A Story of Pain and Awakening
Todd Corbett Interviews Holly Saunders

Holly began attending CSS on Sundays in 2002 after many years of searching and studying within various traditions — the Course in Miracles, initiations on the Sant Mat and Sufi paths, work with anthroposophy, and taking refuge on the Buddhist path with the 13th Karmapa in the Black Crown ceremony. Her root guru, Neem Karoli Baba, first appeared to her in 1977 through a disembodied voice that guided her on her path for a few years. By the time she found the Center, she had been through the gamut of spiritual groups and traditions, as have many of us who eventually arrived at CSS.

During her first year attending CSS Sunday meetings, and after a number of private meetings with Joel, she had a set of profound awakening experiences which had a marked transformative impact on her life. Within just a few years, however, she developed a debilitating illness that brought with it three and a half years of severe symptoms such as disorientation, severe pain and a temporary loss of ability to function in the world. I am interviewing Holly in order to share not only her experience of Awakening, but also to discuss her subsequent experiences of severe pain and mental chaos within the context of her transformed vantage point.

— continued on page 2

A Fond Farewell...
THIS EDITION IS THE LAST PRINTED NEWSLETTER TO BE MAILED!

Starting with the summer edition, everyone who has signed up for it will be e-mailed a link to a free, easy-to-download newsletter in PDF format. In addition to enjoying these pages in color, we’ll see more and more live Internet links to great content, community pictures, perhaps even music and video clips. Yes, the sky is the limit with the new format... but only if you’ve signed up to receive it!

So if you want to be “in the know” and considered totally holy by your mystical bretheren, subscribe right now at www.CenterForSacredSciences.org by selecting the Publications tab/Subscription Form.

Anyone with a special need or hardship receiving the digital edition will still be able to get a paper copy by simply mailing a written request to the Center (see back page for address).

News Flash:
Silent Auction Reveals Practitioners’ Craving

But it appears we haven’t really broken any of our precepts or compromised our karma because it was actually SELFLESS craving. Kind of like a spiritual win-win, as all of our purchases brought in much-needed funds to a very good cause. — Thanks again to Hiromi and all the other volunteers for creating such a nourishing, fun and profitable night. We look forward to more of them in the future!
Holly: I sort of stumbled onto CSS after years of seeking, and was instantly moved by the teachings of Joel. After attending on a single Sunday, I knew I was in the right place and, eventually, I began having private meetings with Joel for guidance in 2002.

Todd: In our conversations, you describe a transformative experience that occurred in 2003. Please describe what happened, how it seemed to come about, and how it changed your life experience.

Holly: After a number of visits with Joel, I was telling him that my practice was to be the watcher, and he threw me off when he gave me a practice of looking to see what is behind the watcher. So I was attempting to look behind the “watcher” when I suddenly had the experience of being disoriented in space. I don’t have coherent words for what happened next, but suddenly there was an experience of awareness without bounds, and there was no sense of Holly apart from anything else. This went on intermittently for days, although there was a sense of something lacking or incomplete in the experience.

Then, about a month later, while taking out the garbage, in a mood of gratitude, I looked at the garbage can and then at the full moon, and what was revealed in between was that there is only one thing here — only god taking all forms — and that there is no true thought. This was the end of seeking and the beginning of rest. Since then, I’ve had this longing to share something of this awakening with others.

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Todd: So, in 2008, you became ill. Tell us about the illness and your subsequent experiences.

Holly: I contracted Lyme disease, and during the very worst of it (between 2008 and 2010) I learned to work deeply with pain and debilitation. This illness was very intense. I got bit by a tick 10 years before the symptoms became acute, and for a long time I did not know what it was. The first thing that began to happen was that I couldn’t walk downtown because I wasn’t able to spatially determine where people or cars were. I couldn’t cross streets. I started feeling this anxiety-like symptom in the body — it just felt like an alarm reaction was always going off. I had lots of strange feelings.

During this time, I also developed an irregular heartbeat and at times a racing heart and erratic blood pressure. I also developed something like Bell’s palsy with some temporary paralysis of parts of my face, and then I began having lots of trouble sleeping and severe pain.

Then, in February of 2008, the mind began to become fragile, and then deteriorated over the next few months. My mental activity pretty much stopped being functional.

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Is Fundraising a Spiritual Practice?
by Barbara Dewey

I have been the face of fundraising at CSS for about a year. During that time my relationship with fundraising has evolved drastically — in a very productive way. I started out with good intentions, enthusiasm and optimism and proceeded to a place of uncertainty, anxiety and confusion. The mystics would probably say that’s a good place to be, and I would have to agree. While it definitely hasn’t been comfortable, it has been humbling and ultimately freeing. I now rest in a place of relaxation, acceptance and creativity.

CSS has had a successful year of fundraising, with about $20,000 raised for the Building Fund through the generosity of individual donors, and creative ideas and hard work by Sangha members. Three fundraising events — the rummage sale, the Winter Party Auction and the Valentine’s Day Raffle — raised over $4000. The balance has been raised from individual donors, and through donations offered at CSS sponsored activities such as the first Saturday meditation mini-retreats, and qigong and tai chi classes.

I believe that creative, mindful fundraising will strengthen the Sangha as a whole and provide creative spiritual practice for individual members. As a small group of practitioners, we have come together creatively to generate a good deal of money — mostly from each other. My feeling is that because we are a small group with finite resources, we now need to start focusing on creative avenues to widen the net, so to speak. There is a whole world out there through which money can be brought into the Building Fund.

To get started I’d like to prime the pump a little bit just to get you thinking:

- We have a building that we can rent to 501(c)(3) non-profit groups (as long as the event falls within the scope of the CSS mission). Please submit proposals to the CSS Board for review.
- Have garage sales either individually or with a small group, and donate the money to the building fund.
- Host an “Idea Party” (aka brainstorming session). Invite friends from outside the Sangha for fresh ideas to raise money. If this sounds intriguing to you, I can provide you more details — mostly taken from Barbara Sher’s book, WISHCRAFT— How to Get What You Really Want.

So the answer to the question posed in the title of this article is (to quote Joel): You Find Out!

— Holly, continued from page 2
I couldn’t laugh or even cry; the brain at one point was all but incoherent. I couldn’t read, I couldn’t watch a movie, I couldn’t follow even a simple conversation.

But despite this, all was still just this awareness observing... inside, outside, observing the whole thing. There was no escaping it; that never changed. I couldn’t have told you any of this at the time — I had a difficult time even being coherent much of that period. Yet despite that, clearly it was all being held in consciousness.

The body was becoming a disaster zone and I had no idea why, despite having gone to multiple different physicians, including a neurologist, to try to get a diagnosis. It remained unclear what was going on until I found a traditional Chinese medical doctor who diagnosed it as Lyme disease. Once I began treatment, the symptoms began to abate. Now after five years of treatment, the symptoms have significantly improved. I still have pain and issues in the body, but it is much better.

Todd: So, in the worst of this illness, with these very difficult symptoms, what happened with your awakening? Did it seem to be affected?

Holly: Well, there was a time when the mind was so vacant and the pain was so great that I was living in perpetual confusion, and even thoughts of suicide arose. The pain was creating such strong contractions in the body, and out of that came a strong sense of selfing.

— concluded on page 4
Holly: The symptoms are much better, but I still have some chronic pain left over from it. Being with these very intense Lyme symptoms seems to have deepened the surrendering process to the point that anymore all I feel compelled to do is service.”

Holly: I continue to host two groups that meet in my home, at no charge, and most recently one that meets at Unity Church on Mondays. I also have private students in different parts of the country, some of whom have been referred to me by other spiritual teachers or other students.

Holly: They can email me at mercyskiss@efn.org.
CENTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recently the Holos Journal published an interview with CSS teacher Matt Sieradski in which Matt elucidates taiji practice from a mystical perspective. Accompanying the interview is an article in which Matt elegantly describes the principles underlying taiji and how, through its practicing, “we forget our conceptual understanding and merge with the Dao.” See:  www.holosforum.org/v7n1/sieradski.html
(Editor’s Note: Both of these are excellent! One more reason to make sure you subscribe to not only the newsletter but the Holos Journal as well.)

Last May, Tom McFarlane did a presentation at CSS of his talk from the Science and NonDuality Conference: Einstein, Buddha, Reality– The Nondual Roots of Science. If you didn’t get to see that (or even if you did), the full video from that morning is now available here: http://vimeo.com/69820122 and here:
http://www.centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/publications/online-video.htm

In yet one more effort to bring the Precepts and deeper spirituality into our lives, a good suggestion has been made that, as much as possible, we bring our own dishes and silverware to CSS gatherings, to lessen the amount of cleanup and garbage going to the landfill. This is a small thing we can all do.

In the Tricycle Magazine article Working With Desire, Matthieu Ricard gives an overview of different Buddhist methods for working with emotions. “The different methods to free oneself from destructive emotions are like keys: it does not matter whether a key is made of iron, silver, or gold, as long as it opens the door to freedom.” Read it here: www.tricycle.com/special-section/working-desire

In case you missed it, Greg Goode (author of Standing as Awareness), has put out a handbook for the practice of inquiry, including 40 experiments starting with simple perception and progressing all the way to inquiry into the nature of the witness of all experience. You can find The Direct Path at:

Amateur Aphorisms by Wesley Lachman

If you know
Your destination
On this path,
You will never arrive

If you can’t loosen your grip
On this egoic self,
You can at least notice
That your hands are empty

What awakens is not you
It is the absence of you

Your true self
Right now
Is exactly the size
Of this room

And a huge, warm THANK YOU to Jack Yousey for his many years of service as our Retreat Coordinator. His dedication, efficiency and hard work made our spiritual paths less bumpy, and (a lot) more than once his own retreat experience suffered so that ours would not.

Thanks, Jack!

Shirley Chase will be picking up the reins, starting with the Spring Retreat at the Benedictine Monestery, and we’re confident she’ll do a great job. If you have not replied to her initial email contact, PLEASE DO SO! Let’s not make her first days at this (volunteer) job more difficult than necessary.
Hungry for Pie (Charts)?

If you missed the Center’s annual financial pie chart in the last (Winter 2013) newsletter, it’s because we’ve moved our financial reports, building fund status, etc. to our website. Those wanting to keep abreast of the progress we’ve made raising money through the CSS Building Fund, what’s being applied towards the mortgage payments, and much more excitement for the numerically-inclined, can find it all at:

http://www.CenterForSacredSciences.org/index.php/about/finances.html

Poem for a Brother Passed
by Mike Barkhuff (read at Jim’s funeral)

Oh maple tree, oh maple tree
you are growing very dear to me

Each day as I look out at you
I feel a bond becoming true

Your fresh green is gone and turned to gold
now you look so very old

Your roots have been here oh so long
centuries before the coming of the gong

And every year in the fall
you gently drop your leaves below the dining hall

Back to our Mother Earth
who with you gave them their noble birth

Ah, but some leaves so desperately cling
waiting for rain and wind to fiercely fling
them madly through the air
‘til you become completely bare

The birds now land only for a rest
they have no place to hide or nest

Your leaves will turn to what? I don’t know
perhaps they will become a doe

Your giant neighbor across the way
has succumbed to death, rot, and decay

As you and I will surely do
just as your leaves now do so too.

Love & peace

Meinrad Craighead: Praying with Images
a film by Donna Campbell & Georgann Eubanks (60 min.)
Review by Peggy Prentice

This film, about the artistic life of a nun, will interest many CSS Members. In-depth interviews and scenes of her drawing in her studio illumine Meinrad Craighead’s creative process and symbolic, spiritual imagery.

She moved to Albuquerque, NM, after living in Italy and other parts of Europe, and much of her imagery is influenced by southwestern plants, animals and the Native American mythology of bird and coyote connecting heaven and earth. Through charcoal, paint and printmaking, her figurative artwork also tells symbolic stories about the divine feminine. Craighead discusses her experience of life and creative process as ritual.

I think anyone curious about the creative process an artist lives will enjoy this film and see Meinrad Craighead’s life as an example of that.

Other New DVDs with a Sacred Creativity Theme

Ansel Adams: American Experience
a film by Rick Burns, WGBH Boston, 2002. 100 min.

Coming To Light: The Edward S. Curtis
and the North American Indians
directed by Anne Makepeace, Makepease Productions, 2000. 85 minutes.

Abida Parveen Sings Songs of the Mystics

Sacred Music
directed by Andy King-Dabbs with Simon Russell Beale, featuring Harry Christophers & The Sixteen, CORO / BBC, 2010. 2-dvd set, 4-Episodes, 298 min.

Ajanta: The History and the Mystery
directed by B.R. Ram Kumar, narrated by P.C. Ramakrishna Kulter, West Long Beach, New Jersey, 2010. 56 min.

Islamic Art: Mirror of the Invisible World
a film by Robert Gardner, narrated by Susan Sarandon, features: Ruba Kana’an, Afshan Bokhari, D. Fairchild Ruggles, Sheila S. Blair, Jonathan M. Bloom. 90 min.
Center Publications

The Way of Selflessness: A Practical Guide to Enlightenment Based on the Teachings of the World’s Great Mystics
By Joel Morwood, Center for Sacred Sciences, 2009, Paper, 364 pages
(Available from www.Lulu.com)
A distillation of Joel’s teachings on the path of selflessness, drawn from his extensive study of the world’s mystical classics. This book will help seekers of any (or no) tradition understand and take to heart the teachings of the mystics of the great traditions.

Naked Through the Gate: A Spiritual Autobiography
(Available from Lulu and Amazon.)
This is the new 2nd edition of Joel’s personal account of his remarkable spiritual path, ending with a Gnostic Awakening. With a beautiful new cover and nicer font, one might say it’s the 30th anniversary (of Gnosis) edition, published a bit early.

Through Death’s Gate: A Guide to Selfless Dying
A guide to death and dying from a spiritual perspective, including teachings and practices from the world’s great mystics.

The above three books may be ordered at http://www.centerforsacredsciences.org/catalog.htm
We’re able to offer the lowest prices when ordering direct from our printer, Lulu.com.

Peculiar Stories
By Mora Fields
A book of teaching tales that are plain-spoken, absorbing and layered with depth. These stories delve into such topics as: where thoughts come from; how we deal with things like emotions, fear, and peer pressure; how to experience spaciousness; and the meaning of life.

The Shortest Way Home: A Contemplative Path to God
An introduction to the contemplative mystical path for those seeking a radically new and deeper way to God. A step-by-step presentation of the path of spiritual realization. Each chapter ends with a You Find Out exercise so the reader can test what has been read against his or her own experience.

Bringing Home the Mountain: Finding the Teacher Within
By Cathy Rosewell Jonas
“Cathy Jonas’s exciting account of her spiritual journey overflows with an abundance of experiences and insights. Any genuine seeker should find plenty here to both inspire and instruct on his or her own path to Awakening.” — Joel

Einstein and Buddha: The Parallel Sayings
by Thomas J. McFarlane
This remarkable book contains sayings from the founders of modern physics paired with parallel sayings from the works of Buddhist, Hindu, and Taoist contemplatives. Einstein and Buddha challenges us to think deeper about the relationship between modern physics and mystical insight.

Book Publications by Members

The Mandala Book: Patterns of the Universe
By Lori Bailey Cunningham
The Mandala Book is a visual symphony, filled with 500 stunning mandalic images from nature and civilization. Drawing from history, science, religion, and art. Lori Bailey Cunningham leads a journey that spans from prehistoric petroglyphs to Carl Jung, from tiny particles of matter to entire galaxies.

She explains the concepts of mandalas, showing how they are at the root of life itself. More Mandala resources available on her website: http://www.mandalaproject.org.

Audio recordings of most of the CSS Sunday talks, including a full reading of Through Death’s Gate, are available free on the CSS website, www.centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/audios.htm
Aphorisms from U.G. Krishnamurti

If you have the courage to touch life for the first time, you will never know what hit you. Everything man has thought, felt and experienced is gone, and nothing is put in its place.

Whether you are interested in Moksha, Liberation, Freedom, Transformation, you name it, you are interested in happiness without one moment of unhappiness, pleasure without pain, it is the same thing.

We don’t want to be free from fear. All that we want to do is to play games with it and talk about freeing ourselves from fear.

Your constant utilization of thought to give continuity to your separate self is you. There is nothing there inside you other than that.

When the movement in the direction of becoming something other than what you are isn’t there anymore, you are not in conflict with yourself.

Contact the Center

Phone #: (541) 345-0102  
Website: www.CenterForSacredSciences.org  
Mailing Address: 1430 Willamette St., #164  
              Eugene, OR 97401-4049  
Meeting Address: 5440 Saratoga St.  
              Eugene, OR 97405

Missions and Programs

The Center for Sacred Sciences is dedicated to the study, practice, and dissemination of the spiritual teachings of the mystics, saints, and sages of the major religious traditions. The Center endeavors to present these teachings in forms appropriate to our contemporary scientific culture. The Center also works to create and disseminate a sacred worldview which expresses the compatibility between universal mystical truths and the evidence of modern science.

Among the Center’s ongoing events are Sunday public services, with meditations and talks given by the Center’s spiritual teachers; monthly Sunday video presentations; and — for committed spiritual seekers — weekly practitioners’ groups, and monthly and semi-annual meditation retreats.

The Center also maintains an extensive lending library of books, audios, videos, and periodicals covering spiritual, psychological, philosophical, and scientific subjects. In addition, the Center provides a website containing a great deal of information and resources related to the teachings of the world’s mystics, the universality of mystical truth, and the relationship between science and mysticism. The Center publishes this newsletter providing community news, upcoming programs, book reviews, and other contributions and resources related to the Center’s mission.

The Center for Sacred Sciences is a non-profit, tax-exempt church based in Eugene, Oregon, USA. We rely chiefly on volunteer labor to support our programs, and on public donations and membership pledges to meet our operating expenses. Our spiritual teachers give their teachings freely as a labor of love, and receive no financial compensation from the Center.

Center Community News is published three times a year. Submissions, comments, and inquiries should be sent to: <newsletter@centerforsacredsciences.org>, or mailed to Center for Sacred Sciences, Attn: Newsletter Editor, 1430 Willamette St., #164, Eugene, OR 97401-4049. To update or change your subscription preferences, please visit our website and select the subscription form under the Publications Menu.
**CSS Calendar: May – September 2014**

Please check the website for the most updated schedule information: [http://centerforsacredsciences.org/calendar.htm](http://centerforsacredsciences.org/calendar.htm)

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**Schedule Notes**
- Community nights will be on May 28 and July 30. Regular classes will not meet these weeks.
- All CSS activities will be suspended for the Spring Retreat from April 27–May 2 and for the summer break from August 11-September 22.

**Sunday Videos planned for this calendar period are:**

**May 4 — Being Born as the Earth: Zen Master, John Daido Loori**
This talk by Zen Master John Daido Loori addresses the growing awareness of the connection between spirituality and ecology. This taping took place on Buddha's birthday in 1990, which also happened to be Earth Day. (Library DVD #0655)

**June 1 — Changing From the Inside: Meditation for Women Inmates**
This is a compelling account of an intense pilot meditation program for inmates at a minimum security jail near Seattle, Washington. Seven women practice an ancient meditation technique called Vipassana for ten hours each day, delving ever deeper into themselves to understand and ultimately master the nature of their behaviors and compulsions. In the end, they are transformed by their inward journey and come away with new tools to maintain that transformation. (Library DVD #0366)

**July 6 — Abide as the Self: The Essential Teachings of Ramana Maharshi**
Comprehensive film footage of the great 20th century mystic Ramana Maharshi with emphasis on his teaching of Self-Inquiry and its practical application. A special collection of rare photographs enhances Ramana's presence and captures the compassion and grace of one of the most respected sages of our time. The inspired narration by Ram Dass provides an overview of Ramana's teachings. Also included are interviews with H.W.L. Poonja, Douglas Harding, Allan W. Anderson, and others. (Library DVD #0261)

**August 3 — The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Way of Life**
Death is real, it comes without warning and it cannot be escaped. This stunning film explores an ancient source of strength and guidance, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, which remains an essential teaching in the Buddhist cultures of the Himalayas. Featured are commentaries by H.H. the Dalai Lama, Ram Dass, and Nagap Togden Rinpoche. (Library DVD #0056)
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**Independence Day**

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**July 2014**
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