

**The Retreat Center***(In Celebration of IMS' 30th Anniversary)*

Unobtrusive, yes.  
Just an ordinary country road,  
At the top of a rise,  
Not too far from some small town.

You'd never know it  
driving past:

Here,  
Countless times—like breaths—  
Awareness falls in love,  
with inhalation,  
with exhalation,  
with single leaves, whole trees,  
and,  
I've heard it said,  
with toilets.

You might not know it  
as you cross the threshold of a homely hall:

Here,  
the union of letting go and diving down  
begets  
again and again and again  
a single moment of peace.

You'll know it as it happens,  
know it like your hand,  
like the back of your hand  
turning  
to reveal the palm of your hand:

Here,  
the heart opens,  
and the soul slips softly  
around the bitter-sweet stuttering—  
Birth, death. Birth. Death.  
Birthdeath—

—*Eowyn Ahlstrom*

i'm glad i like potatoes  
when that is all there is to eat today.  
it's easy when you have no preferences.

—*Eleanor Ames*

**If I Should Ever**

If I should ever see you again—  
First I would have to sit through this pain

“The Ridgen Kings... Tilo, Naro...”  
Crouched in my contorted knee;  
Let the needled shoulders be  
No aversion.

Having the key of non-acquisitiveness  
It is still sure to follow  
The end...and so  
Where is the escape from sorrow?

We live only this instant  
Brought more alive by the suffering  
Of sitting pain.

—*James Besig*

**The Truth**

Just now in the med hall  
I sat with Myoshin  
And started to wonder,  
What's in Fragrance-Free lotion?

So as Buddha said  
I went to see for myself.  
I walked to the bathroom,  
Took the jar off the shelf.

While in the latrine  
Noting ingredients in the cream,  
I thought, “Might as well review  
Directions for how to shampoo;  
There's no I, me or mine,  
But this hair could still use some more body and shine.”

Five more minutes 'till the bell  
(That last sitting was hell)  
And who can resist lunch's savory smell?  
Besides, if I got up early, who's gonna tell?

So I set aside queries of soul, or no-soul  
And if all phenomena cannot be controlled.  
It's nice to have questions more easily answered—  
Now where was this toilet paper roll manufactured?

—*Laura Sideman*

*The heart-self of the world,  
born & evolved  
through imaginary time*

this knot of habits, this  
tangle of nervous twitches,  
strange familiar floating  
world, upside-down heart,  
buried heart, strangled heart,  
angled, angered heart,  
essence of illusion.

Dogen's three-headed, eight-  
elbowed Buddha being-time.

Thoughts as the frost  
on quantum-to-particle,  
atom-to-molecule,  
chemical-to-copulate,  
replicate-to-cogitate,  
nerves-to-nervousness,  
phototrope to fear,  
cell-wall-to-skin-prick-  
to-flight, thus  
boundary-to-leap-to-self,  
self-to-selfishness,  
so on to society, so  
many hearts in hiding,  
so here we are, again.

This diastole & systole,  
cardiac balloon of selves,  
watch, it floats & fears.

=ct=

## Homage to the Elder

Homage to you,  
The Venerable, The Teacher, The Elder.  
Homage to you...

I have met you before  
I can't remember when or where  
It has been a long journey.

I have been with you  
Noble Silence as our guide  
Hope is not in our thoughts  
mind and matter  
reside in our thoughts  
"What if" is not here  
"What is," here:

Lying on your bed  
you are not here  
but a you *is* there.

"The sun is hot," you said.  
I heard, "The sun is hot,"  
but you meant  
your heart is hot.

the night sound  
louder than our heartbeat  
day becomes night, night becomes day  
and neither is true  
time is irrelevant  
but breath *is*

5/19/05: back to the hospital  
again  
a different world  
a different language—numerical:  
temperature 101.4, oxygen level 91  
numbers are up, numbers are down  
numbers are down, numbers are up  
the voices of X-rays sheets wake us up

What we know is that we don't know.  
We both know  
the truth is unsureness.  
We both know  
"waiting" is nothing to do with us.  
"Watching" is in our heartbeat.

As I hold your warm hand I may go first, instead of you,  
and you may hold on to my cold hand or  
you may go with your cold hand.  
Warm and cold; constant changing of one sensation to another,

which you taught me: "Know the change, be aware of change,  
no need to act or react. Let it go by itself."  
Everything comes and goes  
there is no control, we both know

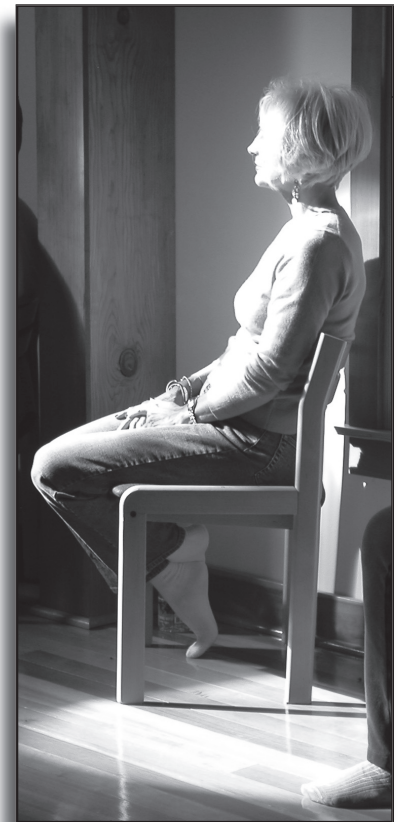
If you go first,  
the sky will be below  
the earth will be where  
the sky used to be  
but

I know  
where to keep you:  
in my Heart.

I pay homage to you, Sayadaw Gyi  
I pay homage to you, Sayadaw Gyi  
I pay homage to you, Sayadaw Gyi

—*Theikdi*

[For Sayadaw U Silananda,  
who passed away in 2005.]



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