

MEET CHAU YODER, WHO WILL LEAD OUR DAY OF MINDFULNESS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023 * 9AM – 3 PM * ST. BEDE'S CHURCH * MAR VISTA



Meet Lay Dharma Teacher, Chau Yoder. (Chau is pronounced “Cho”.) Chau has a special place in the history of our practice tradition!

CHAU’S EARLY HISTORY IN VIETNAM * THE SEED

Out of the mud blooms a lotus flower. Chau emerged out of the war-torn country where she was born. She was born in 1946 in North Vietnam, one month before the Battle of Hanoi, the start of the First Indochina War. Her family had to escape from where they were living and for years lived in constant fear.

This war ended in 1954, and then the Vietnam War started! Chau’s family escaped the Communist North and moved to South Vietnam. Eight-year-old Chau and family saw fighting between warring factions take place right in front of their house. They lived in anxiety, not knowing when they would encounter a bomb, grenade, sniper, or an informant for one side or another. War was a way of life since she was born and continued until she left. To help her through these times, she focused on her studies and took refuge in Buddhism. As a teenager, she realized that she had the seed (aspiration) to become a monastic and the desire to travel abroad. Only one would happen for her...

THE TICKET OUT * COLLEGE * CAREER * FAMILY

In 1967, Chau worked hard to win a scholarship to California State University at Fresno where she met her future husband Jim and obtained a Bachelor of Science in Electronic and Electrical Engineering. She went on to have a successful 25-year career with the Chevron Corporation.

Chau and Jim were married in 1971 in Vietnam. They have 2 daughters, Annie and Lynn (son-in-law Seth) and now have 3 grandchildren, Lilly, Wesley, and Bodhi.

RECONNECTING TO THE SEED * MEETING THICH NHAT HANH

In 1986, Chau took a course given by the PSI Seminars that reconnected her to her spiritual quest. Soon after she found Thay’s books, **The Miracle of Mindfulness** and **Being Peace** and committed to study his teachings and practices.

In 1989, Chau received the 5 Mindfulness Trainings from Thay. She vowed to share his mindfulness practices, to help people be healthy, happy, and strong. She wanted to help others live life with more joy and less suffering. Thay thus named her “Lapis Lazuli of the Heart”, named after the Medicine Buddha.

PLUM VILLAGE * SISTER D * ORDER OF INTERBEING

Chau first went to the Plum Village Monastery in France in 1997 for 3 weeks. She realized how deep was her desire to become a monastic. For years, she often cried because she knew that being a nun was not possible in this lifetime without causing suffering to her family.

In September 1999, Chau attended Thay’s Retreat in Santa Barbara where she met Sister Dang Nghiem (Sister D), then a lay person and medical doctor. After the retreat they continued their friendship with frequent talks and visits. Since Chau had the seed to become a nun, she recognized it in others. In her book, **Healing**, sister D writes, *“Among the wonderful people there, I met Sister Thoai Nghiem and the (future) Lay Dharma Teacher, Chau Yoder in our Dharma Discussion group.... Later it was they who arranged everything for me to go to Plum Village. (Chau and her husband) even bought me the plane ticket for me to go to France. If I had arranged all the details, I may never have made it to Plum Village.”*

Sister Chan Khong nominated Chau to the Order of Interbeing (OI) and ordained her in a special ceremony in 1999 at Plum Village. Thay gave Chau the name, "True Deep Wisdom".

LA BOI PUBLISHER * SANGHA * DEER PARK

Sister Chan Khong appointed Chau to be the head of La Boi, publisher of Thay's Vietnamese language books. For over 20 years, Chau and Jim published 50 books by Thay. They worked with a dedicated team of 20 volunteers to distribute his books. Chau has been on the board of Parallax Press for many years.

Chau started the Peaceful Heart Sangha in Walnut Creek with her husband Jim in 1999 that continues today in a hybrid format, in person and online.

Starting in 2000, when Deer Park Monastery opened in Southern California, Chau attended retreats annually and often helped to facilitate discussion sessions.

DHARMA TEACHER * BACK TO VIETNAM

Chau was ordained as a Lay Dharma Teacher by Thay in 2003 in a ceremony at Plum Village.

In 2005, Chau travelled with Thay and the monastics on special trip to Vietnam. This was the first time that Thay was invited back to his country after being exiled since 1966!

She and Jim also led private tours to Thay's root temple in Hue and his short-lived monastery in Bao Loc, and led trips to distribute prosthetic hands to amputees in need in Vietnam and around the world.

WATERING THE SEED * CURRENT PRACTICES

Chau has an intensive daily practice of meditation, chanting and touching the earth. She is an active dharma teacher who leads courses in Buddhism, mindful living, mindful leadership, qi gong and tai chi. For some special events, she has been known to shave her head and wears a brown robe to be a temporary monastic for 10 days. She then returns to the world to bring joy and help others.

She takes daily walks with her husband, and she cooks delicious vegetarian meals using the many fruits, vegetables, and herbs that she grows in her bountiful garden. They enjoy spending time with their children and grandchildren that includes frequent travel to New York.

She is ever the ardent student of Buddhism and vows to be a monastic in her next life. She has already made a reservation!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023, 9 AM-3 PM – All of Chau's history and all our histories have led us to this special Day of Mindfulness organized by the members of the Organic Garden Sangha of WLA.

Please come join Chau, sangha members and friends in mindfulness and joy for this worthy cause – fundraising for the monks' residences in Deer Park Monastery!

Photos:

Upper left: Chau & husband Jim (standing behind her to her right) visiting Thay in his hut at Deer Park.

Lower: Thay, Sister Chan Khong, Chau and others in Oakland