

Tales From Joy, #7, 2024

As I walk the grounds here, amidst the emerald green moss and the purple lotus blossoms, I also have one perceptual eye peeled towards whether SDS can energetically survive the loss of Khun Mae's charisma or continue to draw in the urban liberals that she attracted?



I'm discouraged to see the lifeless resin statues, with recordings and videos playing. In the photo above, she's positioned next to the sand mandala that four Geshe-level nuns from Nepal painstakingly created several years ago. This "four-dimensional" mandala was meant to be washed back into the sea, river, a creek or canal upon its ceremonial

completion, thus affirming the creation and dissolution of all matter!

Likewise, our dear Khun Mae remains locked away in her refrigerated casket, in defiance of the very foundations of Buddhism:

Annicca - the eternal chaos and shifting of all solid matter and

Annatta - the insubstantial nature of our identities..

Last year, right before I left SDS, I was poised to give Pa Tum a little pep talk about releasing the physical form of her sister, Khun Mae. No one else would dare or care to do that. Nawng Joy was to be my (reluctant) translator. Just as I was about to launch into my spiel... a few dozen schoolchildren arrived, bowing to Pa Tum and flooding into our space, rendering my plan impossible.



As we walked away, Nawng Joy said to me:

Don't feel bad, Pa Joy. You can tell her next year... Cause this is not about to change.

How soon we humans tend to forget about our journey from “dust to dust”! How readily we all attempt to resurrect ourselves in some divine eternal mold.

Please do laugh, dear readers!

Meanwhile, life is surging in a vital way over at the Montessori-inspired kindergarten that Khun Mae initiated

decades ago!



The Kiddee

Cafe is an annual event. The kids choose the breakfast fare, sew their outfits and decorations, draw the menus, prepare all the food themselves, take the orders, serve the hot cups of coffee alongside everything else!

This is the first Kiddee Cafe to happen in a few years, due to the pandemic.

It's enlightening to see how I generally underestimate the capacities of young

children. I noticed that 90% of the adult patrons at the Cafe could not resist “helping” them with their tasks.

Another annual tradition that faded during the pandemic was Pa Joy coming in to play flute, do yoga and dance with the kids.

Since my schedule and theirs was very tight, the teachers decided that I should show up the following morning, right after Kiddee Cafe. My dear friend Beer would be there to translate.

I have been contemplating for decades how to keep the children from getting hyper-excited during my classes... We used to take little time-outs to calm their nervous system every ten minutes or so.



This year, however, the children seemed almost demonic; it was impossible to speak or to capture their attention amidst the screeching, hitting and running in circles!

What happened to the quiet little waffle-makers, the sweet sober keepers of the breakfast tally, I wondered?

We cut “class” radically short. I wrote Beer later and asked how I might have ameliorated the situation? She responded:

*They need free play after hard working hours.
Not perfect timing.*

Ahhhhhh,
only releasing illusions of control, of my own
charming charismatic appeal...



They did get quiet for several minutes at the very end, amidst the slowly drifting strains of flute music.

And they did want hugs, afterwards.



Yesterday, January 25th, is a special and unique holiday at SDS every year:

Sports Day

It fills the same function as Halloween in the U.S.: a chance to break out of perceived roles and really cut loose for an afternoon. Thus, the most macho of our work-crew guys show up in drag, with bizarre wigs, outrageous boobs and clownish make-up. Even some of the maechees dare to don hats and wigs, albeit far more modestly.

I can't share photos, because they are *verboden* at Sports Day, for obvious reasons, dear readers.

Of course, I do my outrageous best every year: Yesterday, I modeled a purple dress (GO, Team Purple!) that I'd severely cannibalized, a stylish purple beret fashioned

from my underpants, topped off with purple trash bag accessories. The guys later added flour and lipstick for a heightened *de rigueur*.

And Nawng Joy completed my ensemble with flowing trash bag streamers tied into my hair.



But there is a sober component of the January 25th holiday as well:

In the morning we all filed into the Golden Cave (which itself is collapsing), and paid homage to Khun Mae and the Green Tara.

Pa Tum, Nawng Joy and I were honored, as the last to polish the statue of the Green Tara, in silence and privacy. Order and placement is very important and significant in Thai culture. There's nothing random about it.

I wasn't expecting what transpired, however:

As I began to polish Green Tara's right foot, visceral memories of Khun Mae began flooding in....



Of sitting in
silence with
her, both of
us focused
on the
Green Tara,
decades
ago....

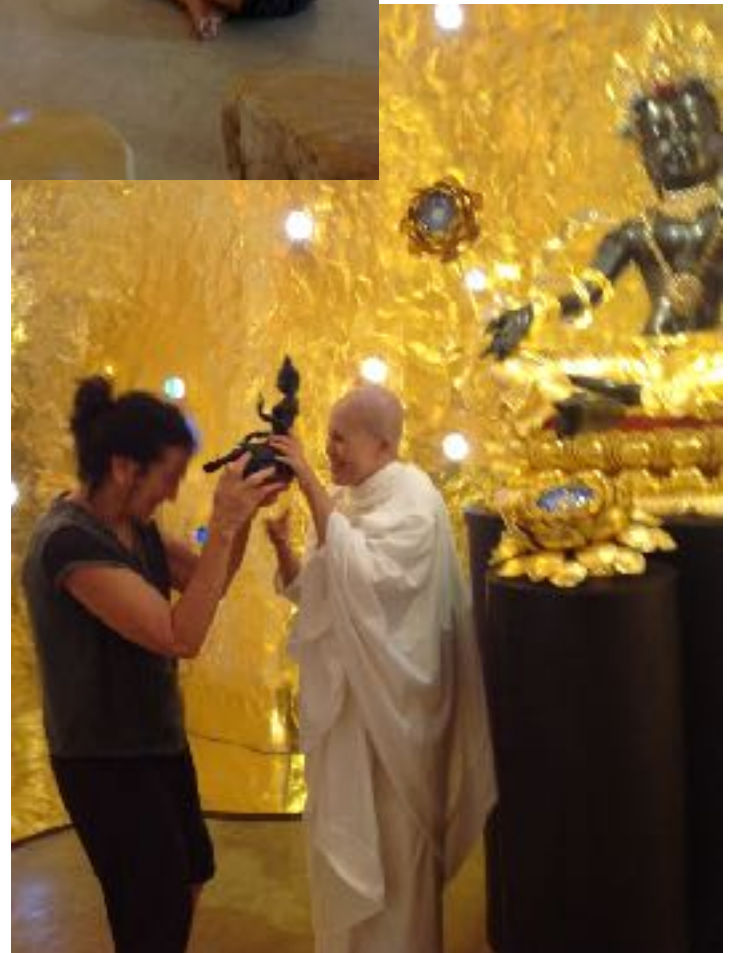
And then

being shocked to receive one of
the first bronze Tara replicas,
cast by the Royal Thai foundry.

It now sits in the Green Tara
Chapel at Wattle Hollow.

But something indescribable
also occurred on the 25th, in
that cave, dear readers...

Truth be told, I'm not fond of all
the gold leaf or the jewels or the pomp involved with the
Green Tara Cave.





But at that moment, I felt the power of Tara stepping out to serve the planet, and I burst into tears.

Some kind of seed was planted anew:

What CAN I do for all beings?

Tara was said to be born when Shiva looked down at earth, and perceived the immense suffering there. A tear fell from His eye. Tara

sprang from the lotus that emerged, out of the mud.

This re-commitment to service is somehow part of my recent “promotion.”

As my teacher/sister Anna Cox told me:

This is just the beginning of a long journey.

