



**No. 1 ~ 2011**



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**Photos & Artwork: Pete Kayes, Mark P., Karen Mueller, & Barry Evans**





*photo by Pete Kayes*

## **How Large is Our Belonging?**

*Maylie Scott*

excerpted from Notes from Big Flat

April 27, 1995

*"Mountains do not lack the qualities of mountains.  
Therefore they always abide in ease and always walk."  
Dogen Zenji*

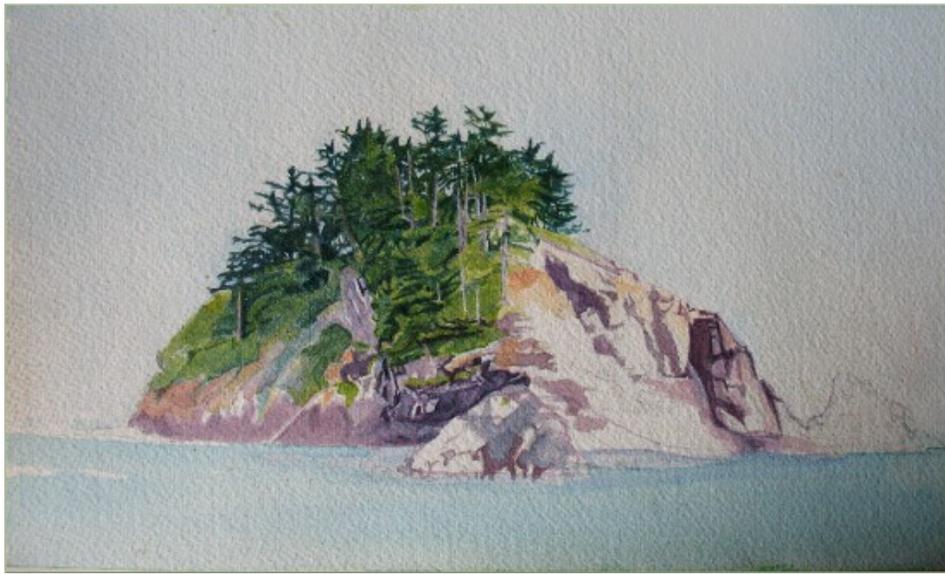
It is raining again. I recall how we enjoyed a rare space of clement weather, walking in bright sun, kelp beds twinkling, coast lines curving long and clear, ahead and behind. How zazen was so firmly supported by sounds of surf and chatter of swallows. That the hot water in the shower mostly worked. That we had Bill in our midst, to describe our position, geologically, energetically, and, Sunday night by candle light, mythically-historically (while the flatheads lay on the floor, feet towards the ocean, and hungry ghosts peered in).

There was space to appreciate one another's mountain qualities. Sherry said what most sustains her is the mountains walking all over her. Kay Dee said the waves, rising, falling in all directions, are her mind. Gaia said the reason we may not think we see mountains walking is that there is so much going on; they walk in so many

directions at once. Rose said the rattle of small stones in the out-going waves was the out-breath of the resistance in her heart.

Where do we belong? How do we belong? How large is our belonging? Gradually we learn one another's qualities and stories and our ease widens. Every time we meet we have walked further. We each find our own relation to the group and are received in ways beyond our knowing.

Gael said that our stories are our basic truth. Muriel Rukeyser says, "The Universe is made of stories, not atoms."



*Pewetole ~ Mark P*

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## **January tides, Humboldt Bay**

*Michael Quam*

At low tide, steel-gray mud flats glisten in the midwinter light, a rime of olive-hued algae is feeding ground for arctic visitors, snow-white with black wingtips, far too many for the gulls to chase off, though every few minutes they try, then flurries whirl and dip with squawks and chirps, until settled again in an uneasy truce. Far off, here and there, solitary egrets stalk the edges of standing water.

Four humans, black silhouettes in strange mud-shoes, slog about, pausing to dig for clams. The subtle signs of rising tide warn them it's time to return to higher ground, and they follow a path along the pylon remnants of a long-forgotten pier. Within hours the bay will be filled again right up to the rip-rap where I'm perched, this fecund muck will be submerged and replenished, and the birds will retreat to new shorelines or feed on the grasses of pastures and leas.

But I can't wait here to witness this cycle. I'm off to a doctor's office; and I think of my old friend Jerome, who spent thousands of hours in his office and treatment rooms, talking patiently, touching and probing, giving himself for healing others, while his soul was also outside on the river, in his garden. He made that sacrifice every day.



*photo by Karen Mueller*

### **Meditación para los Internos**

*Barry Evans and Louisa Rogers*

(Barry) Last December, after two frustrating years of vainly trying to make the right contacts, Louisa and I finally received the okay to offer meditation sessions to the inmates (“internos”) in a state prison in Mexico, not far from our “southern” home. We live part-time in Guanajuato—a historic colonial city in the central highlands of Mexico—in an old adobe house that we bought six years ago and spent the next three years remodeling. Now it’s finished and we spend about four months there every year.

Our contact was the prison Director of Education, Lic. Olmos (“Lic,” short for “Licenciado,” is the title used in Spanish when addressing a person with a bachelor’s degree). The problem had never been any resistance on his part, we simply hadn’t known whom to call. Once we made the connection, we met with

him within a week.

With Louisa watching my back (my Spanish usually gets me by, but she saves me when it doesn't), I told Lic. Olmos I was involved in a meditation program for inmates in California, most of whom were inside for drug related crimes. "Same here," he said. No surprise there.

"Is it religious?" he asked. I explained that the way we presented meditation was simply an opportunity to be still and quiet, to notice. That was OK with him, and he asked when we could start. "Right away," we said, and scheduled weekly sessions for the month of December.

Although the "CERESO" (a complicated acronym) is just a few kilometers outside Guanajuato, it's difficult to get to by local bus. Fortunately taxis are plentiful, and twenty minutes/five dollars after hailing a cab, we presented our passports and ourselves at the main gate. One phone call later, we were sent to the main check-in facility for more ID-ing, more phone calls, thorough pat-downs before being led through a chilly labyrinth of underground corridors to the women's area...via three more ID checks. The security reminded us more of Pelican Bay than the County jail, except that at each checkpoint we were struck by the courtesy and friendliness of the guards.



*A Quorum of Buddhas ~ Barry Evans*

(Louisa) We finally arrived at a chilly and spartan cinder-block room next to a large courtyard where we unstacked the plastic chairs and waited. A few minutes later, the women started trickling in, until we had 12 for our first session.

Most of them looked poignantly young. After introductions, Barry gave a brief talk in Spanish that he'd previously written and rehearsed repeatedly with his Spanish tutor. All prisons are noisy, he said, so if you find yourself getting distracted by a noise, simply notice it and allow it pass through your mind.

As it happened, it wasn't very noisy, but unbeknownst to us, the hour we were there (10:00 a.m.) was also breakfast time. Some of the women were cooking in the next-door room, and the aroma of eggs and tortillas perfumed the meditation. Two sittings later, we closed out, answering their questions as best we could. Finally they expressed their gratitude, and said goodbye Mexican-style: a kiss on the cheek for me and a handshake for Barry.

Then, accompanied by a guard, we walked through the underground entrails via several checkpoints to the men's area, where we sat in a large concrete room next to a row of computers. (I wondered if men had access to the computers, but not women?) We sat in a circle with over 30 guys, one of whom immediately wanted to exchange names and addresses—which I politely declined. We hadn't been given any rules from the director about protocol or policies, but I knew it would be unwise to become overly familiar.

In the sharing afterwards, one of the men talked a lot, making both of us nervous with his air of self-styled expertness. Facilitating group dynamics in a jail setting can be challenging at any time, but especially in Spanish! As we were leaving to many thank-you's, another guy came over to us, saying he had trouble sleeping. I told him that I sometimes struggled with insomnia too. I tried to normalize his experience by saying that it is common for dark thoughts to surface at night: unpleasant but normal. I said in those situations, I tried to focus on my breathing, without knowing how much help I was being.

Each day we offered the program, we would leave home around 8:45 in the morning and be done by noon. Between the protracted process of getting past all the checkpoints, waiting for everyone to show up, and two meditations per group (four in all), by the end, we both felt psychically exhausted. The chilly, barren, colorless environment (so unlike Mexico!) probably didn't help.

Yet we're both so grateful to have had this experience. Lic. Olmos wants us to continue, and brought up the idea of offering sessions to the staff as well. Sure, we said. As long as they want us, we're happy to lead meditation at the prison when we're in Guanajuato.



*Carruthers Cove*

### **Grassy Hill, Point Reyes**

*Angie Boissevain*

Like a bridal bouquet, yellow lupin  
and lavender radishes foam  
in meadows of rattlesnake grass.

Green coyote bushes offer themselves  
for crowned sparrows to stand  
and sing from,  
and a thistle I'd pull if it were  
in my yard is, here,  
nothing but handsome, like  
a tall shy bridegroom.

Closer, orange poppies  
flutter and shine like silk,  
and where there's water,  
swamp mimulus flower in mud.

In a brisk wind, the whole  
lot of it shakes, shivers,  
and tries to dance.

This is the day The Rapture  
was foretold--beautiful  
Spring day, end of my 74th year.  
Surely I must be one  
of the Chosen,  
in such a heavenly place.



*Elk Head, May 2011*

### **Walking with Mom**

*Barbara Madaras*

We took a walk today,  
The warm sun like a towel  
just out of the dryer.

It was good to just walk along  
Listening, not thinking  
too much about our going.

Just a gentle breeze rustling  
the cedars and firs,  
"The sky is so blue," and  
"It's good to be here."

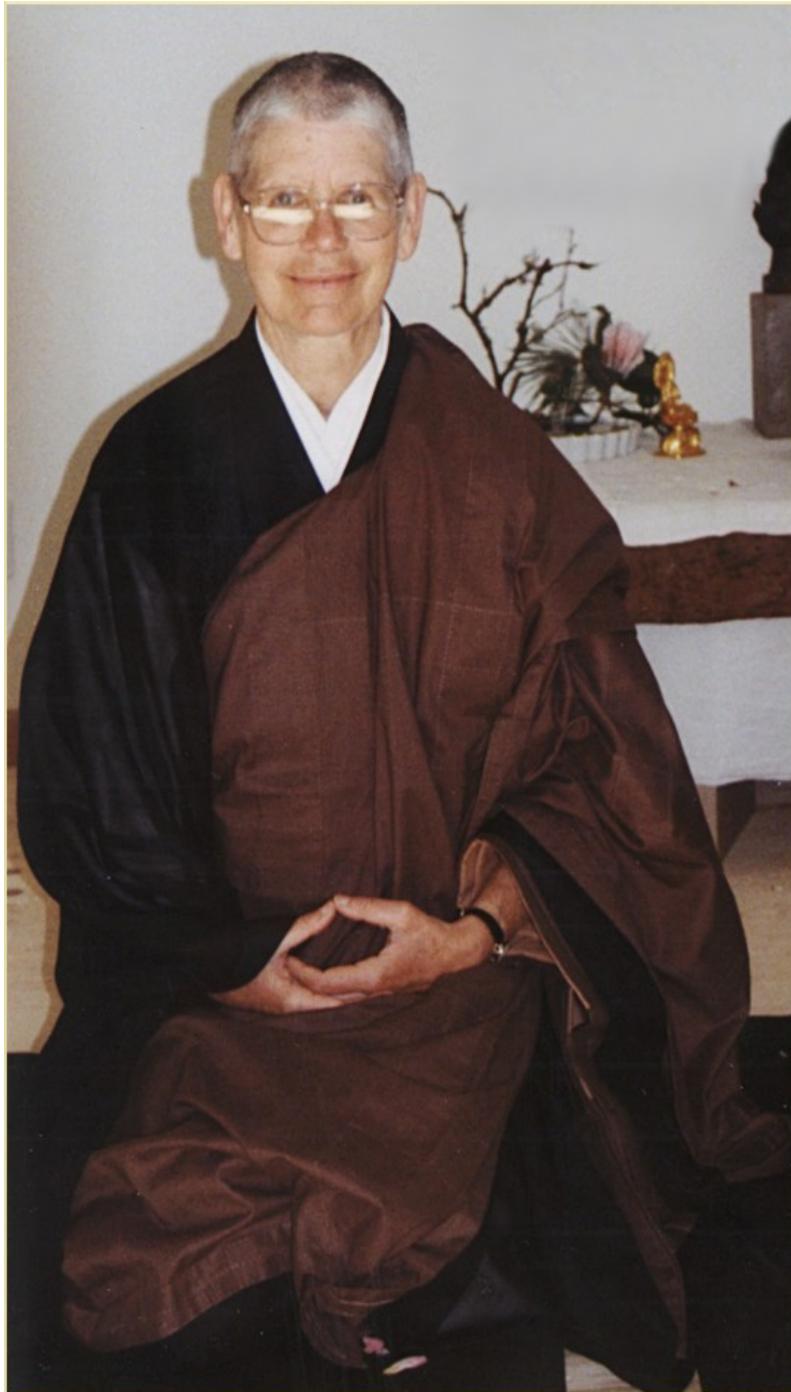
A check-in on all the family  
while huffing up a hill.  
She says, "I want a picture of you  
by that rock." And I think  
"I'll just remember."

The good times together,  
the times we're apart,  
The cord still brings life,  
and gladdens the heart.

### **Another Spring**

*Judith Louise*

The resurrection of the field,  
and of the tree,  
and of the flower,  
rising up from the grave of earth  
as grass,  
and as leaves,  
and as blossoms  
Spirit rising too  
in animals  
in humans,  
energy building, coalescing, bursting forth  
for millions of years  
every year the first time  
life arising  
out of death.



*Maylie Scott, 1935-2001*

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Now ten springs have passed  
your clear zazen instructions  
my heart can still hear

*~ Lynda McD*

