

Mid America Dharma News

Summer Issue

Mid America Dharma Group

August, 1997

Gregg Galbraith: Profile of an Engaged Buddhist

by David Arehart

When Greg Galbraith called to talk about the article I wanted to write about him for the *Mid America Dharma News*, he wanted to talk instead about a species of small, blind fish that he and the conservation group he is president of are helping to save from extinction. This shift in focus away from himself came as no surprise to me. He is not one to dwell over long on himself or his story.

Nonetheless, his is an interesting story. Greg is the one member of our sangha who has spent time in Southern Asia studying Buddhism and living the life of a monastic. He spent several years in the 1970's in Asia studying with the some of the same teachers who taught and inspired Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzburg, Gil Fronsdal and the other senior Vipassana teachers in this country. He lived with the esteemed Indian teacher Munindra-ji and studied with two of the great Burmese teachers, U Pandita and Mahasi Sayadow.

When Greg returned from Asia for good, he settled first in the Northeast. It was there that he became involved in the land trust movement to preserve sensitive land areas from potential development, or worse. He saw a similar need for land and site preservation and conservation when he returned in the early Eighties to live in his home town of Carthage, in Southwestern Missouri.

Other folks agreed. They just did not know how to organize to be effective. Greg's response was to show them how, and so in 1984, the Ozark Regional Land Trust (ORLT) was formed. Lending a legal hand has been David Cerchie, another long-time Vipassana meditator.

Both Greg and David were motivated and inspired by their grounding in the Dharma. The tone of the group, even the uniqueness of its vision, says Greg, is due to the Dharma.

"In this society we tend to be very goal oriented, but I've always tried to evaluate the success of our work as a land trust not by how many acres of land we've protected but *how* we have protected and preserved the places we've involved ourselves in. The world needs compassion and love and respect for the land, which is not to say we haven't had success on this level [protecting land]. It's just not our ultimate yardstick."

The ORLT responds to a "bigger picture," Greg notes. "There are all kinds of places that need to be protected because of what they are . . . open space, farm land, rivers, prairie. We don't set an agenda ahead of time about which properties we will protect. The properties come to us and we listen to get a feel for what wants to happen, in this particular place, at this time, and we help facilitate that." Then the Land Trust tries to find the right people to entrust the land to. Greg calls the group's philosophy "a more Zen like approach"

hundred years ago, they began moving west and eventually they landed at this very spring in Sarcoxie, the guests of the native Osage Tribespeople. This band of the Delaware — the Turtle Band, led by Chief Sarcoxie — stayed until the 1830's when white settlers moved them off it.

One of the goals of the ORLT is to preserve the house (the oldest remaining house built in Jasper County) that was built on this three acre site. Another major goal is to put back the welcome sign for the Delaware Indians to return and perform a feather ceremony at their former home on the edge of this spring. Quite a few of the Sarcoxie townsfolk, pop. 1,300, support the ORLT in this.

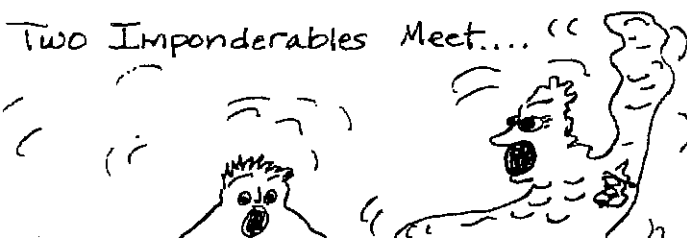
The ultimate goal, though, is to find a 'right use' for the land, the house, the cave and the spring. Perhaps it could become a place where children can learn about ecology and ecosystems and perhaps it could also be a kind of special residence or even a dharma center.

The ORLT used a \$15,000 Missouri Department of Conservation grant and a \$30,000 bank loan to buy the property originally. The house is in need of some repairs, so other funds are needed to make the upsairs of the house habitable and to make other improvements to the property. Then the ORLT has to pay off the loan.

But first it wants to find the right person or persons to become caretakers. I got the feeling in talking to Greg that the property would make a wonderful dharma center that could be used for compatible workshops or small group retreats.

Anyone interested in exploring this possibility should contact Greg directly or the Ozark Regional Land Trust, which is a volunteer organization funded by membership fees and by the generous donations of time, money, land and stocks from hundreds of people all over the Ozark region.

If you would like to help in some other way with this or similar projects, you can write the land trust or phone and leave a message at the Ozark Regional Land Trust, 427 South Main Street, Carthage, MO 64836, or phone (417) 358-5176.



Mid America Dharma Group

Offering Insight Meditation to the heartland

TENTATIVE 1998 RETREAT SCHEDULE

Date	Teacher(s)	Description
January 7	Santikaro Bhikkhu	Meet with Columbia Sangha
January 9	Santikaro Bhikkhu	Public Talk Kansas City, MO
January 10	Santikaro Bhikkhu	Non-residential, Teaching of Anapanasati * Kansas City, MO
January 30-1	Mary Orr	Non-residential, Des Moines, IA
February 1-7	Mary Orr	Householder Retreat Kansas City, MO
March 5-9	Eugene Cash & Debra Chamberlin-Taylor	Residential Conception Abbey, MO
<i>April</i>	Sangha Leaders Workshop	
<i>April</i>	Howard Cohn	Nonresidential Columbia
May 29-June 6	Carol Wilson, Guy Armstrong & James Baraz	Residential with Weekend and Full Retreat Options
<i>July 23-27</i>	Shinzen Young	Residential Conception Abbey, MO
<i>September</i>	Eugene Cash	Householder
November 6-15	Ajahn Amaro & Mary Orr	Residential with Weekend and Full Retreat Options

Confirmed dates are indicated by **boldface** type.
Tentative dates are indicated by *italics*.

*Required reading prior to this retreat: *Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners* by Ajahn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Wisdom Publications, 1996

Mid America Dharma Group
P.O. Box 414411
Kansas City, MO 64141-4411

address correction requested