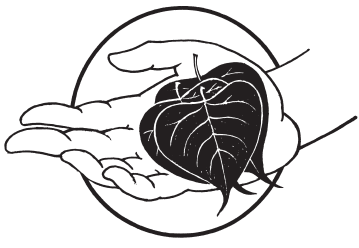
Nine years have passed since my first visit. When I arrived for the tenth anniversary with a few of my Portland friends, we parked in the huge "upper" parking lot and jaunted down the hill. Just beyond the bell tower are beautiful structures sprawling near the freshly painted ranch house that now serves as a large professional kitchen. The next morning we wandered the premises. Modern, spotless and expansive were the abodes; kind, polite and humorous were the residents. —*Mary Sakula Reinard*

So many hands and bodies and voices built this monastery. Sanghapala Foundation planted a seed and Abhayagiri is the fruition. In the months and years before it existed physically, it lived in our hearts. We dreamed a dream of a monastery in Northern California. It was like a ship far out at sea, whose details were fuzzy, whose shape shifted constantly in our minds—but not so much in our hearts. I don't think I've ever lived my way into a dream before. It is breathtaking to have seen the process of creating this physical reality, which is so beautiful, so much better than my dream of it. —*Susan Barber*

You won't find anything like Amaravati in the States," Ven. Attapemo told me shortly before I was leaving London to return to America for good in 1993. I didn't believe him at the time, but after a couple of years living in Phoenix, Arizona, I came to understand all too well the truth of his words. I was soon overjoyed to learn that a sister monastery to Amaravati was going to be established in Northern California. One hot July day in 1996 my husband and I paid Abhayagiri a visit. I took to the place immediately. It was unpretentious, a little run down, and rather inaccessible. It would require the clear vision and dedication that had turned Amaravati into such a vibrant place of spiritual practice, and I knew that this would happen (perhaps even sooner than I could have imagined!). At that time, as far as I remember, there were only two monks in residence, planting the seeds of Dhamma in Northern California. Just look at how those seeds have sprouted! —*Dee Cope*



Resident community, 1996 (top); the first kuti, August 1996 (middle); the first bhikkhu ordination, May 1998 (bottom)



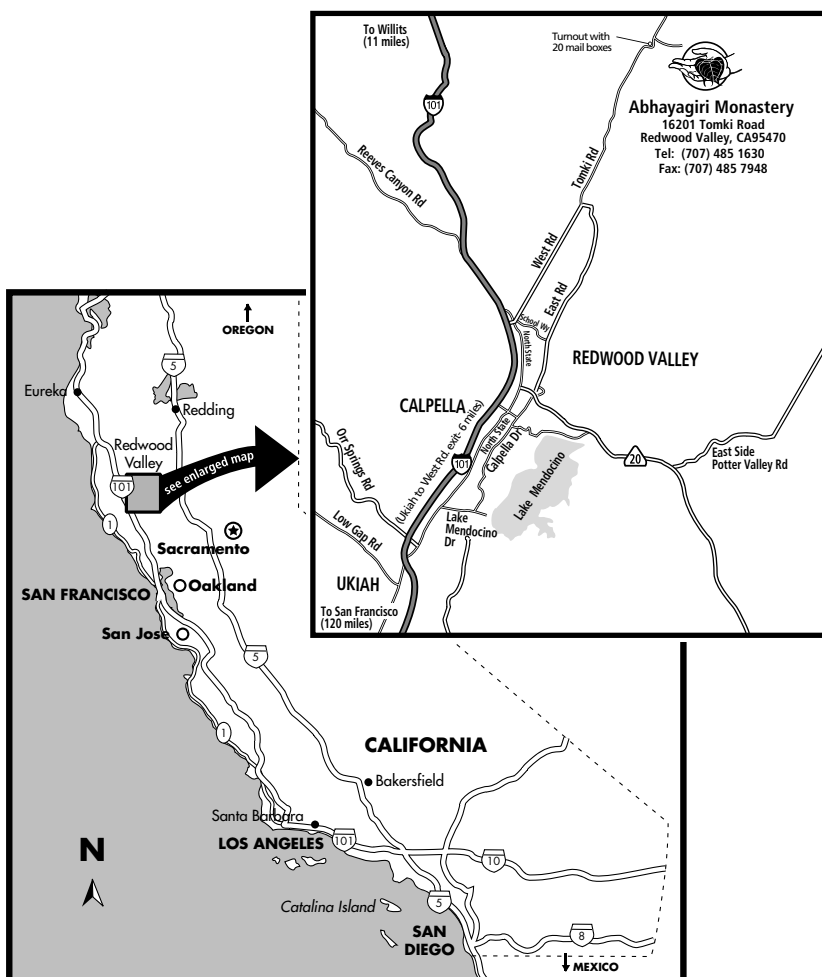
Abhayagiri Sangha Calendar

Lunar Observance Days

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
FULL MOON	SUN 5	TUE 5	WED 3	FRI 2	SAT 3	MON 2	TUE 1
LAST QUARTER	MON 13	WED 13	THU 11	SAT 10	SUN 11	TUE 10	WED 9
NEW MOON	MON 20	TUE 19	THU 18	FRI 16	SUN 18	MON 16	WED 16
1ST QUARTER	TUE 28	WED 27	FRI 26	SAT 24	MON 26	TUE 24	THU 24
FULL MOON							THU 31*

* Visakha Puja

Directions to Abhayagiri



1. Take the WEST ROAD exit from 101
2. Go straight over NORTH STATE ST. and then SCHOOL WAY
3. Follow WEST ROAD till it reaches a T-junction. (3 miles from the exit).
4. Turn left at the "T" onto TOMKI RD. Continue for 4 miles to the big turn-out with 20 mailboxes on your right. The monastery entrance is right there.

FEARLESS MOUNTAIN

Editor: Dennis Crean
 Assistant Editor: Pamela Kirby
 Additional assistance from Abhayagiri monastics

Fearless Mountain is the periodic newsletter of Abhayagiri Monastery, a Buddhist community in the Thai Forest Tradition of Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho. It is composed of materials submitted to or written at Abhayagiri Monastery and distributed free of charge to friends of the Abhayagiri community. Comment within is personal reflection only and does not represent the opinion of the Sangha as a whole. Please keep us informed of your current address.

Appropriate articles and artwork, information for fellow Buddhists, or comments from readers are welcomed. Submissions for the next issue (March 2007) should be received by January 1, 2007. For permission to reprint any materials, please contact us.

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Also visit our online calendar at www.abhayagiri.org for the most up-to-date information

Nov

- 3-10 Bhante Gunaratana at Abhayagiri.
- 5 Anapanasati Day at Abhayagiri.
- 7 Monthly gathering with Ajahn Amaro in Berkeley, CA.
- 8 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA.
- 9 Dhamma Talk, 7:30-9:00 pm, by Ajahn Thaniya in Redwood City, CA. Contact: IMC, (650) 599-3456, www.insightmeditationcenter.org.
- 10 Ajahn Thaniya arrives at Abhayagiri.
- 12 Community Work Day at Abhayagiri.
- 17-26 Thanksgiving Retreat at Angela Center in Santa Rosa, CA, with Ajahn Amaro and Ajahn Thaniya. Contact: retreat06@juno.com.
- 27-30 Ajahn Thaniya in Portland, OR. Contact: www.pdxdhamma.org, sakula@notjustus.com.

Dec

- 3 Upasika Day at Abhayagiri
- 5 Monthly gathering with Abhayagiri Monastics in Berkeley, CA.
- 10 Community Work Day at Abhayagiri.
- 13 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA.

Jan

- 2 Monthly gathering with guest teacher in Berkeley, CA.
- 3 Monastic retreat period begins, continuing through March 31.*
- 10 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA.

Feb

- 6 Monthly gathering with guest teacher in Berkeley, CA.
- 14 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA.

Mar

- 6 Monthly gathering with guest teacher in Berkeley, CA
- 14 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA.
- 31 Abhayagiri Winter Retreat ends.

Apr

- 3 Monthly gathering with Ajahn Amaro in Berkeley, CA.
- 3 Ajahn Pasanno scheduled to return to Abhayagiri.
- 8 Community Work Day at Abhayagiri.
- TBA Upasika Renewal Day at Abhayagiri.
- 11 Monthly gathering in Ukiah, CA

* During the monastic retreat period (January 3 to March 31), overnight and extended visits are not possible. Daytime visitors are welcome to join the community for daily practice and are asked to maintain silence at all times. Saturday evening and lunar quarter observances continue as usual.

Every Saturday evening at Abhayagiri

Chanting, meditation & Dhamma talk, 7:30 pm.

Every Lunar Quarter at Abhayagiri

Chanting, meditation, Precepts, Dhamma talk & late night vigil, 7:30 pm.

Second Sundays at Abhayagiri

Community Work Day, 8:00 am- 4:00 pm, or any portion thereof.

First Tuesday of the month in Berkeley, CA

5:00-6:00 pm, Informal tea gathering. 7:30-9:30 pm, Meditation, Precepts & Dhamma talk by monastic at the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery, 2304 McKinley.

Every Tuesday in Berkeley, CA (except first Tuesday)

7:30-9:30 pm at the Berkeley Zen Center, 1929 Russell Street. Meditation and Dhamma program with lay practitioners. Julie Schlein, (415) 460-9918, juliepgs@gmail.com

Second Wednesday of the month in Ukiah, CA

7:30-9 pm, Meditation & Dhamma talk by monastic at Yoga Mendocino, 206 Mason St., (707) 462-2580, www.yogamendocino.org

Every Tuesday in Portland, OR

7:00-9:00 am at the Friends of the Dhamma Resource Center, 1701 NW Thurman, Ste. 202. Meditation and Dhamma discussion with lay practitioners. Mary (Sakula) Reinard, sakula@notjustus.com.

Every Wednesday in Chapel Hill, NC

6:30-8:00 pm at Chapel Hill Dhamma, 811 Old Pittsboro Road. Meditation, pre-recorded talk by a Buddhist monk or nun, and chanting. Noel Brewer, (919) 932-9195, ntb1@unc.edu

What's in a Name? *(continued from page 1)*

It's good to consider that there are many different kinds of fear. When we contemplate where fear fits into the natural order, we see that at times it's a very useful feeling. We tend to think of fear as being bad, something we are burdened by. "It would be really nice not to feel fear." But we also have to remember that those ancestors of ours who were not afraid were the ones who got eaten when a sabertooth tiger came along. They got chomped and their genes didn't get passed along, while the ones who saw the tiger and ran survived. Fear is a useful thing. It's a protective element in nature.

I had quite a strong insight into this years ago when I was on retreat in the forest in England. I remember sitting on a gate looking out over the fields just around dawn. I was delighting in the scene, watching deer grazing in the meadow, these beautiful creatures munching away peacefully in the grass as the dawn light brightened. Then I cleared my throat, shifted or something, and the sound brought me to the deer's attention. They noticed me sitting there on the gate and suddenly bolted off across the field. My mind started to think, "Oh, what a shame, poor things. So stricken by fear. They hear an innocent sound and run away terrified. They were so peaceful, enjoying the misty morning, calmly eating their breakfast; now they're running off in a frightened fluster."

But then I had an insight: "Don't be so whimsical! The deer have big ears and big eyes, and their fear protects them. That's how they stay alive. Whenever there's any kind of threat or suspicion of threat, they can run. That's how they survive. Their fear is a protection. It's not an aberration of nature."

The down side to our fear is how it gets fed and grows in our minds rather than just being something that protects us when we're in a precarious situation.

Fear is what protects us, too. When we're driving down the freeway, that same kind of alertness and caution is what keeps us from crashing into other cars. It's what helps us to beware when a large truck comes up alongside to overtake us. It's good to be alert and attentive. Here at the monastery when walking along the trails in the dark, we use a flashlight to see where the edge is. Fear of falling down the hillside is sensible. If we didn't feel afraid, over the edge we'd go!

The down side to our fear, as I'm sure we're all aware, is how it gets fed and grows in our minds rather than just being something that protects us when we're in a precarious situation. Because we're able to remember, anticipate, and imagine, fear sometimes overspills its bounds.

Last year I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance

of a scientist named Robert Sapolsky, who teaches at Stanford University. He's written a book called *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*. His main studies over the years have been on stress and its harmful effects. Using his example, zebras experience fear when there's a lion chasing four feet behind them and they're racing across the savannah trying to get away. When a lion wants to make you into breakfast, then it's good to get stressed! Get that heart pumping. Get the breathing rate up and run like crazy, because if you don't, you're going to be eaten. But a zebra only needs to feel fear for a couple of minutes—either until it escapes or is eaten, at which point its worries are over anyway. Either way, the need for the body to crank out a high degree of tension and stress lasts for just a short period of time, so zebras don't get ulcers.

As human beings, such short, intense bursts of stress can even be enjoyable. That's why people love to ride on roller coasters or watch scary movies. Many of us like an occasional terrorizing of the system—it's a thrill. The endorphins rush and the whole system is very, very charged up with tremendous energy. There are incredible levels of alertness and the mind is really focused. When we're on the roller coaster, we're not worried about our tax returns or the argument we had with our sister ten days ago. There's only that ever-increasing ascent as we wind up for the next drop. Likewise, dangerous sports like rock-climbing make the mind very one-pointed, which is an enjoyable state for a short period of time.

What Robert Sapolsky points out in his book is that because we are able to remember, to anticipate, to imagine, stressful situations that last for only a few minutes may continue in our minds for weeks or months. That's when the system starts to break down. It's okay if the digestive system switches off for three minutes while we're escaping from a lion. But if the digestion is messed up for three weeks or three months—or if the heart rate is increased, if the reproductive faculties are switched off, if the supply of the oxygenation to the muscles is cranked up too far—then the system gets burdened and stressed. We get ulcers. Fear becomes a major problem.

Ajahn Pasanno got ulcers as a sixteen-year-old not because he lived in constant danger. It was that his mind went on and on and on, fretting, being concerned, picking up issues, remembering, anticipating, imagining, creating images of difficulty and danger. These are not physical threats but threats to the ego, threats to our sense of security. The combination of these protective instincts and the imaginative and conceptual faculties of the mind creates stressfulness, anxiety, and fearfulness.

So the fearlessness of Fearless Mountain is not aimed at being totally devoid of all fear. We're trying to let go of stressing fear, ulcer-inducing fear, the sort of anxiety that is brewed up and extended by the thinking mind going out of control.

The main cause for this kind of destructive fear is the unknown. We don't know what's going to happen next. We don't know how things are going to be. But that's natural.

Things *are* uncertain. We don't know if this project we're engaged in is going to be successful. We don't know what other people think about us. We don't know what possibilities are going to open up for us in the future. We don't know anything, really. The future is a mass of uncertainty.

When we relate to this uncertainty from an egocentric point of view, we try to fill it up with some sort of belief or hope. And when we can't come up with anything positive or optimistic, then we fill it up with anxiety, fear, worry, and fretting about how things might be. *What if, what if, what if.* In this way we actually create the causes for the feeling of anxiety.

The more we fail to understand where this fear comes from, the more the sense of threat, which then compounds the feeling of "I-ness," of "me" being threatened, "me" being worried. The stronger this feeling of "I," the more we hunker down to try and protect "myself" from all the dangerous, difficult, and worry-provoking things "outside." We try to create a sense of security by having a plan, an opinion, a belief, possessions, or insurance policies. We try to establish a feeling of predictability and safety by keeping at bay all those things that remind us of the uncertainty of life. In the background there might be some murmuring: "Yes, well I still really don't know. It's a good plan, but it might not work out. I've got a good insurance policy, but these companies do go under now and then. . . . Remember the bank that collapsed last week? All those people were left to drift. I've got a good retirement plan, but what about the Enron debacle. Those people got dumped." Then the intestinal tension starts up again: "Oh dear. This is making me really worried."

In terms of understanding how this fear works, we first need to see how the process operates within us. When we try to stave off feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and uncertainty with believing in things, or hoping, or planning, notice the consequent inflation of the sense of "me" and how much that feeds into it. Begin to know: this is the feeling of anxiety, this is the feeling of fear, this is reacting against not knowing, this is wanting to have something that makes me feel secure. Get to know what those feelings are, where they come from, how they are created.

Fear is natural enough, but in recognizing where it comes from, we begin to intuit that it doesn't have to be this way. We don't have to be burdened by feelings of uncertainty as a problem; we don't have to carry around a cloud of fearfulness, worry, and dread of undesired outcomes. That is just a mind-state we are creating. It's not an intrinsic threat.

Fear is derived from the way we handle our experience. As we look at our life, our mind, our world, we see that of course it's uncertain. We don't know how things will turn out, what other people will think, what will bring benefit, or what's going to fall apart. Even in the best of times, this is simply the way nature works. Life is uncertain; it's never been anything but. In reflecting, we begin to let go of the obsession with I and me and mine, to relax our focus on the sense of self, to look at things in terms of nature. We expand our view: "Why

do I call this bad? Why do I call this wrong? Why is this a threat to 'me'?" If we just refrain from creating a sense of self around our experiences, we will see events as being the flow of the natural order—arising and ceasing, coming together and falling apart—and not take it all so personally.

There is still the unknown, but instead of it being frightening and threatening, we experience it with qualities of wonderment and mystery. We don't know, and our lack of knowing is interesting and delightful. This is the kind of fearlessness we're aiming at. Directing our efforts in a skillful way, we can live completely free from fear.

This is, in a way, what we mean by Nibbana, the goal of Buddhist life. Oftentimes we don't really have a clear sense of what Nibbana might mean. We may think of it as a sort of mysterious or exotic word, as some kind of fantastic heaven realm or strange mystical state. Actually, it's simply that quality of the heart when there's no grasping, no buying into our own judgments and self-concern. It's the beauty we experience when we stop fretting and continually seeing things in terms of our own habitual preferences and viewpoints. The heart sees things from the point of view of nature. That beauty is what we mean by Nibbana. In opening to the present moment, letting go of self-concern, Nibbana is right here.

The fearful mind may say, "Yes, but what am I going to *do*? What happens if my plans don't work out? What if the building does slide down the hill? *What if? What if? What if?*" When truly attuned to the fundamental orderliness of nature, what will we do? We'll adapt. We'll be mindful. If there is something to be done, we'll do it. A skillful response will arise, and we won't have to worry about having the future planned or guaranteed or fixed. We can't take refuge in specific outcomes, but we can take refuge in the quality of pure adaptability, pure openness in the present moment. We can live in fearlessness. ♥

Adapted from a talk given on June 10, 2006, at Abhayagiri Monastery.

Ajahn Amaro is co-abbot of Abhayagiri and was ordained in Thailand by Ajahn Chah in 1979.

We try to create a sense of security by having a plan, an opinion, a belief, possessions, or insurance policies to keep at bay all those things that remind us of the uncertainty of life.

BUILDING COMMITTEE

Committee Membership

The building committee is comprised of monastics, lay supporters, and contracted professional help. Meetings are held every two to three weeks during the building season and about every four to six weeks over the rainy season. Co-abbots Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro attend as their presence permits. Ajahn Sudanto bears the major responsibility for the whole community as resident project supervisor and facilitator. Both Tan Karunadhammo and Tan Satimanto have served as committee secretary. Lay members have been Debbie Stamp, Larry Restel, Peter Mayland, Hugh MacMillan, and Rick Williams. Peter has served with distinction as committee chair for the past two to three years. As of this spring Hugh has assumed chair duties, which include organizing and running meetings, as well as assisting Ajahn Sudanto.

In 2003 a project manager, local builder Wayne Bashore, was added. He has been invaluable in keeping our focus on key issues and helping with cost controls. In 2004 an on-going architect, Helen Degenhardt of Berkeley, and a builder, Bob Madlem of Redwood Valley, were chosen to develop future projects. The teamwork of the committee has improved enormously over the years. Unquestionably, the additions of Ajahn Sudanto, Wayne, Helen, and Bob have proven the greatest benefit in realizing the building plans for the monastery.

2005 Building Projects

In early 2006 Bob Madlem's crews completed construction of the monks' office building and, next door, the public restroom building. This project, designed in 2004 and begun in 2005, was a couple of months late starting and hence finishing, but it was completed on budget at \$380,000. It was by far the biggest project to date and the first one to be completed on budget. The monks' office building has three principal spaces: the abbots' office with lavatory, a monks' office, and a Sanghapala office. All are well-equipped with necessary computers and electronic communications. Following the winter retreat, the monastery offices were moved into the new building, and the community is now able to perform its extensive communication duties with efficiency and gratitude. The original ranch house now houses a greatly improved and expanded kitchen.

2006 Building Projects

Completion of the monks' office building marked the official end of the first phase of the four-phase Abhayagiri Monastery development project. Completion of this milestone enables the monastic community to grow beyond the resident limit of thirteen members that we agreed to in the application for

our Use Permit with Mendocino County. Now those patiently waiting for monastic training can begin to be accommodated. With the limited funds available for new construction in 2006, the priority has been to increase the housing available for the monastic community. By the end of the second phase of development, the community resident population will be permitted to reach twenty-three. This phase, which is now just beginning, will include the construction of a monks' utility building up in the forest, additional monastic kutis, and the reception hall in the cloister.

During the summer of 2006, two elders' kutis have been constructed for Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro. Both are on schedule and under budget at \$72,000 each, with the site preparations, hauling of all construction materials in and debris out, and painting and finishing being done by monks, upasikas, and visiting guests. Two additional kutis for other monastics have been constructed nearby for \$22,000 each. To save costs of about \$7,000 on each, these were begun by Bob Madlem's crews but completed by monks working under the supervision of Bob's lead carpenters and Ajahn Sudanto.

In addition, new solar power-generating arrays have been installed to provide economical electric power for the monastery. The two arrays have been made possible by a gift for that purpose and greatly aided by the supplier, Richard Jordan, who is providing his services and the arrays at cost as his way of supporting the community. One array is installed in the upper forest to provide power remote from the PG&E grid for kutis, monastic support facilities, and, eventually, the main Dhamma Hall, when constructed. The second array is installed on roofs of the cloister buildings and connected to the grid to provide most of the power for the cloister and to use the excess to offset the cost of electrical usage during times when solar power is unavailable.

Late this summer a landslide at Casa Serena was repaired by Heath Garman, the grading and road maintenance contractor, at a cost of \$32,000.

Future Projects

Funds for new building projects have been depleted. The entire community will benefit from a respite after their untiring efforts over these past two years. Therefore, the building committee has decided to devote 2007 to reviewing and revising existing plans for future buildings, fleshing out those plans in greater design and cost detail, and establishing the order of priority for future facilities. It is our hope that this effort will prepare us for a timely start at the very beginning of the next major building season, probably in 2008 or 2009.

—Hugh MacMillan, for the committee

New Upasika Committee Formed, New Members Welcome to Join

Over the past 10 years, the Upasika Program has provided a formal venue for Abhayagiri's lay community to connect with the monastery and explore some of the important suttas and teachings of the Thai Forest Tradition. During this time the Upasika Program has been directed and coordinated by Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro. Now, along with restructuring the format of this year's Upasika Days, a group of upasikas have volunteered to participate more actively in the program by joining together to form a committee to help coordinate and facilitate certain aspects of the Upasika Program.

The aim of this Upasika committee is both to assist the ajahns by helping with logistical planning and coordination as well as helping the upasika community take ownership of the program and create a stronger community amongst ourselves. The Upasika committee will provide a forum for developing topics and reading lists for Upasika Days at Abhayagiri as well as being a point of contact for questions about the Upasika Program itself. The committee will foster connections amongst upasikas outside formal Upasika Days, work closely with the monastery to develop themes for Upasika Days, and explore ways to adapt the Upasika Program as the need arises in the future. The Upasika committee will also strive to facilitate participation in Abhayagiri's events and festivals by upasika members, both near and far from the monastery.

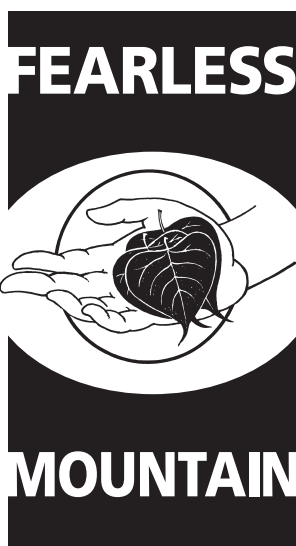
Similar to the Upasika Program itself, this committee is not a closed group but is open to—and looking for!—anyone who is interested to volunteer or even just learn more. If you have any questions about the Upasika committee, have any feedback to offer, would like to learn more about the Upasika Program, or are interested in helping out, please feel free to contact Scott Boultinghouse at obhaso@gmail.com or (415) 794-9192.

Final 2006 Meeting

December 3

10:30 am~ Meal offering
(bring a dish to share)

1:00 pm ~ Chanting,
meditation, Refuges/
Precepts, Teachings
& Discussion



Fearless Mountain Makeover, Help Wanted

Began about ten years ago, *Fearless Mountain* newsletter has provided news, Dhamma reflections, announcements and other information from Abhayagiri Monastery. Its original editor, Barry Kapke, turned over the reins to Dennis Crean in 1998, and the newsletter's format and design has remained largely unchanged since then. With the growing popularity of the monastery's website and other means of electronic communication, it seems time to reassess the role of the newsletter. Likewise, with Dennis's interest in relinquishing some of his responsibilities, an opportunity has been created for new volunteers to get involved in the remaking of *Fearless Mountain*.

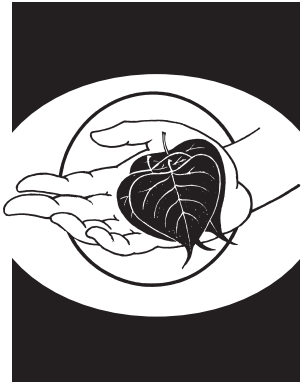
It is hoped that a revisioning process will take place during the remaining weeks of 2006 and that a plan will be in place to create the "new and improved" newsletter beginning in 2007. Volunteers will likely be needed in the areas of transcribing, editing, layout, proofreading, etc. If you are interested in helping with *Fearless Mountain* in any way, please contact the monastery to let us know.

And keep an eye out for something new in 2007!

SANGHAPALA FOUNDATION

**ABHAYAGIRI
MONASTERY**

16201 TOMKI ROAD
REDWOOD VALLEY CA 95470



FALL 2006

**FEARLESS
MOUNTAIN**

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November 17-26
Thanksgiving Retreat
(see below for details)

Spring 2007 in Barre, Massachusetts

Apr 25-May 3 (at IMS)

Monastic Retreat

with Ajahn Amaro,
Ajahn Punnadhammo
& Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia

May 5 (at BCBS)

Exploring the Nature of Nibbana

with Ajahn Amaro

May 6 (at BCBS)

Fourfold Family of the Buddha

with Ajahn Amaro
& Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia

For information, visit www.dharma.org

Space Still Available

**Thanksgiving
Retreat**

with **Ajahn Amaro**
and **Ajahn Thaniya**

November 17-26, 2006
Angela Center, Santa Rosa, California

More information, visit www.abhayagiri.org
or email retreat06@juno.com.