

Anecdotes-Lama Zopa Rinpoche

1. Mongolia: The day before departure, Rinpoche visited the town of Darkhan, about three hours drive north of Ulaan Baatar. He met the local politicians and gave a talk to them, as well as a talk at the only monastery in town. The monks and the politicians requested Rinpoche to establish a branch of the FPMT centre there because they have only one monastery and the missionaries have built ten churches. We had a police escort with blaring sirens - much to the astonishment of a group of Mormons on the wayside - and the talk at the monastery was very emotional. A sea of people mobbed Rinpoche after the talk, trying to touch him for a special blessing, and Roger and Gyatso were forced to use skills honed from Australian football to keep them at bay. Thus the only apparent personal threat to Rinpoche during the whole visit was a result of devotion, not hostility.

(Archives-May/June 2003)

2. SADHANA ADVICE TO BUDDHA HOUSE

Merry Colony in the FPMT Education department was requesting Rinpoche to identify the sadhana to be used as the basis of the Mahamudra retreat at Buddha House next year - and this is Rinpoche's interim response!

'Extensive sadhana in the morning of the kangaroo, after lunch is koala sadhana - as everyone can sleep, at the beginning of the sadhana they can have eucalyptus leaves in their mouths, and have some pieces hanging from their noses and sticking out some stems from their ears, evening sadhana can be extensive sadhana of the millipede and then in the evening they can do cockroach dedication.

Rinpoche said he already mentioned this sometime back to them.

(Archives-August 2003)

3. LITTLE SAYING

Here is a little saying that Rinpoche came up with -

'The director is like the flower, the Geshe is like the honey, the students are like the bees.

(Archives September 2003)

4. CREATING BUDDHA AMITABHA PURE LAND

Rinpoche has been offered a house for retreat in rural USA, and is there now. Ven Holly Ansett offers us this picture of life there:

'We had a brief visit from one Lhasa Apso who lived with Rinpoche for one week (until his owner made contact). We found him lost in the local Wal-Mart car park, he was quite scared of us but as soon as he saw Rinpoche he went straight over and sat at the head of the table with Rinpoche. Rinpoche offered Jangsem (his temporary name) his own fleece blanket. Each day he was here Rinpoche ran with Jangsem - picture Rinpoche hiking up his shemtab and dog running full speed with ears flapping...Rinpoche laughing so hard.

Rinpoche seems extremely relaxed going from one holy activity to another. The house has many, many insects such as hornets and beetles that we all collect in jars and Rinpoche jogs (for exercise) around the relic table 8-10 times before releasing them outside (except now it is snowing outside so Rinpoche has made a house in a box for the insects as he is worried they will die if they go out in the cold). Rinpoche has now picked the site where he would like to build a 30-35 ft high Namgyalma stupa for his Gurus' long lives. Rinpoche wants it on the mountain so that it can be clearly seen by people driving by at the foot of the mountain. It will also have a small gompa underneath.

(Archives-October 2003)

5. One day Rinpoche came down to the kitchen and made everyone a snack of fried portabella mushrooms in massive amounts of butter and salt and Rinpoche named the snack Buddha Amitabha's snack and then proceeded to name the house Buddha Amitabha Pure Land .

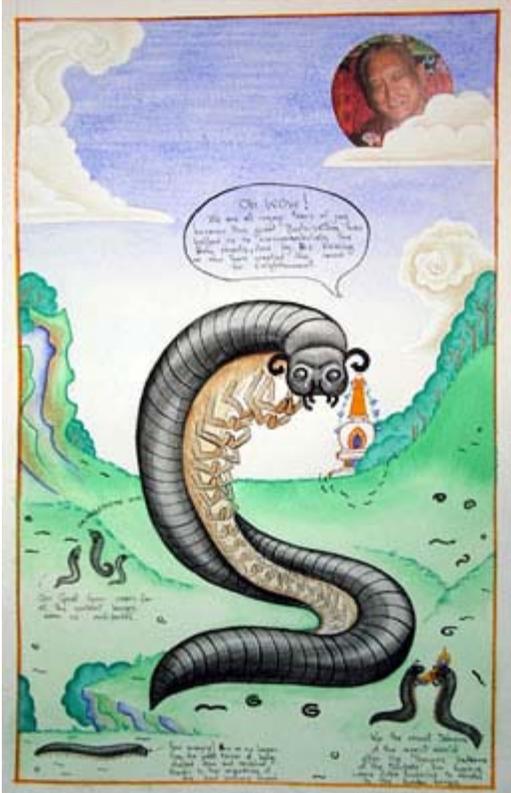
(Archives- October 2003)

6. Ven Roger described arriving in Adelaide for the Mahamudra Retreat: 'We arrived late last night, missed our connection in Sydney, partly due to our flight being late leaving Auckland, and then in Sydney we got held up by customs. I declared all our usual variety of things - dirt from Mt. Kailash, horse hair, pills etc. they were very nice about it but wanted to gamma ray everything. Then one customs agent really got into Rinpoche and said "she would love to put Rinpoche through the x-ray machine!" She started asking all about Dharma and made a money offering - very nice, but it took so long, so we missed the flight. Then the customs agent insisted on escorting Rinpoche to the airlines, wanting to know more about Dharma....and taking time.....then other people were there to meet us and had questions....meanwhile the airlines couldn't get us seats as everything was so booked being Easter. Then I had to pay for the stuff we had to put into quarantine and the cashier had left.....

Finally we got on a flight....'

(Archives March/April 2004)

7. From the Mahamudra Retreat in Australia, Ven Roger writes:
'We had a millipede invasion here during the course - they were everywhere! Rinpoche spent time every day taking them off the road, and getting others to make sure they were not trodden on. Then the artists Dale and Jonathan painted this and gave Rinpoche - it's quite large.' (See photo in the Gallery)



(Archives May/June 2004)

8. Rinpoche gave this teaching on eating yoga after a trip to town whilst staying in Buddha Amitabha Pure Land:

The Breadline Cafe was where I met with the group of students during the last visit. But as it was almost closing time, maybe the waiters would be upset at having to delay going home, so we went to another restaurant called 'Dairy Queen'.

First of all I had an ice cream that was okay for diabetics, and then I was served a veggie burger and French fries. Then it came into the mind to eat the French fries whilst thinking Guru Deity. There were quite a lot of French fries, so with each one, can collect more merit than making offering to all the Buddhas, Dharma, Sangha, statues, stupas, scriptures, and all the holy objects.

I can't say every one, but most of the French fries were done like that. And not all of the veggie burger, but some. I haven't had ice cream for a long time so can't say, maybe hardly done. In fact I can't remember.'

(Archives July 2004)

9. Rinpoche was very very happy to receive the letter below from a young Dharma student - the letter and Rinpoche's reply follow:

'Dear Lama Zopa,
I live in New York City and am 9 years old. I have been vegetarian all my life. Here is a story about Milarepa kids' camp in Vermont, U.S.A.: Recently I was reading your newsletter (the April 2004 issue) when I saw the article that said you should catch bugs and let them go outside. So, when I was at Milarepa kids' camp, I caught about 50 flies indoors one at a time using small paper cups. It took me all afternoon. Then we brought them to Geshe Tsulga who blessed them, and then we took them down to the stupa, circled it while praying, and let them go. I thank you a lot for starting Milarepa.'

'My very dear Rafaello,
I was very very happy, very happy to receive your email that you had saved so many flies and spent your afternoon liberating these flies. I want to thank you very much for practicing my advice, liberating these living beings.

Here is some more explanation about the benefits of helping living beings like this, please see if you can understand this advice and also help other boys and girls to understand how important it is to help others, especially to help the animals and all the different creatures in the world to protect their lives.

I am going to put your picture in the Mandala and explain what you did, I am very happy.

With much love and prayers,
Lama Zopa'

(Archives October 2004)

10. BEACH DHARMA FOR DOGS



Rinpoche wrote this sign for Rinpoche's dog to wear when she goes to the beach...

'I want to benefit all sentient beings.

My name is Om Mani Peme Hum

(with a smiley face)'

As you can see from the accompanying photos, Rinpoche's dog is quite used to wearing Dharma additions from Rinpoche!



(Archives December 2004)

10.

BUG CATCHERS



This is Rinpoche with Vens Labdron and Matthew using the bug catcher created by Rinpoche so that bugs can be caught and circumambulated around the stupa.

Rinpoche demonstrating use of the bug catcher.



(Archives December 2004)

11. Ven Jinpa, a lama gyupa from Kopan, has been serving recently as Rinpoche's second attendant, and sent this email which gives a taste of life with Rinpoche at this time:

"I'm just fine, I had very fortunate and meaningful time in Dharamsala with Rinpoche seeing his wonderful deeds for welfare of all sentient beings ,my stay here for last 3 weeks has been quite busy as Rinpoche keep busy attending teachings form 7am _5pm and of course he continues to see and give teachings after that too .I had nice walk up to hill on the way to Tushita few times with Rinpoche. Days has been just like a moment I just realized that we are leaving tomorrow. I had private audience with HH Dalai Lama yesterday with Rinpoche and HH Dalai Lama express great admiration for Zopa Rinpoche's deed which I am so proud of. Anyway life seemed more meaningful while I am with Rinpoche ,and I am hoping to keep my best little service to my guru ,hope to hear from you

all the time and thanx for keeping in touch ,enjoy the life in best way as Lama
Zopa Rinpoche does

(Archives March/April 2005)

12. CREAM - THE LAM-RIM

There is nothing more than actualizing the lam-rim. This is the best life, most meaningful life in the world, including tantra, which actually looks yummiier. But lam-rim is like yummy cream on cake, actually lam-rim is the cream.

Postcard which Rinpoche sent to all the retreatants doing long retreat at Land of Calm Abiding, Scribe Ven Holly Ansett, Dec 2004

Here is the actual card:

HA HA



There is nothing, best life most
meaningful life in the world, than
actualizing Lamrim including Tantra, ^{but} Lamrim
that makes Nyum Nyum cream on cake,
actually Lamrim should be cream.

HA HA

There is nothing, best life, most
meaningful life in the world, than
actualizing Lamrim including Tantra,
^{Even though Tantra looks Nyam Nyam.}
~~but~~ Lamrim that makes Nyum Nyum
cream, ^{or cake} actually Lamrim should be ^{Nyum} cream.

(Archives July 2004)

13. MEMORIES OF RINPOCHE'S TOUR OF SPAIN

From Claire Isitt:

"I was fortunate enough to travel with Rinpoche on His teaching tour in Spain this summer. Highlight memories which I thought others would enjoy include...

Rinpoche's generosity with His time - for example, Rinpoche always wanted to give an extra talk before leaving each center - this happened in Rinpoche's room in Madrid (with Rinpoche cutting up fruit for everyone); cramming into the library in Oseling with Rinpoche giving the Milarepa mantra to us (which somehow didn't get given during the initiation!). Rinpoche sitting below a large palm tree in Juan and Paloma Bas' garden in Onteniente in order to give a lung to the students of Tekchen Choling Study Group. This then meant that we would leave late in the day to travel to the next center, with Kiko (Tushita Retreat Centre director) driving us through the night.

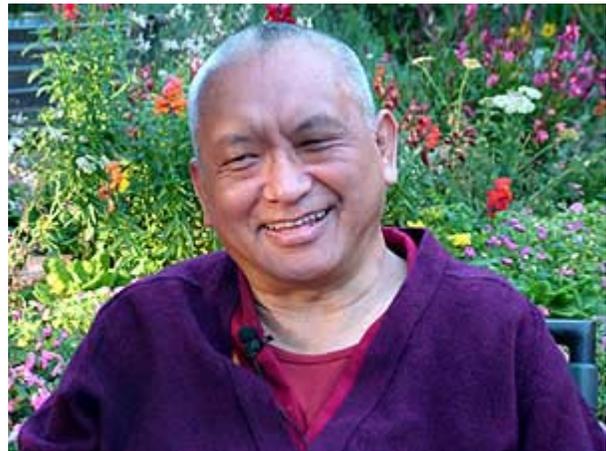


the teaching at Onteniente

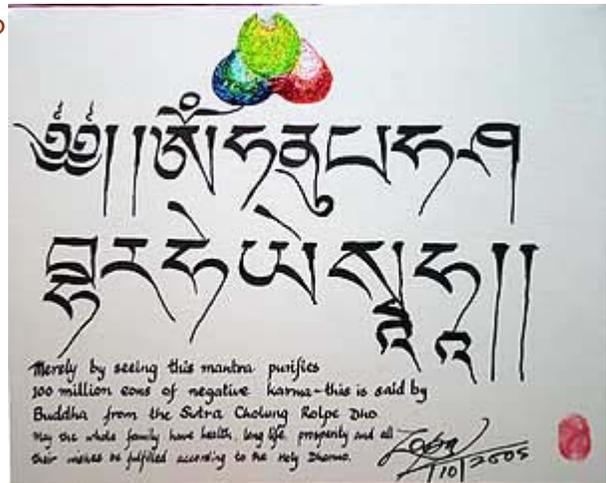
Rinpoche with great care making delicious warm fruit pudding for the lunch with staff and volunteers in Oseling. 8 Nalanda monks sleeping in the corridor of Nagarjuna Barcelona during a gap in making wealth vases with Rinpoche. Rinpoche naming one of Bea (dynamo of Tushita Retreat Centre and cook on the tour)'s dishes for an eventual cookbook - enchiladas became Compassion and Wisdom! Rinpoche at 3 am in Barcelona finding time to give specific advice for the Spanish center directors' meeting. Rinpoche giving the lung of the Golden Light Sutra in Barcelona - only to come back after the break to find Rinpoche in peals of laughter as He had given a different lung..and then the amazingly wonderful teachings on emptiness (which we hope will form part of a book of Rinpoche's teachings and guided meditations on emptiness.

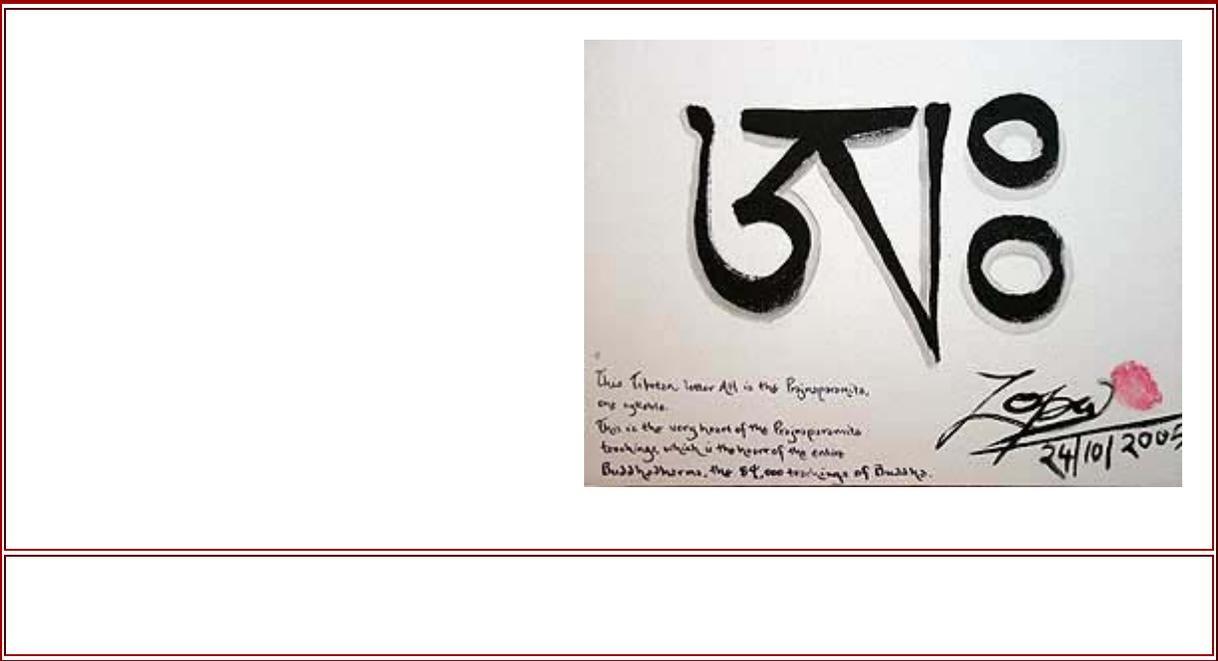
(Archives November 2004)

14.



Rinpoche painted these for an event to raise funds for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings in 2007 in San Jose, USA





(Archives November 2005)

15. and 16

RINPOCHE IN SERA JE MONASTERY

From Ven Roger Kunsang:

"On January 22nd, Sera Je offered Rinpoche a long life puja.

Rinpoche thought He was going to a Hayagriva puja that the Monastery was offering (all day) for Maitreya Project. When Rinpoche went to attend the last session of the afternoon it was a long life puja (for many years Sera Je have been requesting for Rinpoche to accept a long life puja in appreciation for all Rinpoche has done for the monastery. especially offering food to all the monks. for the past 14 years..there are now 2600 monks taking food each day).

Khen Rinpoche (title given to the Abbot) of Sera Je requested Rinpoche to give teaching and an oral transmissions to all the monks, as well as Hayagriva initiation. There were over 2,000 monks in attendance. At the beginning of the initiation the khata on the large Maitreya statue suddenly burst into flames - there were no candles around or anything else that could have caused this...Rinpoche said it was an auspicious sign!!!"

RINPOCHE HELPS OUT IN AIRPORT

From Ven Roger Kunsang:

"Rinpoche and I spent 6 hours in transit in Chengdu airport (China), it was late at night and the airport was closing. One of the cleaners was driving a small vehicle that washed and cleaned the floors. It suddenly stopped right in front of us .broke down and the cleaner for a couple of hours tried everything to fix it. Near the end I noticed Rinpoche was doing mos with His mala and then quietly leaned over to me and whispered that He thinks He can help the cleaner and fix the vehicle. I wasn't sure about this as they were regular Chinese and I wasn't sure what they would do. Slowly Rinpoche moved towards the vehicle reciting mantras (I followed closely behind having no idea what Rinpoche was going to do or how the Chinese would react). Rinpoche gestured to the driver that he could fix the vehicle, the driver looked at Rinpoche with astonishment ..but I think he was so frustrated with the vehicle that he was willing to try anything. He literally threw up his arms and walked away from the vehicle, gesturing to Rinpoche he can have it! Rinpoche started to recite mantra and blow on different parts of the vehicle..then touching and stroking the vehicle with His mala, chanting prayers. When the driver saw this (and it did look pretty strange to the un-initiated mind) he was absolutely astonished .he had this look of complete amazement ...but he also was looking happy as I think he had faith this could work. He ran off yelling to his work mates to come and see this!!! If I had my video catching this scene it would have been absolutely priceless .. It was very very funny. In the middle of this ultra modern new Chinese airport . modern technology had broken down and here was a Tibetan monk chanting mantras (and you know how religion is

viewed there) and blowing on the high tech machine. Soon as Rinpoche finished Rinpoche took off at a fast pace to the departure gate (we were late), Rinpoche never looked back to see if the driver was trying to start it . When we got to the other end of the airport Rinpoche asked me if I could see if it was starting ... I said I couldn't see as it was a long way at the other end of the airport... I guess we will never know."

(Archives January 2006)

17. A little excerpt from Jim Aherne, director of Hospice of Mother Tara, about Rinpoche's arrival in Australia:

"Our Lama arrived to a wet but warm day in Perth and was greeted by a group of about 30 people when He came through the arrivals gate at the airport.

Rinpoche was greeted with flowers and katas and walked along an impromptu line of devotees in the waiting area including me!

Many of those waiting were in tears as Rinpoche touched them in a warm greeting and blessing."

18. Rinpoche had this message for International Office staff as the Portland era begins -

"Billions of thanks to everyone for your service.

This is the beginning.... the root like the sun rising in the world,

Now begins the real development of FPMT in this world Liberation and enlightenment for all sentient beings.

It is like a good seed has been planted, now a great plant with many flowers

.....

With much love and prayer

Lama Zopa"

(Archives May 2006)

19. MOVING - OR LIFE ON THE ROAD - OR LIFE IN A DAY WITH RINPOCHE

by Ven Roger Kunsang--A Life In The Day With Rinpoche....

February 2006

Now we are in Drepung Monastery ...sort of... We are staying in a small hotel in Hubli, one and a half hour's drive from Drepung. The road is very bad, in fact it is a disaster. Rinpoche commutes every day to work... oops I mean teachings, leaves at 6.30am, arrives at 8am for the teachings. During lunch break Rinpoche has some appointments. Then afternoon teachings, and then Rinpoche drives back at night - another hour and half on this crater- filled road. As soon as

Rinpoche arrives, Rinpoche jumps into work always the first thing He says is “Any news!” which is the signal for me to mention all the relevant things that are happening International Office Maitreya Project.... Centers.... Projects... Students/ friends/ families requests/ problems/ deaths/ illnesses.

While I am

talking Rinpoche has the BBC on the TV or the “animal planet” station lions stalking their prey... when they are about to rip the neck out of a deer

Rinpoche changes the channel He can't bear to watch..... the channel is constantly being changed because the animal world seems to be all about eating each other in the most horrific ways yet Rinpoche keeps trying to watch but can't quite do it. After a while Rinpoche starts doing prayers/ meditation, you get no

warning it just happens and so I know that's the time for me to leave. Later at night, usually quite late I get a call and it's time to start work again. Then late late I start the struggle of trying to appear awake while Rinpoche is discussing or dictating something..... my mind starts automatically calculating how to escape with

some dignity... it never seems to work ... I usually end up embarrassed falling asleep in the middle of things. I go to bed exhausted but content, Rinpoche meditates..... then it's breakfast time. another day..... such a variety of issues from all over the place...

(Archives May 2006)

20. After lunch Lama Zopa Rinpoche took Serkong Dorje Chang (he is about 24 yrs old) shopping to buy a monastery they looked at a nearly finished one that was running into financial problems so it looks like Lama Zopa Rinpoche will buy that for Serkong Dorje Chang..... not the normal thing you have on your shopping list!

Rinpoche with Serkong Dorje Chang

(Archives May 2006)

21. BENEFITS OF THE SANGHATA AND VAJRACUTTER SUTRAS

Rinpoche has given us advice about the benefits of these two sutras, which as you know, Rinpoche regularly recommends.

Excerpts from the full advice...

"The very minute you hear it, the five uninterrupted negative karmas - the extremely heavy negative karmas that right after death, immediately without interruption of another life, you get born into hell; you get reborn in the lowest hot hell, which has the heaviest suffering of the lower realms, of which the life span lasts for one intermediate eon – those get completely purified. This happens even for the sentient beings who hear the sutra, the minute they hear the sutra. Therefore, in the past, when I was in Washington, I played the CD in the car going on the way to go shopping, which is a 40- minute drive away. I was sitting in

the front of the car, so I kept the window down. Sitting behind me there were two nuns, Holly and Chosang. It was not sunshine weather; it was a bit foggy and cold. The cold wind was going back through the window and making them cold. But if I had cared only for them, then all those people living in the houses along the road and all the cows and animals, they could not hear. There is a big difference. So, I kept the window down and played the CD very loud, like young people playing their music in the car – those young people, teenagers who have that strange hair that goes straight up onto their head or who have a lot of rings on their ears or on their face, around the eyes or whatever... just to be descriptive. "

(Archives May 2006)

22. RINPOCHE WAKES MANI UP

Recently Mani (Rinpoche's dog, who lives at Rinpoche's house in California) was awoken at 1.30 am by Ven Anet holding a phone to her ears - Rinpoche had phoned wanting to talk to Mani, and to recite various mantras and prayers to her!

(Archives-May 2006)

23. Ants.....

"Dear Rinpoche and kind Guru

This is confession: Last year, on my balcony, I have killed around 50 little ants, to my immediate regret afterwards. The regret is still there each time I hear the word confession or

do confession and purification as in this retreat. So, in a way, they have become guidance for me, because I can feel what regret means. I will do a day of precepts for every ant in the next time, if you do not advise me otherwise."

Rinpoche's answer:

My very dear student,

Thank you very much for your kind letter. It is amazing what you want to offer back to those ants, it is incredible! Even to myself the thought to take precepts for each ant would not have come to my head. I am sure all the ants will jump up and down and clap their hands and make party for you when you finish, wishing for you to get all the happiness (ha ha ha...) I put my hands together at my heart thanking you very very much on behalf of all the ants.

Then in addition read the Diamond Cutter Sutra 4 times and then read the long Namgyelma Mantra and recite the long Namgyelma Mantra if possible 21 times or else 7 times and dedicate the merit for their (the ants) quick enlightenment. They might become your disciples and do everything you say...

Big love and prayers,

Zopa

(Archives-May 2006)

24. Rinpoche, Ven Roger plus all the Sangha in the Santa Cruz area (about 19), plus about 15-20 others all went to the movies recently to see "An Inconvenient Truth" [the Al Gore film about global warming]... quite an amazing event. We took over the whole theater, a sea of red and malas clicking, afterwards we walked up to have gelato, the Santa Cruzians thought we were doing some demonstration...

I think this is the third film Rinpoche has ever seen in a theater..."



Rinpoche Offering Food at Gelato Mania (USA, July 2006. Photographer Bob Cayton)

The previous films were Seven Years in Tibet, and one (title forgotten!) about people masquerading as priests and escaping... Rinpoche also watched Pretty Woman - backwards! Rinpoche at the time had not met Richard Gere (who stars in the film), and students had been talking about Richard Gere, saying he was a Dharma student and wanted to show Rinpoche the movie, but when they put in the video it was at end of the movie so Rinpoche said let's watch it backwards - so they did!

(Archives-July 2006)

25. RINPOCHE CARRYING MOTHERS AND FATHERS

From Ven Holly Ansett:

During a recent animal liberation (the Sangha in Rinpoche's house in California offer an animal liberation three times each month on behalf of any of Rinpoche's students who are sick), after the Sangha and students finished the animal liberation at 5pm we left the 400 worms in the buckets, as Rinpoche often wants to do further circumambulations and prayers for the little worms himself.



Rinpoche carrying mothers and fathers (USA, July 2006)

So at 9pm Rinpoche came down and spent a few hours circumambulating the stupa at his house. Rinpoche had found a broom to be able to carry both buckets with all the worms inside at the same time.

Ven Roger came out to take a picture and Rinpoche said:

"In India when ones parents are too old to walk then their children carry them on their back in this way, father on one side in a basket and mother on the other side in a basket. So here I am carrying 400 of my fathers and mothers on my back"

(Archives-July 2006)

26. CENTER PROMOTION, RINPOCHE-STYLE



While Rinpoche was at Tushita Meditation Centre in Dharamsala earlier this year, Rinpoche was asked to help promote the centre...! (India, Mar 2006)

(Archives-July 2006)

27.



Rinpoche making a skeleton call out 'Roger'!

(Archives-October 2006)

28. NEW YORK TAXI TALES

While in New York City recently to attend His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings, Rinpoche and Ven Roger needed a taxi. So they stood on opposite sides of the street to each try to hail a cab. Ven Roger wasn't having any success, and looked over to see that Rinpoche was successful in getting taxis - but Rinpoche was giving them to the other people waiting!

(Archives-October 2006)

29. NEW NAME FOR THE DELUSIONS

Extracted from a letter from Rinpoche:

"I hope everything is ok with you; I hope you are not in the part of New York where there is no electricity for many weeks; even when there is no terrorist problem, still there are problems.

Anyway here I have thought of a new name for delusions - terrorists. "

(Archives-December-2006)

30. The Precious Mantra Cap - Foundation Store



FPMT board member Peter Kedge and son, Michael, wearing the Precious Mantra Cap, designed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Benefits of the Precious Mantra Cap by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

"By wearing this hat when you go out in public, not only when you play golf, but anywhere, in the street, on the beach, where many people are shopping, in the market, anywhere that animals or people can see you. You are liberating others. Just by wearing the hat.