

# **TASHI CHOLING SANGHA NEWS AUGUST 2021**

## **SANGHA SPOTLIGHT: LACEY SEGAL**



Lacey Segal is a new addition to our local Tashi Choling sangha, although she was involved at our sister center Orgyen Dorje Den for some years. “I always dreamed of moving near Tashi Choling. I wanted to be close to the temple, practice with the sangha, and help care for the temple,” she said. Lacey moved to Ashland in 2020, just as the pandemic propelled us into a world of masks and social distancing and online practices instead of gathering in the temple. In spite of those conditions, she managed to strengthen friendships with several sangha members.

Lacey spent her childhood in San Francisco. “It was a huge blessing to grow up there,” she said. “It was so progressive, and I had the chance to meet people who were doing interesting things with their lives, artists, champions for social justice, environmentalists and teachers.” Lacey

loved being by the ocean. She recalled one particular day when she was 8, taking a walk with her parents by the Marin headlands. Lacey saw a man sitting on a rock, meditating. She approached him and asked him what he was doing, and he explained something about meditation, which captivated her. The next day, she firmly told her mother as they walked on Kite Hill in San Francisco that it was fine for her to go home, and she would walk back by herself, because she had found a “thinking rock” with a view of the city and she wanted to stay there a while. (Lacey thinks that her mother hid nearby and waited for her. Knowing how mothers can be, she probably did.)

Lacey’s parents had both experienced hard times growing up and were motivated to develop a financially secure life. Fortunately, they succeeded, and Lacey reaped the benefits in terms of her education. She was fortunate to attend the highly-rated Lick-Wilmerding High School, which had once been a technical school and still maintained a strong shop curriculum. “I learned how to work with metal, wood, and stained glass, and studied architecture, too,” she said. Later, Lacey learned that many teachers, and even the principal at the school, were Tibetan Buddhist practitioners.

Lacey continued her love affair with the ocean and began surfing when she was 14. Her father surfed, too, and they spent many happy hours together on the water. Later, at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Lacey studied creative writing and Spanish. She studied Jewish mysticism with Rabbi Zalman Schachter then as well. In 1998, she spent a life-changing year in Chile, learning a great deal about legal issues and heartfelt environmentalism from eight indigenous women activists who refused to sign away

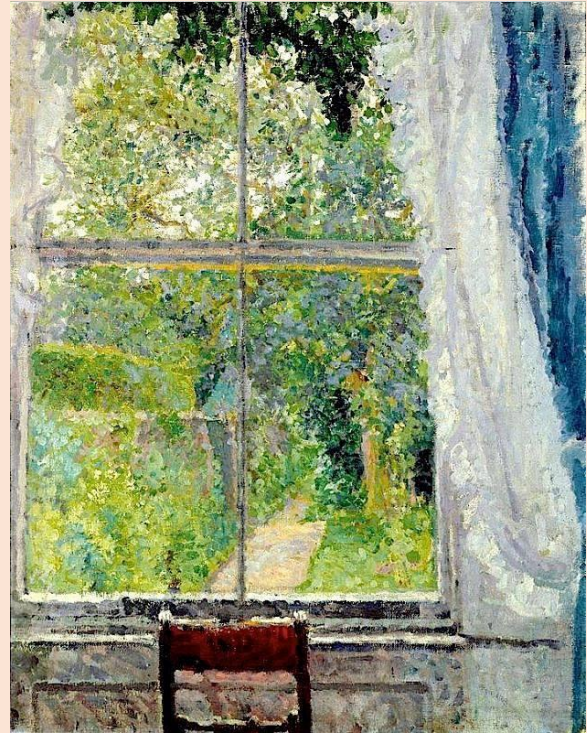
their land to the energy company, Endesa, who wanted to build a dam. In spite of their efforts, the dam was constructed and the Pehuenche tribe was displaced, to Lacey's great heartbreak.

She went on to get an MA in English and taught 12<sup>th</sup> graders, newcomers to this country, and special education students in San Diego for 10 years. "Teaching was my calling, but surfing was my passion. I've surfed all over," she said, "in Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Chile, San Francisco, Hawaii, and all over central and southern California."

Her life began to shift in 2006 when she met the esteemed dzogchen practitioner, Lama Wangdor, in Berkeley and received the rarified *Flight of the Garuda* teaching from him. "I went to this loft in Emeryville (which turned out to be the home of Grammy-nominated composer Sylvia Nakkach), and I didn't know what hit me. It was indescribable. I was both full of life, blissful, and terrified at the same time," she recalled.

In 2007, Lacey was studying Taoism in Menlo Park. One day she met Lingtrul Rinpoche, who had been invited to visit by her Taoist teacher. Lacey had no concept of what might have been considered polite behavior when meeting a lama. Innocently, she extended her hand and shook hands with Lingtrul Rinpoche. It turned out to be a real dharma handshake as she felt a bolt of energy go up her arm and into her heart. After that, Lacey tried to find Lingtrul Rinpoche for a year. Finally, she reconnected with him at Orgyen Dorje Den and took refuge in 2008. Ila Reitz was a good dharma friend at that time, driving through traffic in the East Bay with Lacey to meet Lingtrul Rinpoche, all the while giving her helpful advice and

encouragement about refuge. "She was so helpful to me. I was really nervous. My body was actually shaking at the time," Lacey said.



In 2009, Lacey decided to take three years off to focus on dharma. She quit her teaching job and began a series of adventures. She studied with Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and his son Yeshe, in Mexico, Argentina, and other locales. Receiving transmission and teachings on a Mandarava long life practice, she traveled to caves and other places sacred to Mandarava in order to practice. Recalling her time at Maratika Cave, Lacey said, "It was so amazing and magical, the gift of being in a place like that." During the journey, she reconnected with Lama Wangdor at his residence in Tso Pema, and thanked him for the door he opened in her life.

In 2010, when Lacey attended the Rinchen Terzod Wangchen (empowerment ceremony) at Orgyen Dorje Den, she met

Ven. Gyatrul Rinpoche but did not fully connect with him until she drove Lama Pema Dorje Rinpoche to Tashi Choling several years later. She and Gyatrul Rinpoche talked for a long time, and he gave her advice. At the time, Lacey was working at a Jewish nonprofit. Her co-workers had asked her to teach meditation. Lacey spoke with Gyatrul Rinpoche about it and asked for his blessing, which he gave.



The housecleaning crew with Gyatrul Rinpoche. From left to right, Lacey Segal, Lindy Steele, and Les Collins

From 2014 until the pandemic took hold, Lacey regularly went to Rinpoche's residence in Half Moon Bay with Les Collins and Lindy Steele to help with housecleaning. "It was heavy duty medicine," she said. "I cleaned his house but he cleaned my mind. Compared to what he was doing for me, cleaning his house was the least I could do," she said.

In addition to teaching English and meditation, Lacey has done event planning and fundraising for several nonprofits, including Spirit Rock Meditation Center. "In terms of philanthropy, I really like helping people donate money. I know a lot of people cringe about asking for money, but the donor has the money, and I feel good encouraging them to align with their inner

north star and help make a positive impact in this world that really needs it. Supporting a cycle of generosity in this way lights me up."

Over the past six years, Lacey has been teaching meditation to employees working in Silicon Valley corporations. "These are people who have never meditated before. In the process, they begin to notice their mind, hear the torrent of thoughts, sometimes for the first time. My clients include a lot of Indian men, which kind of makes me chuckle a little bit. It seems funny that they are learning from me, a white, Jewish woman, based in Ashland, Oregon when they live in India. What I am doing is translating meditation into something tangible for everyday people, those who didn't have the same opportunities that I did," she said.

"I just love being at Tashi Choling," Lacey said. "It feels so powerful, and I feel very much at ease and at home here. Since moving here, I feel happier, safer, and more alive. I am grateful for everyone who came before, and did all the heavy lifting to create Tashi Choling."

Thank you Lacey, and welcome to the Tashi Choling sangha.

## **ABOUT SANGHA NEWS**

Sangha News is published bi-monthly. The next issue will appear in October. Please send any news, cartoons, poetry, etc., to editor Gaea Yudron at [gaea.laughing@gmail.com](mailto:gaea.laughing@gmail.com)



## CLARK

by Jude Foster

After his cremation, we walked in a small Japanese garden.

Drops of rain water glowed on large leaves,  
Each drop a prism, reflecting the trees above,  
shimmering.

I imagined him nearby, walking with strong  
legs, just out of sight.

I wanted to show him the droplets, to share  
the moment with him.

Later, as I looked at my imperfect photos, it  
came to me.

Clark was a prism, holding and protecting  
and reflecting

The life force, the Buddha nature that dwells  
within us all.

He held a multitude of stories, journeys, and  
friendships.

He reflected the light that he saw in each  
being he encountered.

The years, the practice, the dedication  
clarified that prism.

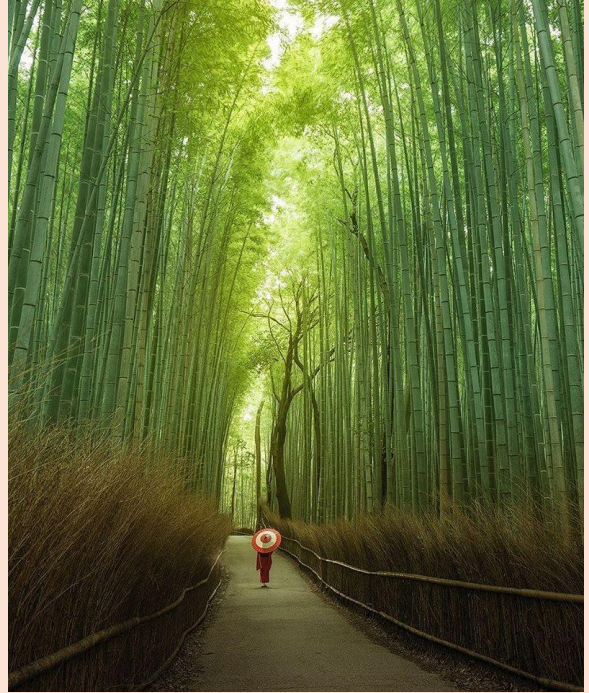
His excellent qualities were magnified once  
he took monk's vows.

But always, his kindness and his love shaped  
his flowing life,

His spirit of adventure, his striding legs, his  
expressiveness.

Clark reflected and connected us all, in the  
web of his life.

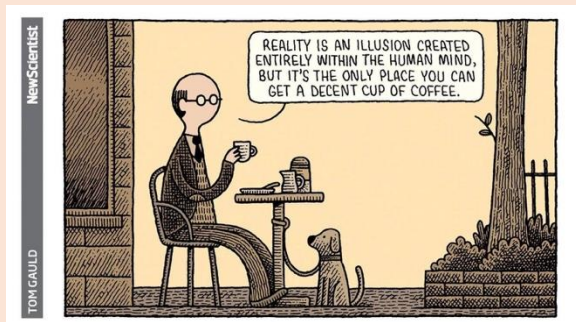
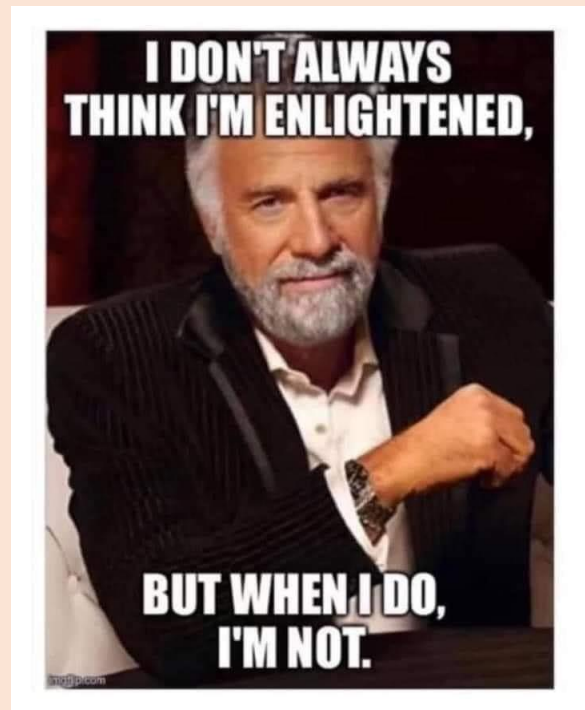
*Jude Foster is a sangha member at Dorje Ling  
in Portland. Thanks to Jude for sharing this  
poem, and thanks to Ani Yeshe for alerting  
me to its existence.*



## Cartoons for the Contemplative



Padma Beamonte, a sangha member from Ensenada, posted this on FB and I had to share it here. Thanks, Padma.



Okay, it is not a cartoon but it is funny, no?