

Tea Wayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these newsletters. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and tea are becoming, as the tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of the tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. This month we would like to introduce the mad man from Down Unda', who brings so much joy to our center, Sam Gibb.

People look at me funny in Taiwan... Actually, people look at me funny everywhere. I don't know why this is, but I have compiled a list of possible reasons:

- 1) Long hair that only gets washed or brushed three times a year (three is an auspicious number they tell me).
- 2) The scraggly beard with old foodstuffs and Puerh-like micro climates.
- 3) I am barefoot in a number of socially inappropriate situations.
- 4) I grew up upside-down, on the other side of the world from most of you—in New Zealand—causing the blood to rush to my head.

Looking at this list you may think: "Oh, this guy sounds like a hippie." I'm not, though the customs officer in Kuala Lumpur called me that on the way home from Taiwan.

Eight months ago, Taiwan would have been one of the last places on earth I would have pictured myself visiting (America is at the bottom of that list but that is mainly due to legal restrictions—something to do with reason four mentioned above, I believe). And yet, in the last four months I have been to Taiwan twice, with a third trip already planned....

What changed? What draws me deeper into this tradition? Why is the work of this Global Tea Hut so important?

The first of these questions is easy to answer: I found Tea. And you know what I am talking about.

Why am I drawn to this tradition is the approach. I'm less interested in the external aspects of Tea—the pots, the types, the growing regions (although if you saw me on a trip to Yingge you might think otherwise)—as I am to the Tao of Tea, the insights, growth and connection it offers. Because I am starting to sound like a "NASG (New Age Sensitive Guy)" as we say Down Unda', I will move on. Suffice it to say, like you all, I think Tea is pretty dang swell.

The second reason I am drawn to this tradition is Wu De and the connection I feel to him and his teachings... Basically he keeps it real. Mad real. I also feel connected to the love and service expressed through the

actions of the Tea Sage Hut community. To me service is the highest spiritual path and the Hut community focuses strongly on this aspect of life.

The final reason bridges to my third question of why the work of this Global Tea Hut is so important. I believe in the vision and path of this tradition and Tea as a whole: No dogma, no sectarian views—just service and love experienced in a bowl. And that's something that can be shared; that's something that can build bridges and heal wounds.

In a world of rapid population growth, decreasing resources, increasing disparity of wealth, religious dogma and materialism, such healing is exactly what we need. Tea offers us common ground to connect beyond the delusions of our minds. It is a place to meet beyond our surface differences. Tea offers the experience of peace beyond words, ideas and concepts. To me, that is why it is so important, and that is why it is so needed in the world.

