



Center Community News

The Newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

“Know you do not stand alone.”

An Account of Awakening: Consciousness Unveiled

This is an excerpt from a talk by Fred Chambers titled “Consciousness Unveiled: Fred’s Realization” recorded March 29, 2006 at the Center for Sacred Sciences in Eugene, Oregon. To read the full transcript of the sharing, including questions from various CSS practitioners, go to the website at www.centerforsacredsciences.org.

Joel: So I just want to say a few words of introduction. Fred is one of our longest veteran practitioners. Last Fall, during our Fall Retreat, Fred came to see me about halfway through the retreat. He started reporting something, and it was kind of garbled. I didn’t quite know what he was talking about at first. It wasn’t a normal report, you know—“Well, I am having some trouble with wandering mind,” or “I am having trouble with bliss,” or something like that. He started explaining to me what had happened and initially I read that he had a very clear insight into the non-existence of the self. And this is a very profound insight to have on a spiritual path. But it is not full Enlightenment.

It’s really important, but it’s sort of the negative side of the coin, and there are two sides to the coin, and the way I sometimes have expressed this in the past is the story of Cinder in the closet. So I retold the story of Cinder in the closet to Fred. He’s heard it before, but just to remind him.

And I said, “Look, this is like this cat I have, Cinder, and when Cinder was very young, Jennifer trapped her. She was feral, pretty wild, and so we brought her into the house and, of course, she would hide in all the places she could hide. And even after she became a little bit more domesticated she loved to still go and hide, especially at night, and she would climb into this closet we had—this was a very little tiny apartment over on Nixon Street and our closet was jammed with all sorts of stuff — and she would get in there and bury herself someplace and very often we would close the closet door and she’d be trapped in there all night. So we learned not to go to sleep until we had really thoroughly checked out the closet to make sure she wasn’t in there. So we would go in there and we would feel all around, all the places she could hide, and she was a little kitten at this point. And if we didn’t find her in the closet, we felt pretty safe to close the closet door. But you weren’t absolutely certain; you weren’t absolutely certain until you walked out into the living room and you saw her, I don’t know, watching the fish in the fish tank. Oh. Now you knew for sure, she wasn’t in the closet.

So this is the other side of discovering there is no self. You can have a very clear experience that there is no self but then what *is* there, is the question. And the idea here, and it is a crude analogy; is that there is another shoe to drop.

So one shoe drops, no self, and then there’s another shoe to drop.

Perhaps put in a bit more philosophical language—Dr. Wolff talked about this—it’s not the realization of a nothingness, but the Absolute Fullness. So I said to Fred, “Go out and see if the other shoe doesn’t drop.” Now Fred’s not a man of a lot of words and he went off and maybe a day or two later, I looked up on the bulletin board there, at the Cloud Mountain bulletin board where people leave you messages, and here was a message for me and I opened it up and it said “Cinder and I, we are through. Consciousness is the other shoe.”



(photo: Vip Short)

Now I have to point out a couple of things about this. My first thought is, Cinder isn’t through—but, you see, actually that is not true. When you are Enlightened, every being is Enlightened. There are the famous zen ox-herding pictures, there are ten pictures, and they represent the ten stages in the spiritual path, and in the last picture— after all these fireworks— the guy says something like “I go down to the marketplace and I go into the wine shop and I buy some wine and everybody I look at is Enlightened.” So, yes, that is true: Cinder, and not only Cinder but everybody else, everything else.

And then, “Cinder and I, we are through.” That’s an interesting pun there. We are through the gate? The title of my book is **Naked Through the Gate**. Or we are through, like we are finished, it is done, finished. So it is very rich to have that “Cinder and I, we are through.” And then, “Consciousness is the other shoe” seems to refer back to what we had been talking about, that the other shoe has to drop, but “shoe” is “shore”

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Ask Dr. Gnositall



Dear Dr. Gnositall,

I heard from a supposedly enlightened teacher that the true nature of everything is nondual. It sounded good for a moment, but then I wondered why I should listen to this guy. After all, isn't the distinction of having an enlightened teacher just creating more duality: enlightened versus not enlightened? Now I feel

CHALLENGED to a DUAL

Dear C D:

Dude, I dutifully brought your dubious dueling duality question to a friend whose gnostic awakening is widely appreciated. He said, "Weird, huh? It completely explodes the myth that you're not enlightened."

Dear Dr. Gnositall,
What is truth?

SILENT SEEKER

Dear SILENT:

Your *nom d' plume* says it all.

Spring 2006 Retreat Focuses on "Dying to Live"



(photo: Jack Yousey)

Spring Retreat participants: (front row from left) Sylvia Hawley, Rich Marlatt, Jack Yousey, Vip Short, Judith Garrison (middle row) Susan Colson, Bill Hamann, Joel Morwood, Megan Greiner, Todd Corbett, Bill Carter, Clivonne Corbett, Barbara Dewey (standing) Robert Trainer, Alan Mishchenko, Mora Dewey, Laurina Peters, Ken Paul, Tom Rundle, Peggy Prentice, Jim Patterson, Mike Strasburger, Matt Sieradski, Camilla Bayliss, Shan Ambika. (Not pictured: Janet Black, Cathryn Cardellino, Deanna Cordes, Mary Moffat, Miriam Reinhart.)



"Nothing up my sleeve," Todd gestures... or is it the Buddha?

The Spring retreat filled to capacity a short time after it was officially announced. Many of the participants came to Cloud Mountain for their first time, including one Distance Studies Course student, Robert Trainer of Washington. Todd Corbett led the retreat—also a first-time thing—assisted by Joel, who seemed to enjoy the co-pilot's seat. The theme of this 5-day retreat was "Dying to Live," with an emphasis on the transitory nature of all phenomena. Under monastic vows of silence, poverty, obedience, chastity and constancy, students undertook a series of meditation practices as they sought to see through the dualistic illusion of life versus death.

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without the “r.” And in Buddhism, they talk about going to another shore, and so forth. So you can read it as Consciousness is the other shore, you cross the ocean of samsara and you arrive at the other shore. So this is a very rich little haiku. And one of the things about Enlightenment is that it sparks these very personal expressions of it that you couldn’t find in a book. And what a teacher listens for is that. It’s not just a regurgitation of a teaching you have heard, but it actually comes out in a very fresh new way. And so, when I read that note, I said “Aha! Okay.”

However, over the years I have learned to be a little cautious about these things. Because people do have genuine gnostic flashes and even gnostic episodes, but sometimes they don’t stick. So, we talked about it a little bit, and we decided to wait before announcing this to everybody. Some months went by and Fred said he was ready to come out of the closet. I warned him; this is the other thing I have become cautious about, and I said “You may not want to, you may want to stay in there!” But he’s already been doing some, ah, crazy things, if you’ve noticed: he’s been singing wildly at our parties, and sending out poems all over the place, and so on, and you’ve noticed some changes in him. So perhaps it is better to bring it all out into the open before rumors start to spread he is getting Alzheimer’s or something like that.

So, without further ado, I am going to let Fred come up here and describe whatever he wants to say and then there will be time for any questions.

Fred: Okay. I guess it is kind of exciting. I’ve been on the other side of this several times. I’d sit in the audience and I heard Todd’s talk, and before that, Andrea and Tom Kurzka. It is always interesting what kind of thoughts and emotions arose for me anyway, kind of being inspired—“Oh man, I can do that, I want to do it too;” to the other side of being kind of envious and jealous: “Gee, that should have been me, what are they doing up there?”

So just anything that arises for you now and afterward, it’s just perfect, I mean it’s got to be if it arises. It’s just that nobody’s there to make it arise, is all you’ve got to realize.

I was going to start with a story of St. Christopher. Joel would mention St. Christopher every two or three years, he would mention this patron saint of travelers. I don’t know why, but I always felt a little bit of an affinity toward St. Christopher. I did some research, and I think his persistence in searching for one thing and another thing was also his arrogance. This is kind of a thing I can relate to; and, oh, fear, fear too.

[Fred goes on to tell the story of St. Christopher’s quest to serve the greatest King. In the legend, Christopher’s path leads from serving worldly pursuits to a search for the Divine Mystery. He finally discovers the Truth as he carries a small child across a deep river.

Then, Fred describes what happened during the Fall Retreat. Ultimately, the “other shoe dropped” while he sat in contemplation near Diamond Hall, in a small abode where many of us have sat for similar purposes. In the interview beginning on page 6 of this newsletter, Fred expands on this final piece of the Recognition.]

So then it was just like being bathed in the love of God and that was kind of the emotion that came in; it was just such a sweet feeling. So then I went out on a walk and that was when that poem, the little poem that I wrote down for Joel came in, about “Cinder and I...” and I just loved it when I wrote it down; it brought tears to my eyes, I don’t know why, I just loved it.

Those words just came; I don’t know where they came from; they just popped into my mind. That was that.

The other thing that happened on the retreat was that I had this dream. I was working for Jane Fonda, doing some carpentry. I was nailing these floorboards into a dictionary. I wondered what could that mean, and then when I was driving home it kind of came to me, “work with words.” Then just a couple of days after I got home from retreat, all these song lyrics came to me. Especially with Bob Dylan; actually he’s a pretty spiritual guy, and I just have this connection to him because I could listen to his song and then the tune would start running through my mind and maybe some of his lyrics—then all of a sudden I would come up with this whole song of my own, about whatever. In that first month or two I probably wrote about 25 songs. They weren’t all to Dylan tunes but a lot of them were. Then when Joel and I set the date for this talk I was listening to Bob’s song “I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine,” and all of a sudden this song came to me about “I Dreamed I Saw St. Christopher.” So I was going to sing that for you. Joel said as long as it’s coming through there’s no reason not to share it, and then when I told him what a musical idiot I am, he sort of kindly suggested that maybe I should just leave it as poetry.

Joel: I speak from experience!

Fred: But I guess I am not quite ready to let go of the music. So even though my musical talents are limited, bear with me one more time. I am just going to sing this song and take some questions.

I dreamed I saw St. Christopher
Alive as you and me
With fiery eyes and reddened neck
He bowed so I could see
He showed me all there was to show
And then he went away
And I am left to tell the tale
And join the human fray.

Arise, arise, arise we cry
Awake and you will see
The beauty and the majesty
That’s spread in front of thee
Let’s sing a song of love my friends
Let’s sing a joyous tune
And you will gaze with wondrous eyes
Upon a water moon.

I dreamed I saw St. Christopher
Alive as you and I
He told the tale of woefulness
And how illusion died
He said he did not mind the weight
The world to carry home
So if you’re feeling burdened now
Know you do not stand alone.

The darkness of a stormy night
The brightness of the dawn
Both of them can help you friend
Just keep on keeping on
So listen to the holy ones
Listen and be strong
For you will soon be coming home
Home where you belong.

So. Any questions?

Sylvia: Have you always been this funny?

Fred: Probably not, no. I always had probably a funny streak but I was always afraid to verbalize it maybe. Things seem more humorous now.

Deanna: Did you have any unusual physical sensations around this time?

Fred: The time of the retreat? No, not that I recall.

Vip: Joel used this construction of being out of the closet. I find myself curious how your family deals with it, if at all.

Fred: Probably a variety of emotions, a variety of ways. I mean there've been some difficult times, upheavals on the home front, so to speak. But, for the most part, it's gone pretty well. You know, my wife Jo kind of sacrificed her life a lot for me, in terms of when I started the path. I was kind of stymied, not knowing what to do; I was in a place where I wasn't making very much money and didn't think I needed to make much money and so she made a lot of sacrifices for me and for our relationship that I never really appreciated as much as I should have, until lately. It is like what I said when I was singing that song at the Christmas party—singing this love song to her—that I had never been able to love her completely before, because I was always afraid of losing her. So all of a sudden that is the other big thing, there is no fear; the fear of death is gone, there is nobody to die, there is no fear of losing anything, so you can be there with someone the way you were never able to be there with them before.

Wesley: You mentioned the body in all this. Sometimes when we sit in meditation we experience ourselves as spaciousness. We don't experience ourselves so much as body, but as spaciousness with different sensations. What is the difference between that, or what you experienced at the retreat, and how you experience your body now?

Fred: Well, it's basically similar. I would guess that you probably still have a sense of your own blind being or something that is there that really wasn't there for me, was just totally dissolved; that's probably the only difference, and now it is not something I think about a lot. It is kind of like what Joel always says, you don't have to think that you are not a dog because you just know it; it is just a fact of your life; so it's not something you think about all the time. I mean it is like our self is always threatening to come into being, it is always arising, but it doesn't last, it is just something that is arising, and it goes where everything else goes that is arising.

Megan: I remember at your house warming you said that losing your job was potentially the most drastic thing that could happen to you but it turned out to be so positive.

Fred: Definitely it was another piece, another blow to my arrogance. I had seniority over almost everybody there but yet they cut me, they laid me off before all the other people and so obviously they had picked and chosen who they wanted to keep and who they wanted to let go, so I was obviously out the door, because I wasn't doing the job the way they wanted it. But it was also freeing. All of a sudden you are thrown out into this

big space, you can do anything, or potentially you can do anything, you don't have to go to work everyday. So I decided to build a house. That was a great experience. I loved building that house.

Sharry: Were you at that kind of pointless place prior to the retreat or did that just sort of suddenly happen on retreat, in terms of your path?

Fred: I think it mostly happened just at the retreat.

Sharry: So you moved from pointless on Sunday into some kind of confusion, seemed to be the basic theme.

Fred: Well the pointlessness and confusion were all the same thing.

Deanna: Have you seen any patterns here, anything leading up to the retreat?

Fred: Well I wrote a song to a Dylan tune the day before the retreat. That was like a foreshadowing. I mean, there have been other retreats where I have had experiences. My head disappeared at a retreat four or five years ago. We were focusing on sensations and I was watching sensations in the back of my head when all of a sudden the sensations disappeared and so did my head and there was just space there. That was a similar kind of thing, because it was just a fact, there was no head there. There were other insights along the way, nothing directly—that was the most direct one.

I remember one time I just fell into this place that was kind of really blissful, but I didn't really know what was going on. I was just kind of enjoying myself looking at all these koans and was laughing at the koans, and then I fell out of this place. I talked to Joel and he said, "Well, you are having too much fun there. You need to look, look at what is going on." That's always a good thing to do, is keep looking.

Kim: This thing that happened to you on retreat, would you say that it was more of a result of things that you did in your life—spiritual practices you chose to take on—or attitudes or whatever, or just something that happened to you?

Fred: Well kind of both, actually. But there's nothing to teach really, so whatever happens like that, it is not a result of the teachings. But if I had not listened to the teachings, I would still be lost in delusion somewhere and it never would have happened to me. So it is a mystery. I don't know how this happens or why it happens. I mean all I know is I was on this search and this was the place where I was sure I was going to find my answer. But it was at the point where I kind of gave up searching, is when I found the answer.

Wesley: Joel recently quoted St. John of the Cross, that Awakening is not something that happens to you but Awakening is God awakening in you. Does that make sense to you?

Fred: Well, yes, there's nothing there, there's no God there, because that's what It is, is nothing. So there's nothing to wake up and nothing to be lost and nothing to be asleep. I could never figure that out before. It is one of those things, it is another paradox. Everything is exactly the same and everything is totally different. Because the same kinds of things arise, the same neurotic thoughts arise; sometimes I'll look at them and say what is that doing here, that is Enlightenment? But that's the point: there's no thing that is Enlightenment because whatever

arises, that is Enlightenment. You know that there is nobody there that causes things to arise or needs to worry about things or do anything, so in that sense everything is totally different.

Alan: How do you know you are Fred?

Fred: I'm *not* Fred. Well I am Fred and I am not Fred. I mean it is just a label. I don't know what I am. Yet I am still Fred. It doesn't really have an answer. I mean you can answer it in any number of ways. I mean, obviously I am Fred. But obviously Fred doesn't exist.

Kiva: You said earlier that you still don't know where thoughts come from, but I get the impression that when you see your neurotic thoughts they are still the same familiar pattern of thought that you had prior to awakening. Joel said once that it is like the ceiling fan keeps turning. I know we cannot figure things out mentally, but what *is* that, you know? Even once you realize there is no self, the same pattern of neurotic thinking will continue to spin. It is so mystifying. You would think that would go away too.

Fred: Yeah, it totally amazed me that it was still there.

Joel: It is conditioning. What food do you like? What is your favorite?

Kiva: Oh, macaroni and cheese.

Joel: So why do you like macaroni and cheese?

Kiva: Comfort food.

Joel: No, because you grew up in this culture where they serve macaroni and cheese. Your family served macaroni and cheese and all that. If you grew up in another culture, they might hate macaroni and cheese. Because they weren't conditioned to like it. And so if you wake up you are still going to be conditioned to like macaroni and cheese.

Kiva: You'd think all that would melt away too with the self.

Joel: Well, if you want all conditioning to melt away, you really would end up catatonic; you couldn't speak English. I mean, English is conditioned. You learn the English language. If all your conditioning dissolved on Awakening, you wouldn't be able to speak; you wouldn't know how to use a knife and fork. You wouldn't even know what was going on. So, it is not the conditioning that is the problem, it is self-centered conditioning. I keep trying to make that point: it is self-centered conditioning. Not just pure conditioning. That means there is a self in the conditioning. Some conditioning does drop away—if it is just totally based on illusion of self, then just take away the center of it and it just falls away—but not all conditioning falls away and you wouldn't want it to.

Kiva: Like the conditioning of Fred always being afraid of losing someone; that would be a self-referencing conditioning, and now that conditioning is gone. So now if you can imagine Jo gone, have you thought about playing with that in your imagination and what would that feel like? I mean it would be sad, but how is it different?

Fred: Well the difference is that you know nobody is alive anyway. It sounds crazy, but we are all just Consciousness, we are all the Divine anyway. If I lost Jo or some family member it

would be very sad, there would be a lot of sadness there. But you are not so caught up in the whole drama. Another thing I wanted to say about conditioning I've noticed, is that you have more clarity so you can see all your conditioning and it is just easier to let go of it. Some of it you don't want to let go of; you are happy with the way things are going. You like this conditioning. But some things just aren't working for you or people you interact with. So you say okay, it doesn't seem to make anybody happy when I do this. So you are just freer to change your behavior.

Q: Are you going to work as a therapist again?

Fred: I thought I would for a while there. Now I'm not sure.

Joel: We've got other plans for him. It's a close profession.

Thank you Fred for opening up. Even when you are enlightened, it is not easy to get up the first time in front of a whole bunch of people and spill your guts out.



Nuptial News!

Jack and Janet Are Wed



Joel, Jack Yousey and Janet Black gather by the river just prior to a beautiful ceremony attended by family and Center friends on May 20, 2006.

(photo: Susan Colson)

Way of Selflessness: Distance Studies Course

The Way of Selflessness distance studies course currently has twelve students scattered throughout the various phases of the course. Several students have passed the "Phase Three" mark where they can join the Center community on retreat, as Robert Trainer from Poulsbo, Washington did during the Spring retreat. We were glad to have him, and look forward to meeting and practicing with other WOS students. In addition to the twelve currently enrolled, the Way of Selflessness has its first graduate: Paul Flashenberg of Eugene. Additional information about the Way of Selflessness can be found on the Center's web site:

www.centerforsacredsciences.org/distancestudies.html



Interview with Fred Chambers

Fred was kind enough to answer a few questions posed by the nosy editorial staff of the Center Community News. Here he shares some details of his path, as well as the experiential steps he took at Cloud Mountain in Autumn 2005, leading to his Gnostic Awakening.

Would you share a bit about your background as a spiritual seeker? Exactly when/how did you find Joel and the Center?

I grew up in the Midwest and my family was very religious and went to church every Sunday so I was exposed to Protestant theology, but the religious scene never really grabbed me and the older I got the farther away from it I drifted. After college I started farming with my parents. Did that for 7 years, but never felt satisfied with what I was doing with my life, and I got the urge to move on and try something else. I then went into the service of psychology, thinking I would find the answers there to bring me happiness. I had these dreams of being a great psychotherapist like Carl Rogers or Rollo May, but it turned out to be a very humbling experience because I didn't have the communication skills or temperament to be a good therapist. Like fitting a square peg into a round hole. So next it was the ecology movement and specifically this eco-village nestled into the forests of Oregon. It sounded idyllic, but we could see that they had many troubles in their past. I was sure that I would be the one capable of turning the eco-village dream into a reality. After moving there it quickly became apparent that it was my dream of saving this place that would be shattered. That was a devastating blow because I didn't know what to do next. Religion hadn't brought happiness, my chosen occupation hadn't, and trying to do the ecologically right thing for the Earth had ended in failure. I was stymied.

Fortunately, my neighbor, Paul Weintraub, had started a small meditation group and he was also coming to the Center here at that time. One thing led to another and I ended up coming to the Center. Right away I knew this is what I'd been searching for all along, this is where the answers to my questions lie—although the majority of the time I hadn't been aware that I was searching or looking for answers. My religious training as a child was helpful because Joel would talk about some teaching of Jesus that I'd heard many times before, but now it was from a mystical perspective and I was like, "Oh

wow, is that what that means?" For the first time in my life religion made sense to me. I'd found my square hole to fit into. That was in 1992, and I spent thirteen years just doing the practices, watching my life transform in small but tangible ways. More freedom and happiness entered my life. Eventually I started doing more karma yoga [yoga of service], being retreat coordinator and serving on the board and going to retreats, which I have always loved. Twenty-five retreats or so, and I had my share of profound (or not-so-profound) insights... and a little bit of bliss occasionally, but not a lot of that really.

Some words about the awakening process... it seems that it unfolded at the retreat over a couple of days or so. Can you describe, play-by-play, how it unfolded for you?

On the first Sunday night, two days into the retreat... this is usually when I start to relax and let go of things of the world, and begin to deepen the meditation practice. But now Joel gave us a foreshadowing of the need to let go of the Divine. This is what is required, and I became disillusioned; I could see that any practice I did was going to end up in the same dead end that I had been in countless times before on retreat. There seemed no point in doing them again. I thought about leaving the retreat, but that seemed pointless also; just as well to hang out with my fellow dharma brothers and sisters for a few days. I would go up and down over the next three days where some teaching would speak to me and then things would seem OK, but then twelve hours later I'm totally lost and confused again and have no idea what I'm doing in terms of a spiritual practice. Which is how I felt going to Wednesday evening. The thing I remember is feeling inspired to keep looking—Joel was good at helping with that. When I listened to the recording of that night's talk a few weeks ago, I found that some of the things he said were exactly what I did in the meditation: "We need to surrender our concepts about the world so we can see the unvarnished, naked truth. The world appears to us as we think it is; notice when the mind starts to tell us what to think, and just let it go." I had a concept of self in my mind and it dissolved like a sand figure. It was just a fact that there was no body, no mind, no heart; just this vast spaciousness, kind of like a night sky with a few stars. There was nothing there that could generate a thought—at least nothing related to a body that I thought I was. No thought that "This is Enlightenment." Just the fact of seeing the reality of no self. Eating breakfast, saying precepts—thousands of thoughts, arrogant, selfish, but knowing there is no one there—no mind or body that could generate a thought. Things just went on like that for the next three days.

Gradually the thought did appear, "Maybe this is Enlightenment?" I could see that there was no self there, and figured that must be it. So I went to talk to Joel, and he's saying stuff like "Only one shoe has fallen... looking for his cat Cinder in the closet...not there, so need to look in living room to see Cinder..." And I'm like, "I don't know what you are talking about! All I can do is keep watching and letting go of thoughts." Joel says do that and don't think about it too much. Because I'd already looked at these horrific, selfish thoughts and seen they weren't me, so I was well grounded in that knowledge. "Keep looking," he said, so that's what I proceeded to do. I had lunch, organized and wrote down the words of the song I wanted to sing for the wrap up. Then went to the outhouses by Diamond Hall and sat down to take a pee. I started thinking about what Joel had said, and pondering if there was any way I could lose this insight or knowledge that I had seen. I thought, "Now what if I die, could I lose it then?", and it was FLASH! like lightning, these words just arose: *There is nobody to die. I Am this Consciousness!* Then it felt like bathing in the sweet love of

God. So that is the other shoe. I went for a walk and that little poem came to me:

*Cinder and I,
We are through,
Consciousness is the other shoe.*

I love that when it came to me, saying it brought tears to my eyes.

What about doubts along your path? Did you fall into the “Slough of Despond,” despair of ever reaching salvation? Dry periods? Felt like quitting?

On the other hand, did you have any inklings that you would “make it?” Especially in recent times: did you have any premonition before last Fall’s retreat, that this would be “it”?

There were always some doubts that arose from time to time, but no big despair other than the disillusionment at the retreat. Thoughts of quitting would also arise from time to time, but they would always dissolve fairly quickly. I never had any inkling of anything before last Fall’s retreat. I could see that I felt more at ease in my life and there was more freedom and happiness, but I would also think of the relatively small number of people in the world who are awakened and realize that the odds of it happening to me were pretty slim.

Aftermath: any big or noticeable changes in your relationships? Your habitual ways of doing things or “doing life?” Did it feel important to keep it under wraps for a while—or was that mainly in consideration of Joel’s cautiousness?

No big changes in my relationships. The Realization occurred the day before the retreat ended and it felt a little tender and I didn’t feel like talking about it at the retreat wrap-up. Within a few days to a week, I would have been fine with talking about it, but also there really is no need to rush telling anyone about it. For the first several months it felt like on-the-job training. Old situations were seen from a new perspective and I was learning new ways of interacting with the world. It wasn’t anything major, more like watching things arise and pass away and acting more from spaciousness rather than habitual conditioning.

The bodhisattva/teaching role: are you preparing yourself to be a teacher? Do you experience *choice* about that? [Joel planned to hunker down with a little hardware store, tend his little garden and live out the rest of biological life in obscurity. Andrea “outed” him and said, “Too bad, you’re not getting off that easy—you just got your first student!” Do you see yourself as a teacher at CSS, or elsewhere? What seems to be involved in taking on the teacher role?

I agreed to teach the Foundation class this fall, and expect I’ll learn a lot about teaching during that. It is interesting; I thought that after awakening that teaching would be easy—I would gain all the knowledge I needed to be a teacher. But, I gained nothing. I just let go of the false notion that I was a separate self in the world. In a very real sense, there is nothing to teach, so being in the role of a teacher is just that: a role to play, and the more you practice in the role hopefully you get better at it. I am certainly willing to give it a good shot, here, there or anywhere. To put it poetically, I was born out of the sangha, the sangha flows through my veins and showers me with joy, so I’m certainly willing to be of whatever help I can be. I know how much I hungered for teachings and put my faith in

them, and they led me to the doorstep of the Divine; so realizing that teachings are all false, really doesn’t discount their value.

Any advice for your sangha? Here we are, a bunch of seeker-schmucks like you used to be—what can you tell us about attitude, practices, anything in addition to the age-old “hang in there?”

Perseverance seemed to be an important virtue for me, but when you think about it, all seekers on a mystical path need a healthy dose of pride or arrogance just to believe that we can have a direct knowledge of the divine. It often seems like an impossible dream, yet we stumble onward driven by our longing or perhaps we feel it as a calling. But this movement toward the divine is really the only thing worth doing simply because it is the only true reality, and it has to end in success, because it is the true source of everything and everything must return to the source eventually.

Here’s a poem I wrote:

To be Divine do you aspire,
What God or Goddess do you admire?

The love you seek is in your heart,
So looking within would be a good start.

The God or Goddess in your mind,
The more you look the less you find.

God don’t want you to be uptight,
But what you seek ain’t in your sight.

The divine don’t demand you be a saint,
Spring forth and arise above constraint.

The end is the beginning,
the beginning the end,
No paradox arises that you need mend.



Fred at Tamolich Pool, upper McKenzie River, March 2006
(photo: Vip Short)



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MISSION AND PROGRAMS

The Center for Sacred Sciences is dedicated to the study, practice, and dissemination of the spiritual teachings of the mystics, saints, and sages of the major religious traditions. The Center endeavors to present these teachings in forms appropriate to our contemporary scientific culture. The Center also works to create and disseminate a sacred worldview that expresses the compatibility between universal mystical truths and the evidence of modern science.

Among the Center's on-going events are Sunday public services with meditations and talks by the Center's spiritual director, monthly video presentations, and—for

committed spiritual seekers—a weekly practitioners' group and regular meditation retreats. The Center also maintains an extensive lending library of books, audios, videos, and periodicals covering spiritual, psychological, and scientific subjects. In addition, the Center provides a website containing teachings, information, and other resources related to the teachings of the world's mystics, the universality of mystical truth, and the relationship between science and mysticism. The Center publishes a newsletter containing community news, upcoming programs, book reviews, and other information and resources related to the Center's mission.

The Center for Sacred Sciences is a non-profit, tax-exempt church based in Eugene, Oregon, USA. We rely chiefly on volunteer labor to support our programs, and on public donations and membership pledges to meet our operating expenses. Our spiritual director gives his teachings freely as a labor of love and receives no financial compensation from the Center.

Center Community News is published three times a year by the Center for Sacred Sciences. Submissions, comments, and inquiries should be sent to:

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CSS CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 2006 – JANUARY 2007

SEPTEMBER 2006

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday |
|------------------|--------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 3 CLOSED | 4 | 5 CLOSED | 6 CLOSED |
| 10 CLOSED | 11 | 12 CLOSED | 13 CLOSED |
| 17 CLOSED | 18 | 19 CLOSED | 20 CLOSED |
| 24 Talk 11 am | 25 | 26 CLOSED | 27 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL) |

OCTOBER 2006

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday |
|-------------------|--------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Video* 11 am | 2 | 3 Library 6:00–8:30 | 4 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 8 Talk 11 am | 9 | 10 Library 6:00–8:30 | 11 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 15 CLOSED | 16 | 17 CLOSED | 18 CLOSED |
| 22 CLOSED | 23 | 24 Library 6:00–8:30 | 25 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL) |
| 29 Talk 11 am | 30 | 31 Library 6:00–8:30 | |

* D'vekut: Hasidism and Jewish Mysticism

This colorful documentary depicts the various sects of Hasidism in contemporary Israel all of whom share a common goal, *D'vekut*, mystical union with God.

NOVEMBER 2006

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday |
|-------------------|--------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | | 1 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 5 Video* 11 am | 6 | 7 Library 6:00–8:30 | 8 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 12 Talk 11 am | 13 | 14 Library 6:00–8:30 | 15 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 19 Talk 11 am | 20 | 21 CLOSED | 22 CLOSED |
| 26 CLOSED | 27 | 28 Library 6:00–8:30 | 29 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL) |

* The Taoist and the Activist

A rollicking, round-table discussion with famed environmental activist Julia Butterfly Hill and Taoist teacher Dr. Benjamin Tong.

DECEMBER 2006

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3 Video* 11 am | 4 | 5 Library 6:00–8:30 | 6 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 10 Talk 11 am | 11 | 12 Library 6:00–8:30 | 13 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL) |
| 17 CLOSED | 18 | 19 CLOSED | 20 CLOSED |
| 24 CLOSED | 25 Talk 11 am | 26 CLOSED | 27 CLOSED |
| 31 CLOSED | | | |

* ECKHART TOLLE: What Is Meditation?

Contemporary mystic Eckhart Tolle gives an insightful talk on true meditation as being rather than doing.

JANUARY 2007

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday |
|-------------------|--------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 CLOSED | 3 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 7 Video* 11 am | 8 | 9 Library 6:00–8:30 | 10 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 14 Talk 11 am | 15 | 16 Library 6:00–8:30 | 17 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 21 Talk 11 am | 22 | 23 Library 6:00–8:30 | 24 Practitioner 7:30 |
| 28 Talk 11 am | 29 | 30 Library 6:00–8:30 | 31 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL) |

* MAHATMA GANDHI: Pilgrim of Peace

Using actual historical footage, this video biography tells the inspiring story of the world's most famous peace activist, Mahatma Gandhi.

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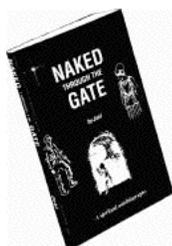


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Center Publications

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Book Publications



Naked Through the Gate: A Spiritual Autobiography

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences, 1985. Paperback, 262 pages, \$11.95

Joel's personal account of his remarkable spiritual path, ending with a Gnostic Awakening.

Through Death's Gate: A Guide to Selfless Dying

by Joel, Center for Sacred Sciences, 1996. Paperback, 83 pages, \$6.95.

A guide to death and dying from a spiritual perspective, including fundamental teachings and practices from the world's great mystics.

Audio Publications

Enlightenment

Consciousness Unveiled: Fred's Awakening

Fred Chambers, March 29, 2006

Tape# 1915; CD# cd450; 61 minutes

Foundational Teachings

Four Kinds of Practice

Joel, June 26, 2005

Tape# 1898; CD# 400; 59 minutes

Mysticism and Society

The Feminine Face of Mysticism

Joel, July 31, 2005

Tape# 1903; CD# 413; 45 minutes

Aspects of Practice

How Suffering Gets Us to the Truth

Todd Corbett, December 11, 2005

Tape# 1907; CD# cd449; 71 minutes

Aspects of Practice—Devotion Series

Devotion #1: Verbal Prayer

Joel, October 16, 2005

Tape# 1908; CD# cd416; 60 minutes

Devotion #2: Prayer-in-the-Heart

Joel, October 17, 2005

Tape# 1909; CD# cd417; 62 minutes

Devotion #3: Purifying the Heart

Joel, October 18, 2005

Tape# 1910; CD# cd418; 64 minutes

Devotion #4: Entering the Spiritual Heart

Joel, October 19, 2005

Tape # 1911; CD # cd419; 72 minutes

Devotion #5: Unceasing Prayer

Joel, October 20, 2005

Tape# 1912; CD# cd420; 68 minutes

Devotion #6: Silent Prayer

Joel, October 21, 2005

Tape# 1913; CD# cd421; 67 minutes

Devotion #7: Doing Nothing

Joel, October 21, 2005

Tape# 1914; CD# cd422; 60 minutes

NEW MP3 AUDIO CDS

Meditation Series

5 Talks by Joel on a MP3 CD, from the Fall 2003 Retreat:

#1: Concentration Practice; #2: Choiceless Awareness; #3: Liberating Thoughts, Desires, and Aversions; #4: Returning to the Source; #5: Doing Nothing

Joel, October 2003, \$20.

Devotion Series

7 Talks by Joel on a MP3 CD, from the Fall 2005 Retreat:

#1: Verbal Prayer; #2: Prayer-in-the-Heart; #3: Purifying the Heart; #4: Entering the Spiritual Heart; #5: Unceasing Prayer; #6: Silent Prayer; #7: Doing Nothing

Joel, October 2005, \$28.

Video Publications

Shifting the Base of Reference

Joel, August 8, 1992; Great Space Center, Lone Pine, CA # DVD-32; 67 minutes

Cost \$17.95* (available in DVD only)

In this talk, given at the 1992 Franklin Merrell-Wolff convention in Lone Pine, California, Joel discusses two of Dr. Wolff's most important concepts: *shifting the base of reference*, and *substantiality is inversely proportional to ponderability*. These ideas served as stepping-stones to Dr. Wolff's own Recognition of that Truth which transcends all concepts and ideas, and Joel shows how they can be used as the basis for a meditative inquiry by anyone following a jnana path.

* Please note that while the quality of the audio is fine, some portions of the video display sharp contrast fluctuations.