



The Subud Boston *newsletter*

Newsletter of Subud Boston Inc.

March/April 1998 Volume 6 • Number 2

Editorial

DO NUMBERS COUNT?

By Sharif Horthy

Two months ago I suggested that our minuscule and static membership is a symptom of something seriously wrong in our Subud community. The map of the world published in the same issue showed about 13,700 registered members—and we all know that active members, those who do latihan fairly regularly, are a fraction of that. So we probably have around 8,000 active members in the world.

In his article last month, Pak Muninjaya suggested a 50% increase overall Subud membership by the 2001 Congress as one of the goals to be adopted by the World Subud Council (WSC). I like the idea of setting ourselves measurable goals, to enable us to check our own performance. I hope that when WSC meets in Bali in June 98 we can agree on a number of such targets to be achieved during our term of office.

So now I would like to start a discussion on the implications of a 50% increase in our membership. What impact would it have and what would have to happen to bring it about?

For a start, I am not suggesting that quantity implies quality or that by 'pushing for more members' we will somehow

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Susila Dharma Goes to Congo

Lambert Kriedemann and Salamah O'Brien

This adventure grew out of events at the World Congress in Spokane. There the Nkembo School Partnership was formed by several people who wanted to work together planting the seeds of the latihan.

The idea to work with a successful Subud project led us to choose Kiti-Ki Menghi and his school, Complexe Scolaire Nkembo, in Congo. Salamah O'Brien and several others of this committee planned to visit the school in February. But for various reasons the others chose to cancel or postpone.

Salamah's testing had said, no, get more information; then a letter from Kiti-ki Menghi, the school's director, arrived. A telephone call with Kiti-ki, and then new testing said, yes, go ahead in spite of the others having canceled. Would Lambert Kriedemann or someone else from South Africa Accompany her?

Lambert thought two weeks in the Congo sounded tempting, but difficult to be away for that long. Any chance of cutting it down to one week? Well, maybe...

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CHAIRPERSON'S CORNER

Getting down to business

Lorena Kreda

"Like peeling back layers of an onion" is an analogy that gets used quite often in talking about the purification and development of our spirit. It also serves well in many other applications including the exploration of emotional issues. First you cast off the dry papery surface stuff and gradually you delve deeper and deeper, coming to terms with one issue then moving on to the next. Lately, I feel as though I've been dealing in onion fractals. When I peel back a layer I don't find just another layer; I'm finding a whole new onion! Maybe this means I'm a long way from finding truth. Even so, it's OK because the process makes life interesting and dynamic—my onion is of the vidalia variety!

When I first became chairperson my goal was two-fold. First, I wanted to help develop a greater sense of community within the Subud Boston group, and second, I wanted to establish a proactivity about the chairperson's role. I wanted to lead with vision, sword in hand, cloaked in a cape. To a certain degree we have achieved these goals, but like an onion, there are many more levels on which we could experience these things. I say "we" because while I

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Letters

Dear Hillel,

I trust that you personally will please pass this on to everyone who worked so hard and so well to help us to reach our goal : to have safe transport for the children of Semillitas. I trust that you will accept this with an open feeling of forgiveness and understanding. I would like to make a personal and heartfelt apology to all of you, all those who were involved and giving so freely : I really had no idea that I could have caused hurt feelings, but recently I found out through Ilaina and Chayatun that I did. This was far from my intentions, it was just my own thoughtlessness and carelessness at a time of many competing stresses. Learning as I stumble clumsily along.

I'm referring to the note we sent about the costs of the repairs, where I unthinkingly put in a parenthesis asking for more possible help because we had gone over our budget limits. Of course, looking back, I realize that this was a mistake. It was not meant to burden you all over again, or to undermine your generous efforts, or to shirk the financial responsibilities which we have taken on ourselves in running such a program. In the middle of confusion and tremendous need, sometimes we overstep the proper bounds. As you may know, and this is not an excuse, I recently had a baby on the 1st of March. At the time I last wrote to you, I was trying desperately to tie up loose ends, pay off debts, and secure donations for the time ahead when I would be unable to work. Times have been extremely tough for the Fundacion, and the programs—but again, this is not an excuse. That was back in February. When Amalia came recently, she didn't mention this incident to me, perhaps out of embarrassment for me, and seeing me so consumed by the new baby. I wish I had realized earlier, perhaps it is too late and people feel too discouraged. This would be very wrong. I hope that Semillitas will not suffer in your estimation because of me. What you all did was right, and more than we could ever have hoped. Please realize that in this crazy family called Subud we are all learning,

changing, and for that reason, always needing to be forgiven.

With much love from your sister,
Ruth Thomas

△

Dear Ruth

We in Subud Boston feel great that we were able to help and we have been talking about how we can continue to do fundraising for charitable projects in such a way that we become stronger and more able rather than being drained of enthusiasm and funds. This is a very fine challenge for us; though I think we are a little baffled at the moment about just how to proceed. We know perfectly well that things are difficult, and I think that most of us also understand that the reward for a successful job is usually another job. But in reality it only works once or twice to ask the members of a small group like ours to dig into their pockets for money. People don't like being asked more than once a year. On the other hand, fundraising work is something that can be an ongoing project. Since the charitable works of Subud need more money than can be raised simply by asking the membership for donations, we need to figure out is some way that we can raise money other than by asking the membership to write checks.

For example, a couple of years ago I organized a Christmas tree sale. We pre-sold Christmas trees as well and wreaths, holly and garlands. The only thing the customers had to do was come and pick them up. The trees were extremely beautiful and reasonably priced so everyone was very happy with them. We didn't sell a huge number. Actually, the only people who bought them were our members. I don't think I got the project organized very well. Nevertheless, we made a few hundred dollars. I think that, if the membership had just done a little work selling them to friends and colleagues, we could have made quite a lot of money. (Like maybe two or three thousand dollars. The neat thing is that most Christmas-celebrating people buy these things anyway so donating costs nothing extra and since the quality was good we actually provided a convenient service. This is just one idea. There are probably dozens that

other people could think up; but any idea needs to be planned in advance and not tackled as a last minute thing.

In general, I think, fundraising will be much more effective if it is properly planned. What doesn't really yield such good results is the sort of thing where you send out an emergency appeal for funds—the sort of thing that Garrett did with the young man who needed a scholarship. It may work once or twice, but when you do that you really do wear out your welcome quickly. What we need is a strategy.

Finally, I want to stress that, for me at least, because of working on fundraising for Las Semellitas, I feel that in some way that I belong to the project and the project belongs to me. You guys are allowed to screw up a little, but it is important for us and for you that we maintain the tie of love that goes with the money. It is easy to get overwhelmed with negative feelings, but ultimately they are an illusion. We think you guys are great.

love Cassidy

△

CHAIRPERSON'S CORNER— continued from page 1

might have some ideas about what I want to do, I haven't done anything alone. Kenneth, Dorothea and I work very closely together, but still nothing is really accomplished apart from the support (either inward or outward) of the group as a whole. The committee exists symbiotically with and within the group and the helpers.

Now it's time to take a look at the next layer of the onion. In doing so I've realized that what may have seemed visionary in an earlier context now looks very reactionary to me. The bar has been raised in this next layer! Goals must be viewed relative to where you're at at the time, both individually and contextually.

Recently, members have availed themselves to me with guidance about direction they would like to see for the group and the chairperson's role. I am very grateful for this input—I have a hunch it's always been there, it's only now that I've been tuned into the right frequency to hear it. What I've heard is that I need to express ideas and information with authority and decisiveness. I need to know what the needs are, both for myself and for the group, and see to it that those needs are met. I've received recommendations about altering the format of the helper-committee meeting to better nurture the spiritual connection between the helpers and committee members. It's been suggested that I consider making this column more business-like in nature rather than personal as it has been (I will continue to write creative articles as well, but they will be submitted apart from this column).

I can't tell you how much I appreciate this feedback. As a novice chairperson I really didn't know what I was getting into with this position and I don't think I was properly equipped internally to find out. I think I've

grown into this job over the past couple of years and look forward to making the most out of the five months left in my tenure. While God is the real teacher, I'm deeply indebted to Subud Boston for funding my education. △

ANSWER TO ANDREA BLUM:

Mardijah Tarantino

(The last issue included an article by Andrea in which she expressed concern that the emphasis in Subud on Muslim over other religious practices may be giving the erroneous impression that Subud is a branch of Islam.)

To begin with, I'd like to say that I agree with most points in your letter.

Having said this, let's examine the whys and wherefores for the "regular inclusion of Muslim practices" in Subud literature. You have already named one: the fact that Bapak himself was a Muslim. In writing about Subud and Bapak, it isn't easy to separate his religion and nationality from his role as spiritual guide of Subud.

References to Islam are most often made at the onset of Ramadhan. One reason for this is purely practical. Since we in the west don't follow the lunar calendar, we need to have some idea of the dates of the fast, which are different each year. The easiest way is to print a reminder in a publication.

Why would everyone want to know these dates? Bapak encouraged us to do the Muslim fast, if you remember, not so that we would become Muslims, but because that particular fast—called 'Ramadhan' after the month in which it falls during the lunar year—would be beneficial

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Monadnock—Easter morning

We are planning a hike up Mt. Monadnock in southern New Hampshire Easter morning, April 12. The Boston group did this Easter climb once or twice about ten years ago and had a great time. Several people have already expressed enthusiasm.

We will need to meet early and get an early start—at dawn or shortly thereafter. Those who wish may meet earlier and cook a pancake breakfast together outside in an area next to the parking lot at the mountain.

It's a fairly easy climb that requires no special equipment or technical skills, however it is a steep hike and takes several hours, so it shouldn't be taken lightly. Anyone who is healthy and in good condition should not be intimidated by it.

The whole endeavor is, of course, dependent upon having good weather. Rain or snow, really cold weather, or high winds could result in cancellation, but we'll be in touch with each other as the day approaches.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Hillel at 413-582-9902.

SUSILA DHARMA GOES TO CONGO, continued from page 1

On the plane from Cape Town to Johannesburg we sat next to a young lady who told us she was a keen skydiver. "Where are you going?" she asked. "To the Congo—on a mission for an NGO called Susila Dharma" we replied.

"You're braver than I am," she responded, adding, "Skydiving's got to be a lot safer than that."

Off to Johannesburg on Friday evening and Lawton and Melinda DeVilliers met us. Next morning we flew into the unknown. On the plane we quizzed each other on the contents of Salamah's French phrase book. The results weren't all that encouraging.

The plane landed—Kinshasa! The problem would be getting through the airport. As we filed out we chatted to a lady who seemed to know most of the airport staff. Like a guardian angel she saw us through the difficult bit. As soon as we were safely in the arms of Kiti-ki Menghi, Ruagasore Nsimba and Angelique Nlandu Kuntonda, our new International helper, she quietly disappeared without waiting to be thanked.

the weather was unbelievably hot and humid. Before long our clothes were soaked with sweat. Our taxi, a rust experiment on wheels, rattled along at breakneck speed. Somehow we managed not to disappear into any of the enormous potholes. The roads in Kinshasa are lined with incredible numbers of tiny shops and stalls offering everything imaginable. On sidewalks and wherever there is an empty patch of land, food is being grown. We were captivated!

Our destination was a catholic boarding school, one wing of which is used as a lodging house. The complex includes a large church, a small outdoor shrine and a number of large trees. It was here that we suddenly realized what was so different about this place. It's the only urban area we know where the vegetable force is palpably stronger than the material. It's a haven of peace among the frenetic activity that characterizes Kinshasa.

Sunday we attended latihan with the Kinshasa Subud group at Kasa-Vubu, one of four groups in the greater Kinshasa area. The Subud house, also the national office, is one of a row of semi-detached houses with five rooms on an ordinary suburban street.

While we received our latihan, life outside the house carried on as usual and nobody seemed to find it strange. Afterwards there was a meeting with several long speeches. In the Congo everything is done with ceremony and a warm welcome. Several people spoke some English. We were treated as guests of honor. Afterwards we enjoyed fresh baked bread from the Boulangerie Nseka, a Subud bakery, and lots of lively conversation.

Monday we were taken to visit the Lemba-Imbu school near Kinshasa. Lemba-Imbu was started in 1995 by Ntendi Santu and his wife. Now they teach 300 children in six classes with additional teachers. Recent

rains had rendered the road impassable and we had to stop a few blocks away. Fortunately, one of the local children offered to guide us by an alternative route.

Soon we were being escorted along a walkway lined with flowers and an orderly column of pupils who sang songs of welcome as they marched. We sat under some trees while teachers made speeches. By the time we had a chance to reply the children were visibly uncomfortable in the hot sun, so we kept our "Thank yous" as short as possible, hoping our few words conveyed how much we, too, were honored to be with them. It was beautiful!

On the way back to Kinshasa we passed through an area of small farms. The farmers have evolved good sustainable organic farming methods and are providing a significant amount of the food consumed in the city. As we re-entered the city we were stopped by police. They looked like cut-throats, but their behavior was quite proper.

A long delay followed, and while we waited for them to return our passports, we sat outside and had an informal Susila Dharma meeting. We learnt that there is very little security in having a job in the Congo at present. Many people don't get paid or their paychecks are three or four months late. The Subud members are keen to explore the idea of starting and import-export business. Since many things are in short supply, they hope, with the help of Subud partners in other countries, to establish a lucrative, two-way trade. We promised to follow this up.

From the moment we arrived, Kiti-ki was like a father to us. At the airport, stations and taxi stands, we were besieged by would-be porters looking to make a few dollars by carrying our luggage. Kiti-ki would tell them that we were poor missionaries who couldn't afford their services.

On Tuesday we began our trek to Muanda. The train to Matadi was surprisingly comfortable apart from the jazzy Congolese music. The music was great, but the loud loudspeaker was over our heads. At Matadi station we evaded the con-men and pick-pockets, and transferred ourselves to another overcrowded taxi. Driving at bread-neck speed down dubious roads, we arrived at Boma well after dark.

Kiti-ki insisted that we visit Dr. Nsinghi, who runs the Polyclinic in Boma. So we booked into a hotel, had a much-needed shower and found ourselves sitting down to dinner with Mrs. Nsinghi at eleven P.M.! The doctor was still at work. We met him the following morning when he came to see us off at the port to begin our trek down the Congo river. During our brief visit, we learned that the Polyclinic Dissea is operating well, expanding and needs assistance. It is a seven-bed clinic with maternity, operating room, and support for patients.

The final part of our trek to Muanda was a three-

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SUSILA DHARMA GOES TO CONGO, continued from page 4

hour ferry ride down the Congo River to Port Banana/Muanda on the Atlantic coast. Across the river is Angola. Kiti-ki's wife, Marie-Claire and a small delegation met us at the dockside. At Nkembo School, we were treated to another rousing welcome with music, dancing and poetry composed by the students, and this time partly in English! The Nkembo School is the Menghi family's— Kiti-ki, Marie Claire, and sons André Michel and André Roger.

It took a couple of days to settle in and be introduced to the relevant officials. Then we started work in earnest. With the help of Kiti-ki and his son Roger who is finance manager for the school, Salamah spent hours digging through school records to establish running costs and revenue for the last few years. It was no easy task to pull together a budget for 1995-'96 through 1999-2000.

Complexe Scolaire Nkembo is a pre-school, primary, and first three years of secondary school and is located at two premises. Marie Claire is director for the 500 student pre-school and primary. Kiti-ki is director of the secondary school with 145 students and special study in biology, chemistry, administration, and commerce. Kiti-ki teaches the science courses. Much of the growth of the school has been from term to term, with Kiti-ki running small businesses on the side to make up the shortfall in funds.

Plans for the Nkembo School are to expand to a full six-year secondary program over the next three years with the first graduating class in 2001. To accomplish this they will need fundraising and additional teachers. Volunteers to teach, assist in construction, start permaculture projects and minibusinesses are encouraged to apply.

Lambert began producing a series of architectural site drawings in addition to his temporary job as Nkembo School custodian. The only equipment available was a black ball-point pen, a ruler and few sheets of typing paper. Somehow everything fell into place quite easily with a but of help from the latihan.

Lambert drew the compound as it exists at present. The Kiti-ki described how he envisions the next stage of development and this was drawn up too. By this time we were supposed to be flying back to Kinshasa. Too late we discovered how erratic the air service from Muanda to Kinshasa could be. Eventually we pinned down firm booking for Friday. So much for plans to be in the Congo for one week. It was going to be two.

Who said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans."?

With extra time, we could do more work. Salamah tightened up her calculations with forward projections and possible costs of proposed future development, again with the assistance of André Roger. Kiti-ki asked us to look into providing additional volunteer accommodation on the compound. Salamah, delighted at the

opportunity to put her bookkeeping aside, joined in a brainstorming session and we came up with a workable idea in record time. Lambert sketched the plan and Salamah prepared a brief proposal.

Our tasks completed, we flew back to Kinshasa after a wonderful ten days. In Kinshasa we held a final meeting with Charles Lusanda, who is the SD-Congo Chair, Angelique Ruagasore and Kiti-ki. This was the first opportunity to meet with Charles Lusanda because he had been away for his father's funeral, and the only time we were all together except for Nkanga Wa Mambu the Subud DR Congo chair.

We held a Susila Dharma meeting announcing the grants from SD-USA and SD-South Africa, transferring the funds in full observation of all present. SD-USA had a 1998 grant for \$3,700 for Nkembo School for completion of nine classrooms, a grant for \$300 to Mrs. Diabanza Alvaro to assist with passport and visa to Colombia to re-unite the family, and a \$120 grant to Lemba Imbu School. SD-South Africa passed on a \$200 grant to be shared by SD-DR Congo and Lemba Imbu School. Then we all celebrated and went out to dinner.

Saturday saw us back at Kinshasa airport. Leaving was just as awkward as arriving. Our luggage was searched twice; and passports and tickets reviewed by an unconscionable number of officials, none of whom seemed to be in a hurry to see the last of us. Saying good-bye and how much we appreciated every moment of this unforgettable adventure was beyond words.

God bless and remember our 1480 Subud members in Democratic Republic of Congo and their more than 30 Susila Dharma projects.

We are grateful for the support of our Congo Subud family, who stayed with us right up to the final barrier. Winging towards Johannesburg we kept remembering things we'd failed to do or say, then were surprised at the number of things we had managed to complete, and the long list of potential disasters that didn't happen. We decided we had every right to celebrate. So we did!

Thanks be to God and thank you to our wonderful Congo Subud family!

Lambert Kriedemann works with Susila Dharma in South Africa and Salamah O'Brien works with Susila Dharma in the United States. Δ

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Woodstock tax woes!

Helise Heijn



Benda

Subud Woodstock has been struggling for nearly a year to maintain its tax exempt status in the town of Barnard, VT., where its Subud House is.

About 25 years ago our group hand-built a House on a four acre plot of land, donated to us by Charles and Stella Helmer. At this time we incorporated, and applied as a religious organization for state and town tax exemption, both of which were granted. The town allowed the exemption for the house and two acres, and we have been paying property taxes on the other two acres.

Last year town lister, John Lancaster, discovered that taxes had not been paid on our building for over twenty years. For reasons which may, unfortunately, have been amplified by the fact that Mr. Lancaster and George Helmer share a mutual antipathy, he decided to make an issue of our tax exempt status. In Jan 1997 he sent a very long, bureaucratic letter (it has to be seen to be believed) to George asking many questions which purportedly had to do with the criteria that had to be met in order for us to qualify for tax exemption. George replied immediately. Unfortunately, his reply was rather sarcastic because, in George's own words, the letter "...pushed my buttons." The listers, with Mr. Lancaster heading the campaign, then decided to take our tax exemption away from us. Without informing us of their action., they put the matter before the Barnard Town Meeting in March. Not only were we unrepresented there, but were, in fact, grossly misrepresented by Mr. Lancaster. The town, having no understanding of the true situation, voted against us. We did not even know what had happened until we read about it in our local paper; indeed, the biggest news in the coverage of the Barnard Town Meeting was the revocation of Subud Woodstock's tax exemption.

We were in shock. What should we do? We and decided to meet with the listers at a grievance meeting, standard procedure for anyone disputing their taxes. We learned there that we could not do anything about the tax exemption revocation, but that we could have a reconsideration of the of the tax evaluation. We also learned that, because the house had been locked, the

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Dewan meeting in Woodstock

Jillian Hensley

On Friday evening March 6, members of the regional dewan including our own Michal Brownell and Stuart Cooke joined the local dewan for latihan, testing, discussion and tasty treats. It was a great start to a northern New England get-together.

The Subud House in Woodstock, Vermont, is an ideal place for a Winter Weekend. Tucked away in the woods among graceful birches, and beeches with translucent beige leaves still clinging to their twigs, the house offers peace as well as a warm welcome. During the day, sunlight streams through the sliding doors of the reception area between the two latihan rooms, and that is where almost 30 people gathered over the weekend of March 7 and 8.

Most of the regional helpers came (Michal Brownell, Stuart Cooke, Matthew Mayberry, Latijah Miller, Rochana Koach), plus two members of the regional committee, Margaret Aldis and Deanna McFadden, and national helpers Damanhuri Alkaitis and Helen Dodson. Boston was represented by Jillian Hensley and Kenneth Henderson, and Rhode Island by Michael and Sarah Clement, both of whom were tested in as candidate helpers. (Sarah is teaching natural childbirth, and Michael is in demand as a decorative artist and muralist. Their little son, Hamilton, is now almost two and had a great time romping with big brother Sanderson in the latihan rooms.)

With the opening of Sandy Raynor on Saturday, the fledgling St. Johnsbury group was strengthened by another member. Sandy's compatriots from the Northeast Kingdom, Mitchell Ziegler and Cheri Leach, were there to support her, and Mitchell returns to his group as a candidate helper following testing over the weekend.

Welcomed with open arms was Stella Hovis. Her friends had not seen her for some time since she moved from New York City to Montpelier, Vermont. She was delighted to learn about the existence of the St. Johnsbury group, which is a manageable drive from her home.

It was wonderful to catch up with members of the Vermont group. Ted, Boonsuay, and Hunter Clement breezed in for a few hours. Ted is on the verge of completing his law degree and is looking forward very much to being out in the "real" world. Emerson Hinkel is home for the summer to help his parents, Lucien and Elaine to build their new house. He will be going back to college in the fall. Stella Helmer enjoyed participating in the awareness testing, which she has not had the opportunity to do before. George Helmer is kept busy keeping track of his talented trio of offspring. Latham Stack is in the throes of studying for

a... Degree, and enjoying every minute of the challenge. The Heijns continue to enjoy their lovely home on a hillside. Roland is kept busy with his woodworking business, and Helise is forging ahead with her BFA in creative writing, in which she is earning plaudits from her professors.

Our hosts had not expected such a stellar turnout and did an amazing job catering for the healthy appetites resulting from the invigorating Vermont air and the chilly weather. We thank them all for the warmth of their welcome and for their open hearted hospitality. Δ

Sharif: continued from page 1

make Subud better or more successful. I am thinking about something completely different. My question is this: given that Subud is something excellent and really beneficial, what is it that we are doing or not doing that is preventing the growth that we would naturally expect to take place?

It's clear that we in the international organization cannot directly intervene in the processes whereby our membership increases or declines. It is at the local group level that new members are interviewed and opened and it is here that they drop out if their needs are not met. So using membership growth as a criterion for WSC's performance only makes sense if we can influence that process in some way, even if indirectly. I'd like to look at how we might do that, by thinking about the stages a person goes through in becoming a Subud member.

First of all, a person has to come and ask to be opened. Apart from the occasional exception, the number and frequency of applicants meetings and openings are quite rare events in most Subud groups. The reasons for this are probably as follows:

Most Subud members are rather secretive about their Subud affiliation—so that even when their life begins to show the fruits of having done the latihan, the connection with Subud is never made for the people they come into contact with in the course of their life. So the concept of Subud spreading by example is thwarted.

Subud itself is not known in the world. It is hard to find references to it. It has been many years since Subud books were obtainable in bookshops or libraries.

The very little information that is available on Subud—and the way we talk about it—often seems to give an impression that is quite the opposite of what it really is. After all, Subud is a contact with God's power that leads us to an awareness of our true self, free from of the interference of culture and other human artifacts. But it somehow gives the appearance of a secretive eastern cult with all sorts of mumbo-jumbo attached to it.

As far as this stage is concerned, apart from encouraging a culture of greater openness among our members, I believe the organization has to improve our image through clearer and more professional communication with the outside world.

The next stage comes when the applicant meets with the local helpers in order to gain a deeper understanding of Subud. This stage is very important because if the helpers are able to give an accurate picture, then by the time the person comes to a decision about being opened he or she will understand that Subud is a long

and slow process requiring great patience and commitment for the equally great rewards to be obtained. Especially, they will be clear that it is very important that one really consistently comes to latihan twice a week for years and years and that they may not obtain proof of the benefits for some time.

If these points are clearly and repeatedly emphasized, we may end up with fewer applicants being opened but at least those who are will be prepared to stick it out until they can feel the reality of the latihan for themselves. The success of this stage therefore depends on the helpers being able to give clear and balanced explanation, as well as being welcoming and generally sensitive to the needs of the people they are interviewing.

It is the third stage—which starts when a person is opened and ends when they have obtained their own proof of the reality of the latihan—that seems to present the biggest challenge, since only about one member in ten seems to survive the first couple of years. Even if the new member is fortunate and is able to feel movement in the latihan early on, it is still all very strange for him or her. It is at this point that one has a thousand questions, often hard to articulate, about what the latihan means and how it can be integrated into one's life.

When I was opened I not only felt a movement that came from beyond my normal self, but I also received very clear proof of something like a superhuman intelligence that was looking after my inner needs. Even so, what pulled me through my difficult times was that right at the beginning I was befriended by a very special helper and a small part of his deep understanding of Subud rubbed itself off on me and still sustains me till now. It all happened by example—we hardly ever talked about Subud. I'm not sure how I would have fared had I been told to do latihan twice a week and left to my own devices.

The other thing that was critical to my own development was that, having been opened at Coombe Springs in 1958, I immediately became aware of the global dimension of Subud—I just found it all so fascinating. What I feel from this is that apart from the need for regular contact between helpers and new members after they are opened, the international reality of Subud, especially the work of the wings—the connection to culture, work, enterprise and welfare—has to penetrate down to the group level.

It may be that there is a fourth stage, a critical moment when a member has done latihan for years—maybe he or she is a helper—but suddenly the whole thing seems boring. Because for such a person going to latihan is still an activity which is separate from and competes with their 'normal life'. Suddenly giving it up seems like an attractive way of freeing up more time and energy for their life and for doing all the things they always wanted to do. Then this person who has been in Subud for years and seems to have had all sorts of meaningful experiences, suddenly leaves for some seemingly trivial reason. The reason can be something like, 'they' (the Subud organization, the helpers' group, the group committee or whoever) have done something that the person does not like or agree with.

If one talks to such a person, they often make a distinction between the latihan (good) and Subud (bad), personified by these various groups of people. They don't have the feeling that Subud is

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'me' and Subud is 'my' organization—so if it does something I don't agree with then I had better try to do something about it, because I share the responsibility.

The answer to this 'stage four' lies for me not with the helpers, but again with what I think of as the work of the wings. At the group level we need to have enterprise activities, cultural and charitable activities, talent testing and support for each other in our personal struggles to integrate the latihan into our life, creating success and fulfillment for ourselves and our families in the process. So that Subud is no longer something separate from our outer life but one with it. Not only will this make Subud 'interesting' for each of us but it will also provide the 'outer example' that brings the 'stage one' people to come and ask about Subud—thus completing the circle.

So, if we agree that making Subud available to others—which means allowing our membership to grow—is our responsibility, then we need to think carefully about how we can better serve the needs of our individual members at these successive stages of their journey through Subud. But I think there is another interesting dimension to this whole question that has to do with our will or our intention.

Tuti and I moved to a Subud group in the south of England just over a year ago. We were part of an unplanned and unexplained influx from all over the world which has resulted in more than 50% growth during the time we have been here, making Subud Lewes a sort of case study for what we are talking about. Of course, this was not real growth but a sort of 'zero-sum' growth—Subud people moving around, not people joining Subud. But still I've noticed that there are aspects to membership growth that are not always positive. The group owns a very nice Subud house in the center of town, but it is now painfully too small. And yet there was quite a lot of resistance and inertia about looking for something bigger or rebuilding, even though finance may not be too difficult to get given the possibilities for renting space to others.

So this was growth where the existing group members had little choice in the matter. With new members, where we can influence the outcome, could it be that we are unconsciously limiting our own growth? That we don't grow because it is uncomfortable? It is an interesting thought.

If that is the case then adopting the goal of membership growth may be like declaring an intention that will break the spell and change something in our feelings. And it may indeed be that there is an optimum size for a Subud group. When the number of active members becomes so large that there have to be more than two or three latihan a week and most of the members no longer know each-other, it may be time for the group to split in two. So perhaps the growth of Subud is a matter of constantly starting new groups. But that's a subject for another day.

Sharif Horthy, 43 St. Anne's Crescent—Lewes BN7 1SD, UK

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Dear Brothers and Sisters, like many of you, I have been practicing the Ramadhan fast since I learned about it from Bapak. By the time you read this, the end of Ramadhan will have come and gone, so —whether you fast in Ramadhan or in Lent, or

prefer to avoid the whole idea—I ask your forgiveness for all my past mistakes and shortcomings, intentional or otherwise. I also want to thank very sincerely those who call me and write to me with information, ideas and suggestions. These are often very useful and help me to understand things more clearly or start useful trains of thought. Owing to time constraints, I am not always able to respond as and when I would like—I just found a two-year-old pile of unanswered correspondence—so at the same time I am asking for your indulgence as well.

May God guide us all in doing our job and to act rightly in everything we do during the coming year.

Sharif

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to our progress in the Latihan. As you remember, Bapak wrote a great deal about the benefits of doing the fast for us in Subud, while not making a rule of it.

Moreover, the month itself has a more universal and I dare say esoteric meaning. It is, according to Bapak, the time when the earth is closet to heaven, and furthest from the influence of the satanic forces. Often there are Jewish and other holy days that fall in that same lunar month.

Of course, Bapak also praised those who wanted to do the Lenten fast, but he warned us that to do it properly, as did Jesus, we would have to fast for forty days! There are also other fasts following different procedures such as the King David fast that Bapak would refer to.

So I would suggest, rather than eliminating references to Islam, that there be 'equal time' for references to other important religious occasions such as Lent and Hanukkah. The Providence Journal is very good at this. I was surprised to see the following prominent announcement in December.

"Tomorrow is the THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT for Catholics and Protestants. For Muslims, Monday is LAY-LAT AL-BAR'AH, known as the Night of Repentance, when God approaches the earth to call humanity and to grant forgiveness of sins."

Here is my dream: that one day there will be publications destined for the public in which there would be no references whatsoever to religion, nationality, nor the founder of Subud; where the latihan is presented as a secret receiving from the Great Life Force available only to those who sincerely yearn to receive it. Only then, after a person persists in wanting to know more about the latihan, would he/she be introduced to the prerequisites, (the three months) given explanations about the latihan, and only in the final stages (perhaps only after being opened), would that person learn of the origins of Subud, and of the existence of the talks, videos and guidance of our Spiritual Guide. Δ

Visit to New York to discuss housing issues

Lorena Kreda

On February 8th, Kenneth, Peter Baptiste and I met in NY with some of those who were instrumental in the acquisition and renovation of the NY Subud house. Attending from NY were: Sierra Goodale, Jerry Chalem, Robert Mertens and Renardo Barden.

This meeting was extremely beneficial both from an information gathering perspective and from a less tangible emotional view. We talked for several hours; below are five of the more salient points that were raised.

1. We should always have our eyes open for a place.
2. We need to be exploring the idea of house-ownership within the group on a consistent basis.
3. We need to look into future tenant possibilities (those who could potentially lease space from us).
4. We should seek out organizations of non-profits as a source of alliances to meet various needs (such as legal, accounting, etc.)
5. We need a vision of what we want and a business plan as to how we're going to obtain it.

NY cautioned us not to err on the side of planning too much. It's the old paralysis-factor; planning is important, but there comes a point where you just move forward and trust that with the guidance of the latihan you'll be able to figure some things out as you go.

QUARTERLY MEETING

The group met on February 15 for a pot-luck supper and general membership meeting. Attendance was low perhaps due to the holiday weekend.

In addition to enjoying the vast array of desserts that were brought since most people attending happened to

have last names falling in the middle of the alphabet we had an inspiring discussion centered primarily on housing issues. Key items are summarized below:

1. Kenneth, Peter and I reported on our trip to NY.
2. Peter Baptiste is going to research local non-profit societies.
3. Kenton expressed interest in putting housing-related financial scenarios down on paper. This would be an extension of the financial report prepared by the committee.
4. We voted in favor of alternating latihan rooms between the men and women on a monthly basis.
5. We selected March 15 as an evening for group testing of housing-related questions.
6. New directories, calendars, and phone trees were distributed.

VISIT FROM THE SEC DEWAN

The helpers and committee met with the regional dewan on Friday evening March 6. The committees and helpers met separately.

Margaret Aldus and Deanna McFadden serve as co-chairs for the region. Deanna is still trying to finalize the venue for this year's East Coast regional congress. There are openings on the East Coast committee; be thinking if this might be an opportunity you would like to pursue!

We discussed housing a little too and were advised not to underestimate the impact a Subud Boston house would have on the region as a whole. There's also a lot to be said for the process of acquiring a house in terms of bringing the group together.

HELPER-COMMITTEE MEETING

The second bi-monthly helper committee meeting for March took place on Sunday the 15th. Candidate helper Mitchell Ziegler joined us from Vermont. Sidora came later for latihan. So nice to see them!

The next helper-committee meeting is Monday, April 6 and we are planning to spend the evening testing about the needs of the group. Helpers and committee members are encouraged to attend this meeting.

ANNUAL SPRING GATHERING - MAY 9

The committee is making arrangements for our 3rd Annual Spring Gathering to be held at the Congregational Church in Westboro on Saturday, May 9 (10:00-5:00). We are inviting the SEC dewan to join us. It will be a coordinated pot-luck: last names beginning with A-G: sides/drinks, H-M: entree, N-Z: dessert. Details to follow as they become available.

Healing Stories

I am compiling a book for the public of healing stories—describing the influence of the latihan on health and experiences of healing which are interesting or out of the ordinary. Please send contributions, type-written if possible to: Hermione Elliott, East Hoe Manor Cottage, Hambledon Hants, PO7 4SZ UK Tel/Fax 01705 632 750

(50% of the royalties will go to fund SIHA Subud International Health Association)

With many Thanks

Hermione Elliott

Birthdays

March

- 3 Rosetta Narvaez
- 5 Mardijah Tarantino
- 12 Stuart Cooke
- 12 Steve Gorman
- 12 Loura White
- 12 Sidora Ziegler
- 15 Suzanne Repetto
- 18 Everett Parmenter
- 28 Jules Seltzer
- 30 Lillian Shulman

April

- 1 Tuti Horthy

May

- 2 Bart Brownell
- 7 Samuel Mattimore
- 9 Stella Repetto
- 15 Hamilton Helmer
- 19 Jillian Hensley
- 25 Debra Pearlstein

Newsflash

Welcome new members

Judy Gaseidnes, 42 Seabreeze Drive,
Bourne, MA 02535,
#508-759-1819

Suzanne MacInerney, 202 Greendale
Avenue, unit 102, Needham, MA 02192,
#617-433-0344

Dates to Remember

April

- 6 Helper/committee meeting
- 12 Mt Monadnock climb
- 19 Helper/committee meeting

May

- 3 Desert night
- 4 Helper/committee meeting
- 9 3rd annual spring gathering and potluck in Westborough
- 18 Helper/committee meeting

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listers had evaluated the house by peering through the windows. "Why didn't you ask us to show it to you?", I asked in exasperation.

The listers have made a big issue out of the fact that the house is locked, and therefore not open to the public, though nowadays most churches are locked. Also George had said that our meetings were private. Again, although we clarified that anybody sincerely interested in Subud could meet with us to learn more about it, Mr. Lancaster has locked onto the word *private* like a dog with a bone, and refuses to let go of it. He holds that, since the meetings are private, they do not benefit the town, and this disallows exemption. The listers re-inspected the house and lowered the taxes somewhat. I sent a letter to the local newspaper explaining Subud, and that the Subud House had been a house of worship. We put a small sign in front of the house and a brief explanation of Subud next to the door.

Our lawyer felt we had a good case so we met with the Barnard Board of Civil Authority and were surprised when Mr. L. and the listers showed up too. The discussion between the Board and ourselves was constantly interrupted by Mr. L., and no one attempted to stop him. Fortunately, our lawyer persevered through everything, and made good points. But the Board decided it did not have the authority to overturn the town's decision.

We have now submitted our case to the Vermont Board of Property Valuation and have been waiting many months for their decision. If the Board rules against us we will take the matter to court, but we hope this will not happen. We are a small group (seven members), and these taxes represent a real hardship for us. Please send your good thoughts and prayers for a happy ending to this story.

The Subud Boston Newsletter

45 Estabrook Road
Concord, MA 01742
