

Notes from
‘The Cannon Beach Meeting’



George Vetter/Cannon-Beach.Net

**Saturday January 12th &
Sunday January 13th, 2008**

**The Executive Boardroom,
Tolovana Inn, Cannon Beach, Oregon, USA**

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Meeting Participants:

- Sheila Blackford (USA)
- Dr Ann Bolger (USA)
- Chencho Dorji, MD (Bhutan)
- Kevin Griffin (USA)
- Professor G. Alan Marlatt (USA)
- Ashley Marlatt (Canada)
- Dr Kitty Moore (USA – attended Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning)
- Paul Saintilan (Australia)
- Dr Martin Salinsky (USA – attended Saturday morning)

(See Group Photo in Appendix 4)

*A **video recording** of the meeting was made possible by Professor Marlatt and Kit Marlatt from Cascadia Addiction Research and Education, LLC (C.A.R.E., LLC). Edited selections from the meeting will be available in DVD format and content may also be streamed off the website www.buddhistrecovery.org in due course.*

The following notes present a faithful record of the key decisions of the meeting. However, in order to create a coherent document for public distribution, in some cases the sequence of the original discussion has been altered. In rare instances refinements have been introduced that were the product of post-meeting discussions. Where this has occurred it is clearly indicated. For these reasons we have entitled these “notes” rather than “minutes”.

The meeting was opened by Paul Saintilan (the meeting facilitator) at 9:00 am on Saturday January 12th. After a some preliminary announcements, the conveying of apologies from those who could not be present, and a ten minute meditation period to bring some stillness to the proceedings, each participant spent 15-25 minutes providing a personal introduction and sharing his or her hopes for participating in the meeting.

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The first key outcome of the meeting was a working draft of the organisation's Mission Statement:

"The Buddhist Recovery *Network* supports the use of Buddhist teachings, traditions and practices to help people recover from the suffering caused by addictive behaviors. Open to people of all backgrounds, and respectful of all recovery paths, the organization promotes *mindfulness and meditation, and is grounded in Buddhist principles of non-harming, compassion and interdependence*. It seeks to serve an international audience through *teaching, training, treatment, research, publication, advocacy and community-building initiatives*."*

* Note that this contains refinements introduced after the meeting (italicized). The initial draft created at the meeting is presented in Appendix 1.

2. NAME: Buddhist Recovery Foundation, subsequently changed post-meeting to Buddhist Recovery Network

'Mindful Recovery' was discussed as an alternative to 'Buddhist Recovery' as it might enable easier mainstream engagement, devoid of religious connotations. However, the conclusion was reached that 'Buddhist Recovery' was truer to the scope envisioned by many of the meeting participants.

Alan and Paul also saw the definition of 'Buddhist Recovery' transcending the convergence of AA and Buddhism (eg 'Buddhist Twelve Step' meetings). They saw the scope of 'Buddhist Recovery' encompassing Buddhist practices completely outside AA influence such as Naikan in Japan, Vipassana meditation in prisons, and the use of mindfulness based therapies in relapse prevention.

While 'Foundation' was the original third word of the title in the draft meeting documentation, at the outset of the meeting Paul expressed some dissatisfaction with it. Foundation possessed commendable weight and gravitas, but community building was likely to be a higher priority than channelling an endowment to other organisations. A number of other options were considered (such as Association, Community, Fellowship, Group, Institute, Organisation, Society etc) however the meeting drew to a close with no change to the proposed 'Foundation'. After the meeting Kevin suggested 'Network' as it was closer to the key community-building aspiration.

3. OBJECTIVES:

1. **To establish an archive for the historical preservation of research and writing on the topic of Buddhism and Recovery. This could serve as a future resource for writers, researchers and artists.**

- Status: Accomplished.
- Paul offered as a gift to the proposed organisation a full set of the books reviewed on the www.buddhistrecovery.org site. This gift was accepted by the meeting participants on behalf of the proposed organisation.
- Alan offered to host the American site for the archive, which would be based at the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington. This offer was accepted by the meeting participants on behalf of the proposed organisation.
- Paul also minuted that he had made a similar donation to David and Joyce Djaelani Gordon at YAKITA, Indonesia. While it will remain in Indonesia under their supervision, the collection is understood to be a community asset which the proposed organisation will be able to access.
- **Action: Any items deemed worthy of being held in the organisation's archive should be sent to:**

**G. Alan Marlatt, Ph.D.
Professor and Director
Addictive Behaviors Research Center
University of Washington
Dept. of Psychology
Box 351525
Seattle, WA 98195-1525
USA**

2. **To establish by May 2008 a website, to serve as an introduction to the organization and as an information resource for those in recovery and for those seeking to help people in recovery.**

- Paul offered as a gift to the proposed organisation the website www.buddhistrecovery.com. He tabled a document with information on the site such as visitation statistics and Amazon sales to date. The commission from Amazon sales from 2008 onwards (and all other potential income) would go to the proposed organisation. This gift was accepted by the meeting participants on behalf of the proposed organisation. It will be subsequently changed from a 'blog' style site to one more appropriate for a community organisation. Paul tabled a

print out of the web pages on the current site. These were marked up to show how they might be adapted. There was insufficient time for this document to be reviewed in detail.

- It was agreed that in addition to the current Resources List the website should feature an Event List, a Meeting Register and specially originated content, including streaming audio and video.
- There was debate over the Meeting Register, and whether it should be highly controlled, or user generated under the banner of a legal disclaimer. Chencho argued persuasively that to fulfil the widest community potential in a short period, opening up the site under a disclaimer would be the best option. This is where the discussion concluded.
- Paul also noted the future possibility of the site becoming a retail channel for e-books. Many of the titles reviewed on the site will fall out of distribution, and so making them available in soft copy would be a useful service. For example *The Joy Beyond Craving* is effectively out of stock and the publishers have confirmed they would be delighted to have the title still available through an e-book service. Katy Butler has also confirmed that in principle she would be happy to have her essay (reviewed on the site) made available for sale in soft copy.
- **Action: Paul to check if Collins Flannery wishes to volunteer as the webmaster. If not Kevin will canvass interest among his contacts. Kitty may also have a possible contact.**
- **Action 2: Post-meeting it was also suggested that the .org domain should be acquired once the organisation has been established and the .com retained and redirected to the .org address.**
- **Action 3: Post-meeting it was suggested that a Gate Keeper would be necessary to screen requests to have meetings listed. This may or may not be the same position as the Webmaster.**

3. To undertake advocacy work, promoting the potential benefits of Buddhist teachings and practices to those in recovery.

- Alan has been invited by the UK based Addiction Recovery Foundation to present on the proposed organisation's behalf at the 5th UK/European Symposium on Addictive Disorders. This will be to an audience of around 500 delegates, and will take place from May 8-10, 2008 at the Millennium Gloucester Hotel, Kensington, London, UK. They will be supporting his travel expenses, and Alan hopes to include video footage from the Cannon Beach DVD in his presentation.
- This will grow in time to become the publicity, marketing and fundraising dimension of the organisation.

4. To host Conferences and Conventions to foster community building and information sharing, the first to be held in the Fall of 2009.

- This objective was proposed by Kevin and was greeted with considerable enthusiasm.
- Cities identified as a potential location for the first Conference were: San Francisco; Seattle (taking advantage of facilities at the University of Washington, or at Semiahmoo Resort, Washington www.semiahmoo.com/); and Minneapolis/St Paul (where there is considerable interest in this area).
- Debate took place on whether we should aim for Spring 2010 or Fall 2009. Logistically it was felt that 2010 was safer, but given the growing interest in this area it was agreed a 2009 date would provide a more motivating focus and could capture the imagination of people when the organisation's formation is announced. 2010 might be viewed (initially) as quite remote. It was agreed we should try for Fall 2009.
- It was noted that in determining the date, research would need to be conducted into potentially competitive events.
- It was agreed that as and when possible, future Conferences should take place outside of the USA to reflect the international nature of the organisation. Bhutan for example was mentioned as a possible location for a future Conference.
- A working party would be established, comprising a great deal of volunteer support, to take responsibility for the delivery of the Fall 2009 event.
- **Action: March Board meeting to determine precise dates and city.**
- **Action: File note - Conference budgeting should provide a budget to sponsor attendance from international presenters and monks who could make a contribution.**

5. To conduct training workshops

- Even before the meeting there was interest in the organisation being a catalyst for training and development. Kevin wrote: "One thing that keeps coming up for me is the idea of helping different dharma centers to establish Buddhism/12 Steps groups. I'd like to be able to train people to lead groups, because I get so many inquiries from people about different areas where there is no group. That's one of the ideas I'd like to put on the agenda."
- There was insufficient time to discuss this in detail at the meeting.

6. To undertake research and provide consultation on research proposals.

- The research related work of the organisation would be conducted under the supervision of Alan.
- There was insufficient time to discuss this at the meeting.

7. To establish a Treatment Center on the West Coast of the USA

- There was discussion over the degree to which the proposed organisation should involve itself in bricks and mortar style projects. It was agreed that creating one showpiece Center that could serve as an inspiration for this community could be a mid to long term project.
- There was insufficient time to discuss this at the meeting.

8. To formally establish the organization.

(i) Patrons

It was agreed that the following should be invited to become Patrons of the organisation:

- Pema Chödrön - **Action: Alan to contact**
- Jack Kornfield – **Action: Kevin to contact**
- Thich Nhat Hanh - **Action: Alan/Kevin to contact**
- The Dalai Lama **Action: Alan and/or Kevin to facilitate making contact**

It was agreed that Patrons would have no administrative obligations. Their key function was to provide endorsement through public association with the work of the organisation. Additional involvement would be at the discretion of the Patron. They may also be invited to ceremonially preside over major events presented by the organisation, though acceptance would create no obligation in this area. Their considerable spiritual authority would also make them powerful internal sounding boards if the organisation ever needed wise counsel to resolve issues of controversy or difficulty.

(ii) Board

It was discussed and agreed that the Board should comprise 10 to 12 members with staggered terms. Paul recommended that the Chair should be someone with heavyweight credentials in the area of 'Buddhist Recovery'. There was unanimous desire by participants that the Board be diverse and reflect varied backgrounds – Buddhist meditation teachers, a Buddhist monk, Addiction/Recovery Academic Researchers, an Addiction/Recovery Clinician, those recovering from alcoholism or substance addiction, those who are family members of

an alcoholic/addict. Paul also made a personal plea that one of the Directors possess a legal background.

The following participants of the Cannon Beach meeting were proposed and confirmed as founding Directors:

- **Interim Chair:** Paul Saintilan (Australia). Paul will hold the Chair position on an interim basis until a suitable candidate can be found. An ideal candidate would be US based, with heavyweight credentials in this area. Once the Chair was found, Paul would stay on as an Australian based Director. Paul's experience is primarily in business management and administration, though he co-founded the www.buddhistrecovery.com website.
- **Member:** Professor G. Alan Marlatt (USA). Will provide considerable expertise in areas such as research.
- **Member:** Kevin Griffin (USA) Meditation/Dharma Teacher/Author.
- **Member:** Dr Ann Bolger – (USA) Psychologist and Clinician.
- **Member:** Sheila Blackford (USA). Will provide input on legal matters.

In addition, it was agreed that invitations would be extended to:

- Timothy O'Brien (USA - Executive Director Northwest Dharma Association) Has the potential to make a contribution to financial supervision. **Action: Paul to contact**
- Ajahn Amaro (USA – studied under Ajahn Chah in Thailand) **Action: Kevin to contact**
- Tara Brach (USA – author of *Radical Acceptance*) **Action: Alan to contact**

Kevin also mentioned one or two other high profile individuals in the San Francisco area he would like to approach.

Board members would not be paid, but may have their expenses (or a proportion) reimbursed if funds were available to cover this.

It was agreed that Board members could not be granted anonymity, as potential donors and supporters needed to know the credentials of those to whom they are entrusting gifts and bequests. However, Advisory Council members could be granted anonymity.

(iii) Advisory Council

- Paul proposed that an Advisory Council be established, of 24 to 100 people, which would enable input from a wide spectrum of disciplines and perspectives. Participants could include Buddhists of all traditions, doctors, psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, neurologists, social workers, addiction counsellors, researchers, people within and outside of the AA, NA and AI Anon fellowships etc. Advisory Council

members would be copied on key policy and project documents for their input. Board members would be drawn from the Advisory Council. This was agreed.

- It was agreed that anyone who had been invited to participate in the Cannon Beach meeting and was not serving on the Board would be invited to serve on the Advisory Council. (See Appendix 2)
- Additional suggestions for Council members would also be welcome. These will be discussed and approved at Board meetings.
- Prospective members of the Advisory Council would receive a formal letter of invitation explaining the objectives of the organisation, the function of the Council and the role of Council members.
- Paul proposed that due to the greater collective wisdom of the Advisory Council compared to the Board (due simply to numbers), a potential safeguard over the conduct of the Board might be to grant the Advisory Council the right to remove the Board if 75% of the Advisory Council lost confidence in the Board. No agreement was reached on this proposal. Due to insufficient time, further discussion was held over for a future meeting.

Action: Paul to draft letter of invitation to prospective Advisory Council members. To be discussed and approved at March Board meeting.

Action: Other suggested additions to the list be emailed to Paul for discussion at the March Board meeting.

(iv) Membership

Alan raised the possibility of establishing an additional category of **Membership**, whereby in return for an annual fee, Members are sent Network publications and materials. Adopting this type of model was discussed but no decision was reached.

(v) Place of incorporation

It was agreed that the organization would be incorporated in Oregon USA since the organization's founding meeting had taken place at Cannon Beach, Oregon.

- ***Action: Sheila will assist by taking care of the incorporation and donate the filing fees - \$50 filing plus \$5 for true copy for IRS for later filing for tax-exempt status. [NOTE: staggered terms need to be established.]***
- ***Action: Sheila to look at the level of Director's Liability insurance that may be required .***

(vi) Tax Exempt Status with the Internal Revenue Service

Sheila reported that gaining tax exempt status can take place within 27 months after the end of the month in which we are legally incorporated. The expected revenue of the organization impacts the non-refundable filing fee. If organization anticipates it will not generate gross receipts in excess of \$10,000 annually over a 4-year period, we must submit a filing fee of \$300. If the anticipated gross receipts will exceed \$10,000 annually over a 4-year period, we must submit payment of \$750. This may be an expense that we will need fundraising to cover.

Action: Incorporation and tax exempt status to be discussed at March Board meeting.

4. VALUES

Discussion took place on the values that should be upheld, both in terms of personal values that should be embodied by office bearers and in relation to organisational culture.

Personal values

It was felt that being a 'Buddhist Recovery' organisation the values implicit in the Buddhist teachings and precepts should serve as a basis for ethical guidance. The paramitas were proposed as a way to encapsulate these values at a personal level.

'We follow the values of the paramitas: (i) generosity, giving of oneself; (ii) virtue, morality, integrity, proper conduct; (iii) renunciation; (iv) transcendental wisdom, insight; (v) energy, diligence, vigour, effort; (vi) patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, endurance; (vii) truthfulness, honesty; (viii) determination, resolution; (ix) loving-kindness; (x) equanimity, serenity. It was discussed that the precepts, Four Noble Truths, and Eightfold Path could be graphically represented showing their inter-relation.

Organisational values

It was felt that the organisational values should be explicitly defined, and the following were proposed by Paul and accepted without objection:

- **Diverse** – Welcoming and inclusive of many different perspectives.
- **'Bracing and embracing'** – positive and respectful but not frightened of constructive conflict and speaking up. An organization with no conflict is a dysfunctional organization.
- **Money an important means, but never an end** – The organization should place greater value on the positive influence it generates than the financial value of its assets (*"it's not the size of the boat, but the size of the waves"*). The organization should never sacrifice principles to increase assets.

- **International** – We should recognize that while US-based, the US is in fact a small part of the global potential of the organization.
- **Transparent** – open, accountable and non-defensive about inquiries into its workings.
- **Ethical** – in terms of its conduct and advocacy, works in accordance with Buddhist precepts, and would never accept funding from an entity which can be seen to be contravening Buddhist precepts (understanding how difficult it may be on occasions to determine this).
- **Efficient** – aims to deliver the maximum social outcome for each dollar invested. Will monitor and improve the ratio of overhead expenses as a percentage of revenue.

The comments from David and Joyce Djaelani Gordon in Indonesia that the organisation should always see itself as a service organisation, at the service of people who are suffering, and never lose its humility, were accepted with appreciation.

It was also agreed that the organisation should be open and inclusive, open to people of all backgrounds, and did not require identification as a 'Buddhist' to become involved.

Action: Kevin offered to undertake further work on defining values (see Appendix 3).

There being no further business and the advancing hour, the meeting closed at 5:45 pm on Sunday 13th January, 2008. Kevin led the closing ceremony.

Appendix 1: Mission Statement Draft Agreed at the Meeting

“The Buddhist Recovery organization supports the use of Buddhist teachings, traditions, and practices to help people recover from the suffering caused by addictive behaviors. Open to people of all backgrounds, and respectful of all recovery paths, the organization promotes the practice of meditation to become aware of, and let go of, habitual patterns of behavior. It seeks to serve an international audience through training, treatment, research, publication, advocacy and community building initiatives.”

This was subsequently refined and amended to arrive at the statement reproduced earlier.

Appendix 2: List of those who were invited to the Cannon Beach meeting and will be formally invited on to the Advisory Council (37)

Unless otherwise indicated, Paul Saintilan will email a formal invitation (wording of invite to be signed off at the March Board meeting). We attempted to contact all these people to invite them to the Cannon Beach meeting:

Christie Ackmann (USA – licensed clinical social worker from Salt Lake City)
Bill Alexander (USA – author of *Cool Water* and *Still Water*)
Mel Ash (USA – author of *The Zen of Recovery*)
Jeff Bell (USA – afternoon News Anchor for KCBS Radio and author of *Rewind, Replay, Repeat*)
Dr Thomas Bien (USA – author of *Mindful Recovery*)
Beverly Bien (USA – author of *Mindful Recovery*)
Deirdre Boyd (UK – CEO of the Addiction Recovery Foundation)
Chencho Dorji, MD (Bhutan - psychiatrist)
R. Adam Engle (USA – Chairman and Co-founder of the Mind and Life Institute)
Collins Flannery (USA)
Virginia Franklin (New Zealand)
David Djaelani Gordon (Indonesia – established the recovery network YAKITA)
Joyce Djaelani Gordon (Indonesia – established the recovery network YAKITA)
Christina Grof (USA – author of *The Thirst for Wholeness*) [we need contact details]
Joel Grow (USA) – *Alan to contact*
Charlie Johnson (USA – on the Board of Spirit Rock and the East Bay Meditation Center) – *Kevin to contact*
Ray Kemble (USA – Colorado)
Kuladitya (UK - Western Buddhist Order)
Dori Langevin (USA – associated with the Insight Meditation Centre, Washington) – *Kevin to contact*
Noah Levine (USA – possibly Board) - *Kevin to contact*
Dr Marsha Linehan (USA) – *Alan to contact*
Lokapala (David Gilmour) (New Zealand – Clinical Team Leader Auckland Methodone Service)
Jeffrey MacIntyre (USA – Boston Shambhala Center)
Kit Marlatt (Canada) – *Alan to contact*
Ashley Marlatt (Canada) – *Alan to contact*
Dr Kitty Moore (USA – clinical psychologist and acquisitions editor of Guilford publications) - *Alan to contact*
Michael Poole (Australia – co-founder of www.buddhistrecovery.com)
Judith Ragir (USA – Zen Priest and Teacher) – *Kevin to contact*
Laura S. (USA – author of *12 Steps on Buddha's Path*) *Kevin to contact*
Dr Martin Salinsky (USA - neurologist)

Santikaro (USA – Theravadan Buddhist Teacher)
Heather Sundberg (USA – Director of the Spirit Rock family program) – *Kevin to contact*
Janet Surrey (USA)
Claude AnShin Thomas (USA)
Charlie Walker (USA)
Sandra Weinberg (USA – one of the founders of the NY Insight Meditation Center) – *Kevin to contact*
Larry Yang (USA – psychotherapist, consultant in cultural diversity) – *Kevin to contact*

Appendix 3: Personal Values

Kevin Griffin was invited at the Cannon Beach Meeting to undertake further work on defining personal values. This is in the spirit of trying to cultivate a strong ethical culture for the organisation, influenced by Buddhist teachings and traditions. The following was tabled on 21st February, 2008 as a draft for discussion:

“Many of these values are based on the “Paramitas” or “Perfections”, qualities which the Buddha is said to have developed and perfected over many lifetimes.

1. mindfulness – a non-judgmental, wise attention is what guides spiritual growth and recovery. Mindfulness is the basis of Buddhist meditation. It helps us to let go of stressful grasping and aversion, and it opens us to insight about ourselves and the dharma. Mindfulness is the antithesis of denial, and it guides every step of recovery, from the initial acknowledgment of a problem, to the spiritual awakening that recovery promises.

2. generosity, giving of oneself – For lay people the Buddha taught generosity first, not meditation. Perhaps this was because generosity is the most basic form of letting go. We learn in Twelve Step programs (Step 12) how helping others gets our mind off ourselves and brings a sense of self-worth and satisfaction. Generosity doesn't just mean money; fundamentally, it means giving of ourselves, our time, our attention, our care and love. To live and practice with this value is to experience the joy of recovery.

3. virtue, morality, proper conduct – This value is associated with the Five Precepts of non-harming: to not kill, not steal, not harm others with our sexuality, to not harm others with our speech, and to not use intoxicants that cause heedlessness. The last precept, of course, is the starting point of sobriety and recovery. But recovery demands more than just physical sobriety, and morality is a key part of that. Step Four asks us to take a “moral inventory” and the Buddha emphasized virtue as the starting point of spiritual growth. While a repressive, Puritan morality may wind up being counterproductive as it only triggers rebellion, having some set of values—our own values—is an important part of a recovery program.

4. renunciation – This value is the essence of letting go, and it's at the heart of recovery. Until we “renounce” our addictive drug or behavior, we haven't even started on this path. Traditionally renunciation meant taking on a monastic lifestyle, but its benefits aren't limited to the clergy. Joseph Goldstein used the phrase “non-addiction” to replace the sometimes off-putting word renunciation. When we start to look at our behaviors and habits through the lens of addiction, oftentimes we uncover many things we want to let go of, to renounce.

5. transcendental wisdom, insight – Wisdom and insight are not qualities that can be taught. One formula is “experience plus mindfulness equals wisdom.” This points to the need for continuing attention to become wise, the reason that older people are traditionally the repositories of their culture's wisdom. Intoxicants break attention, thus undermining the development of insight. In Buddhism, wisdom is centered on having insight into the Three Characteristics: Suffering, Impermanence, and No-Self.

6. energy, diligence, vigour, effort – no change happens without effort. To merely think about change is useless. While the practice of meditation appears passive, it is, in fact, an engaged and energetic form of attention. And yet, practicing “Wise Effort” requires engaging with the essential paradox of meditation: Meditation is about non-striving, so how do you try to not strive? Suzuki Roshi calls this “the secret of practice.” This is sometimes called “effortless effort.”

7. patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, endurance

8. truthfulness, honesty – honesty is one of the cornerstones of recovery. It starts us on the path when we come out of denial. It helps us to look deeply into our own conditioning and habitual patterns. Transparency and truthfulness protect us from harming others and ourselves.

9. determination, resolution – continuous vigilance is required for sustained recovery. “Keep coming back” points to this, as does the saying, “suit up and show up.” Our sobriety is a vow, one renewed each day. The struggles of life and impermanence create many challenges, so this deep commitment to the path of recovery sustains us.

10. loving-kindness – the spirit of recovery is the spirit of caring, caring for ourselves and caring for others. As we let go of destructive patterns, our heart naturally opens and allows us to become more loving towards all beings.

11. equanimity, serenity – balance of mind supports us through the challenges of recovery. We strive for a heart unmoved by the “worldly winds.” The addict tends toward extremes. The value of equanimity reminds us to avoid these dangers.

12. concentration – the foundation of calm in meditation, concentration helps us achieve balance and serenity. Concentration is healing and purifying, cooling the passions and bringing lightness and joy to the mind.”

Appendix 4: Group Photo



*Meeting participants (from left to right):
Dr Chenchu Dorji; Sheila Blackford; Paul Saintilan; Dr Martin Salinsky;
Dr Ann Bolger; Kevin Griffin; Ashley Marlatt; Professor G. Alan Marlatt.*