



Center Community News

The Newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

Center Members Visit Great Space

Every summer, students of Dr. Franklin Merrell-Wolff (one of Joel's teachers) make a pilgrimage to Wolff's Great Space Center near Lone Pine, California, to deepen their understanding of Wolff's teachings and share their insights with like-minded souls. At this year's three-day conference, Joel delivered the keynote presentation, entitled "Final Thoughts," to an intimate group of about twenty people, including Center members Clivonne Corbett, Fred Chambers, and Tom McFarlane. During the 90-minute talk, Joel elucidated Wolff's elusive instruction to realize "pure subjectivity without an object." He then guided participants in a meditation looking for this "Nothing that is absolutely substantial and identical with the SELF" (**Philosophy of Consciousness Without An Object**, p. 36-37).

—TOM MCFARLANE



(photo: Tom McFarlane)

Joel gives a teaching at the Great Space Center in Lone Pine.

*God is not hiding from us.
We're hiding from God.*

—JOEL

Spring 2007 Retreat Puts Fred Chambers in Teacher's Seat



(photo: Vip Short)

Fred listens to a question in Diamond Hall as Joel rides shotgun with full attention.

My First Ever Retreat

Cloud Mountain with Joel and Fred was nothing like anything I ever could have conceived of. Looking back, all the mind can say is "What the heck was that!?!?" Spiritual boot camp to the gates of heaven? Colossus, the emotional thrill ride? Mental soup chopped up fine, then for total confusion placed in the integrity blender on high-speed puree? Once stripped of any dignity in thought, it was time to lean back, relax the mind (by then it was afraid to think); and through a small pinhole in the head that had opened by virtue of the preceding activities came the game "Catch all the truth you can," here it comes: NOW, and NOW, and now....

I did not even need to bring a seat belt, diving gear, life preserver, blender, or straightjacket—they were all provided free of charge. Before that week there was this conceptual belief that I understood how counter-productive thoughts were to evolutionary process; boy, was that an understatement!

There is no earthly way to measure the breadth and girth of the gifts we are offered by virtue of the unusual folks we call our teachers.

My inadequate gratitude overflows.

—CAROL COFER BATES

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Infinite Mountains

I went to school at the age of seven. During the very first lesson, the teacher asked the kids to write any three words. The idea was to see where they stood at the beginning of their school education. Some kids did not know how to write, but I learned to read and write in Ukrainian when I was five. So when asked to write three words, I first put down "father" and "mother," and then added one more: "mountain."

Seeing these words written in capital letters on the first page of my notebook is vivid in my memory. I seem to remember a momentary hesitation while deciding what should be the last word, trying to come up with something profound. Why was the word "mountain" selected? A possible answer is that as a child I was asked to imagine "infinite mountains" when I had trouble falling asleep. My grandmother, a retired teacher of mathematics, brought infinity and similar notions into the stories composed to entertain me. An image of "mountains and rivers without end" may have inspired my love for the mountains.

Later as a university student, I had a hobby of browsing through heaps of obscure books in the cluttered, dusty second-hand bookstores and libraries in Kiev and Moscow. This led to several interesting discoveries, among them, Russian translations of Oriental nature poetry. These were considered escapist by the Soviet ideology, yet published in a small number of copies to enable criticism. This reading made a lot of sense, reminiscent of the familiar infinite mountain vistas, hinting at the undivided experience in daily life. "Because the mountains are high and broad, the way of riding the clouds is always reached in the mountains; the inconceivable power of soaring in the wind comes freely from the mountains." (*Sansui-kyo*, Dogen, 1200-1253.)

Coming to Cloud Mountain for the first time several years ago was a rediscovery of that childhood daydream and the later Oriental studies. Not only was the place beautiful and mysterious, as the name itself suggests, the lifestyle at the retreat center—sitting long hours while watching the progress of the day from sunrise to sunset, walking the trails and watching wildlife, eating rice, drinking tea, and washing the dishes—all were in perfect harmony with the atmosphere of this place. It brought to mind this line: "We sit together, the mountain and me, until only the mountain remains." (Li Po, 701-762.)

Returning to Cloud Mountain is always as much of a celebration as the first visit. It is an ideal setting to live without separation, as the mountain and all its inhabitants participate in the profound examination of the present moment. A tree sways in the wind. A cloud sails in the sky. A recollection arises in the mind. Whatever appears, simply ask: "Did I intend to have this thought, or this experience?" Upon close examination, our thoughts and emotions have a life of their own, even when we are trying to recall something or read a story in the newsletter.

—ALAN

Spring 2007 Retreat: "Unshakable Mountain"



(photo: Steve Jonas)

Spring Retreat participants: (front row from left) Steve Jonas, Melissa Kaspar, Bill Hamann, Tom Leach, Betty Vail, (middle row) Pat Munden, Peggy Prentice, Vip Short, Joel Morwood, Fred Chambers, Shirley Chase, Sally Snyder, Lois Diller, (standing) Bill Arcright, Laurina Peters, Ellie Parsons, Jack Yousey, Susan Colson, Steve Cummings, Bill Carter, David Cunningham, Cathy Jonas, Per Kielland-Lund, Carol Bates, Ken Paul, Tim Bates, Lewis Bogan, Camilla Bayliss, Jim Patterson. (Not pictured: Mike Strasburger.)

Summer Retreatants Consider “Relinquishing Belief”



(photo: Jack Yousey)

Summer Retreat participants: (front row from left) Vip Short, Deanna Cordes, Mary Moffat, Jack Yousey, Rich Marlatt, Todd Corbett, Sharry Lachman, (standing) Alan Mishchenko, Tim Bates, Bill Carter, Laurina Peters, Judith Garrison, Gail Marshall, Bill Hamann Jr., Jim Patterson, Per Kielland-Lund. (Not pictured: Mike Strasburger.)

Todd Corbett took his first turn in the solo teacher’s seat this past June 15-20, at the usual venue of Cloud Mountain Retreat Center. The theme was “Relinquishing Belief.” Sixteen students attended with monastic dedication, as Todd worked his best magic in pointing to What can never be truly described, but only known first-hand. (We worked on dropping the belief that it’s a “what,” as well.) There was all-around agreement that our new teacher’s style—which included unpredictable moments of ecstatic, Zorba-like spontaneity—is beautifully suited for undoing the wretched mindsets that give rise to continued suffering. As one participant observed during the final day’s sharing, this retreat might as well have been titled “Todd Unleashed.”

CCN Diminishes Its Carbon Footprint

Al Gore would be proud of us. Beginning last issue, the Center Community News switched over to a greener printing format. We now use recycled paper and soy-based ink. The greenest option, however, remains our colorful electronic micro-footprint edition, sent by email and viewable on the web. For an easy way to switch your subscription preferences, please see the bottom of the back page of this newsletter.

Practitioners Dream On with Joel

Two sets of students from the Practitioners Group were fortunate to meet in separate spiritual dream analysis groups over the course of last winter and spring. Each group had five or six members and went for eight weeks. Dreamers met weekly and shared their most powerful nighttime visions, in a sequential and building format. Joel, assisted by Jennifer, helped these visionaries understand the insistent messages from archetypal Mind.

Empty Space

by Bill Carter

We are empty space
In which everything takes place
As a bluebird passing by
Flying silently through the sky
Not leaving a trace

As rivers flowing to the sea
This oneness we all be
This is not easy for some to see
To know that we are free

It is only in letting go
Just letting all things flow
No resistance to anything
Awakening this does bring

Happiness joy and peace
A state beyond all bliss
As we look deep within
This we surely cannot miss

Opening of the heart
As a flower blooming in the spring
In the silence of the night
The dawning of a day so bright

Joel to Address Noetic Group in October

Our spiritual director will be giving a talk at the monthly meeting of the Eugene chapter of the Institute of Noetic Sciences on Tuesday, October 9. All are welcome to attend this free event, held at the EWEB Community Room. Oddly enough, the title of Joel’s talk is “What is Gnosis?” (It’s probably not a “what” either, but who gnosis?)

“Spectrum” Still Quite Ecstatic

Using the text **Spectrum of Ecstasy**, Todd took over as teacher of the practitioner’s group this past winter, and led aspirants on an emotional roller-coaster ride through tantric energy spaces. Students strived to see the arisings of “icky” feelings as ongoing opportunities for transformation, using them instead as “wisdom energies.”

*Religion is nothing else but
a looking.*

*One of the principal truths
of Christianity, a truth that goes
almost unrecognized today, is
that looking is what saves us.*

—SIMONE WEIL. **WAITING FOR GOD**



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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 ongoing 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 2007 – JANUARY 2008

SEPTEMBER 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
2 *CLOSED	3	4 CLOSED	5 CLOSED
9 CLOSED	10	11 CLOSED	12 CLOSED
16 CLOSED	17	18 CLOSED	19 CLOSED
23 Talk 11 am	24	25 CLOSED	26 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)
30 Talk 11 am			

* NO VIDEO

OCTOBER 2007

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

* RUMI: The Wings of Love

Sufi ceremonies filmed on location in the Middle East, combined with the words of contemporary scholars and sheikhs, give us a glimpse into the hidden depths of Rumi's mystical life and poetry.

NOVEMBER 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
4 Video* 11 am	5	6 Library 6:00–8:30	7 Practitioner 7:30
11 Talk 11 am	12	13 Library 6:00–8:30	14 Practitioner 7:30
18 Talk 11 am	19	20 CLOSED	21 CLOSED
25 CLOSED	26	27 Library 6:00–8:30	28 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)

* KRISHNA DAS: One Life at a Time

In this exciting video documentary, we get an intimate look at the life and music of Krishna Das, the western-born chanting master who has inspired American and Indian audiences alike.

DECEMBER 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
2 Video* 11 am	3	4 Library 6:00–8:30	5 Practitioner 7:30
9 Talk 11 am	10	11 Library 6:00–8:30	12 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)
16 Talk 11 am	17	18 CLOSED	19 CLOSED
23 CLOSED	24	25 Talk 11 am	26 CLOSED
30 CLOSED	31		

* KAREN ARMSTRONG: The God of All Faiths

At the "God at 2000" conference in Corvallis, this former Catholic nun and author of *The History of God*, describes with humor and humility her personal search for an experience of the Divine.

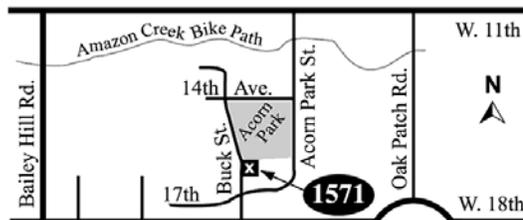
JANUARY 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
		1 CLOSED	2 CLOSED
6 Video* 11 am	7	8 CLOSED	9 Practitioner 7:30
13 Talk 11 am	14	15 Library 6:00–8:30	16 Practitioner 7:30
20 Talk 11 am	21	22 Library 6:00–8:30	23 Practitioner 7:30
27 Talk 11 am	28	29 Library 6:00–8:30	30 Practitioner 7:30 (ALL)

* PEMA CHODRON & ALICE WALKER in Conversation

In this remarkable video, Buddhist nun Pema Chodron and famed author Alice Walker engage in a face-to-face dialogue about the meaning of suffering and the mystery of joy.

MEETING ADDRESS:
1571 BUCK ST., EUGENE, OREGON

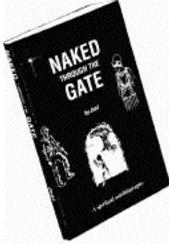


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Center Publications

For a complete catalog of our current publications and for pricing and ordering information, please visit our website at www.centerforsacredsciences.org

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

Consciousness Unveiled: Fred's Awakening

Fred Chambers, March 29, 2006

Tape# 1915; CD# cd450; 61 minutes

Four Kinds of Practice

Joel, June 26, 2005

Tape# 1898; CD# cd400; 59 minutes

The Feminine Face of Mysticism

Joel, July 31, 2005

Tape# 1903; CD# cd413; 45 minutes

Take Up your Cross

Todd Corbett, June 11, 2006

Tape# 1919; CD# cd462; 68 minutes

Truth Has No Name

Todd Corbett, November 12, 2006

Tape# 1928; CD# cd476; 69 minutes

Drop the Story

Joel, July 9, 2006

Tape# 1920; CD# cd465; 58 minutes

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

New MP3 Audio CDs

MEDITATION SERIES

Talks by Joel on an 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

Talks by Joel on an 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.

DVD Publications

Shifting the Base of Reference

Joel, August 8, 1992; Great Space Center, Lone Pine, CA
DVD-32; 67 minutes \$17.95*

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 steps 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.

Here and Now News Service:

Joel Interviews Franklin Merrell-Wolff

Joel, June 21, 1983; Great Space Center, Lone Pine, CA
DVD-30; 70 minutes \$17.95

Readers of *Naked Through the Gate* know that during the final months of Joel's path he took to the road, visiting spiritual communities and teachers to record the video magazine "The Here and Now News Service."

Meeting Franklin Merrell-Wolff, Joel recognized that he was someone special and dropped the 15-minute "Here and Now" format for a longer interview. Today Joel says of this recording, "I didn't know the right questions to ask Dr. Wolff. I wish I'd thought to redo this video after my awakening." This film also has some spots of snow and segments of hand-held camera work. Even so, it's a fascinating document for those familiar with Dr. Wolff's work, or interested in the formation of Joel's teachings.

QUAN YIN VOW:

Never shall I seek nor receive
Private individual Salvation;
Never shall I enter the final Peace alone;
But forever and everywhere shall I
Live and strive for the Redemption
Of every creature throughout the world.