



JANUARY – MARCH 2015

THE ESSENCE OF ZEN PRECEPTS – ZENKAISHO

The following is from a dharma talk given by Kwong-roshi at SMZC during Summer Ango Sesshin, August 15, 2014.

I couldn't help but appreciate the fog this morning. In the Tibetan tradition they think of it as a protection canopy over the mountain. Most people usually just say, "It's that fog again." But it provides a truly wonderful cover. There are shafts of light coming through the small forest that separates us from the sangha house. Those shafts of light maintain their radiance and stability as the fog moves from north to south. It even comes down vertically from above. It's like the metaphor of vertical and horizontal. And I can't help but smile and think about all those dewdrops. How many dewdrops are there? Just as many dewdrops as stars in the sky. They are shimmering, glistening, brilliantly. Each dewdrop like a star doing its part in the galaxy.

Of course this connects with Indra's net and is very interesting. There was a Soto monk named Kyogo who along with Ejo and Senne made comments on Dogen's Shobogenzo. Kyogo must have been a great person since there's very little written about him. I think that's how it works. The very well-known and famous artists say the least about themselves in their biographies. I studied here, I went there, and that's it. But the other people who are trying to become famous, they write a lot about themselves.

So, let me just refresh us on Indra's net. I didn't really know the importance of this net. And even in those days, Kyogo merged with Dogen's teachings about the precepts. He also merged with the Kegon tradition. That's very unusual, to step beyond one's own tradition and merge another sutra in another tradition. It was the Avatamsaka sutra from the Kegon or Huanyuan school. The sutra is also known as The Flower Garland Sutra. We can see that Indra's net is a great metaphor. And as I was reading this, it's *upaya* to the max. Because this is how you work with your small-mindedness, or your ego. It's so vast, that ego can't keep up, because ego always wants to control everything. It's exclusive, it's territorial, it's non-relating to anything. And the ego can not relate to the cosmos, nor the universe, nor to the environment. In Indra's net a jewel is tied at each eye or knot of the net. One jewel. But, how many jewels? We can't even measure how many jewels. And each jewel has many facets and in one jewel you can see the entire cosmos. These reflections start going in every direction, picking up more and more. It's true abundance. Billions, trillions of manifestations of reflections.

But it is also like the character *ju*, in the word *jukai*. *Ju*: the ideogram is composed of three parts. And there's one hand handing something to the other hand. In the third part there's an extra hand. Why is that third hand there when it only takes one hand to give something to the other hand? But, that's the character of *ju*. Very interesting. There's also a wider background. There's a source where all these hands and reflections come from. From one jewel is reflected the whole cosmos. And reflections simultaneously are reflected in all the other eyes of the jewels' many facets.

The purpose of this metaphor is that all things in existence are defined by their interconnectedness. When you go shopping, at the mall and you're in the parking lot, no one tells you that they are leaving so you can park where they were. Because people are just fixed on themselves. But you just say, "Oh", and the other person says, "Thank you." You must have the same experience because people are disconnected. They have no idea because

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of their ignorance that there's a greater interconnection going on. A greater life than what we see and hear every day on TV. I don't have an iPhone, but I can imagine that it even amplifies all the isolation and aloneness we feel. But here, all things in existence are defined by their interconnectedness with all other things, without losing their own independent identity within this process. If that wasn't true, the world would collapse.

You recall the poem by Tozan Zenji that I read - it's really a beautiful poem. I'm just really beginning to understand it. It's about the blue mountain, and the white cloud. The blue mountain is the father. Or the blue mountain could be the mother. Gender doesn't really matter. And the white cloud could be the daughter or the son. All day long they have this relationship and they play together. Sometimes they embrace each other, but there is the blue mountain, and the white cloud - separate and independent. So, to put it on another level, you could say, "form is emptiness, emptiness is form" as in the Heart Sutra. But it's still duality. It still has its independent identity within the process. The blue mountain is just the blue mountain. The white cloud is just the white cloud. Emptiness is form, form is emptiness. Emptiness is emptiness, form is form. That's the whole thing in four phrases. I have this calligraphy by Kobun Otogawa roshi in the living room. You're welcome to come and see it. It's a copy of his calligraphy of this poem.

You know, reflections are happening everywhere, but it demands the viewer, or the seer, to be still. Once you're still, you can receive something. You have to be like a white sheet of paper before you can take on anything or any color. Your paper or canvas has to be empty. And because it's empty, because the glass is empty, it can be filled. You can be filled with all the magic in the world. It's right in front of you. The kerosene lamps in this room reflect the entire zendo, including us. I hope individually we, as dewdrops or stars, can also reflect each other. It's not just about you. We reflect each other and the entire universe.

In ancient times, they told a lot of stories. In these myths, they were so huge, the numbers got into the hundreds and thousands and billions, and you couldn't keep up. But that's exactly the antidote to the notion of ego. It can't keep up. This reflection, Indra's net, is quite powerful in the sense that we're usually just preoccupied with ourselves. And we try our best, and sometimes the notion of ego keeps thriving, because when we don't try our best, it's got us. And it thrives every time. It says, "I got you!" But eventually through our practice, we can catch it when it says, "I got you," and we can smile at it because we know it's conjured up and not real. It's more than fictitious. No one can prove they have an ego.

So, let's go back to our earlier reading. I have to introduce the Zenkaisho again to everybody. And this is *The Essence of Zen Precepts*. We didn't get very far, maybe today we'll just get as far as the preface.

"From the time before the scriptures were compiled in India and translated in China, the correct Dharma was transmitted from the Buddha to Mahakasyapa and down through 28 generations to Bodhiharma. What has been transmitted is temporarily, or provisionally the Treasure of the True Dharma Eye." *Strikes stick*. [And when this transmission happened, Buddha said to Mahakasyapa, I have now transmitted you the treasury of the true dharma eye, the inconceivable mind of nirvana. *Strikes stick*. That's what he said, and that's where the title of Dogen's Shobogenzo comes from.] "This is called the great matter of cause and effect." *Strikes stick*. [The great matter of cause and effect. This is really important for us human beings, because if we don't understand this cause, we will be a victim of our small mind, and we'll go through numerous sufferings. This is not like you are bad, and you have sin. You will cause your own suffering, and you will not know how to handle it.] "And also called the greatest thing from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha to the empty eon." [To emptiness. The greatest thing.] *Strikes stick*. "And also called Zen. *Strikes stick*. Also called precepts. *Strikes stick*. In this way, the name Zen precepts is established here. For this reason, this Zen precept is different from the precept of Samadhi wisdom of the scriptural studying schools." [The intellectual schools.] "The word precept is the same, but the meaning is very different, just as the source of water is one, but the streams vary in length and depth. But the slightest discrepancy is as the distance between heaven and earth." [This is how it was written in those days over 2579 years ago.]

I don't know if people are getting better, but the translations have changed in a way to fit the people. And there were great saints, like Nagaharajuna, Vimalakirti layman, Vasubandhu, you know. His brother, Asanga. All these guys started saying things like, if you don't do this, then it's as great a difference, as the distance between heaven and earth. But, within that difference is the same meaning, if you understand the relative and the absolute. In the early days, they were talking more about the absolute, but they changed at some point.

And then they go on to say, "If one departs from the scripture by so much as a single character, it becomes the same as a demon's discourse. Can it still be scripture with the universe or outside the entirety of phenomena, including feathers and fish scales? There is nothing that is

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Fred Jacobs photo

not the actualization of the Zen precepts.” [That’s really a profound statement. Any time is a good time. Every day is a good day. Every day is a perfect day, even when you’re gonna die, even when you have cancer, even when you’re in a car accident. Or, even have shingles. Every day is a perfect day. Suffering is extra, but pain, yes. When I had shingles in 2010, it was a very interesting thing for me. And it proved to me the power of meditation practice. That when Zen says, “just as it is,” it literally means it. There’s nothing mysterious behind it. The mystery of what happens is that it changes karma. Because through consistent years of sitting you have disentangled the entanglement of your circuit that has been conditioned. You have unconditioned it, and you have restored yourself, your Buddha nature, your purity, your virtue. Because when it hurt, yes, it hurt like hell. When it didn’t hurt, I was happy it didn’t hurt. But I didn’t wish it not to hurt. I didn’t blame anyone. I was not angry. I was not depressed. I thought, jeez, what we do is really good. That was proof to me of our practice.

“There is nothing that is not the actualization of the Zen precept.” You could think that when you get up in the morning, this is the perfect day. See what happens. Everything you do, everything that happens to you that day: someone cuts in front of you when you’re on the highway, someone blows their horn when driving in

back of you, someone tells you to go to hell. But, today is the perfect day. Try it, see what happens. “There is nothing that is not the actualization of the Zen precept.” That is how deep, and profound, and powerful it is. It’s not just wearing the rakusu, our garment. That’s what it symbolizes. This is what it is. This is why it is. “And Ejo, his successor,” Dogen’s successor, “recorded his words and called it the *Essay on Teaching and Conferring the Precepts*. And it was Zen master Kyogo with extreme labor and exertion who combined it with the scripture of Indra’s net. Hoping to teach later generations by making it easier to understand.” And it says something about, “ever since then, the Soto school has prospered, there are now 25,000 temples.” That doesn’t mean it’s good. “In each abbot’s room, the precept essay is individually transmitted. While the precept vein,” *kaimiyaku*, precept vein, “is entrusted by teacher to successor. The precepts are also given to students and laypersons, however during the course of 300 years, the forms of Dharma practice have become loose and confused. But fortunately, during the Genryoku era we obtained an official mandate to restore the correct tradition. But at that time, there was no blood remaining.” In the olden days, they did part of the precept paper with blood. You cut your finger, I cut my finger and we draw it. That was olden times, and we still do it. “Many have lost the precept essays, and have stopped giving the precepts vein, while nonetheless announcing the transmission of the precepts has taken place. Because of this fact, although the essence of the precepts exists” (the essence of it exists, whether given or not, the essence was even before Shakyamuni Buddha. How could he have realized it if the truth wasn’t always there?

Trungpa Rinpoche didn’t bring Dharma to America, it was already here. But in the relative way. In the human conventional way you have to invite Amaterasu-omikami to come to America. So, we understand that conventional and social way. Do you understand what I am saying? Because that’s part of our culture and

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tradition. We invite, “Please come!” but it is already here. Please come! This was in the Shinto tradition, which is completely different from Zen. And Trungpa was Tibetan! He crossed the Tibetan line and went over to the Shinto line and he asked their kami, their spirit that’s enshrined in the Grand Issei shrine to come. And they consented. The person in charge said that they would come every year. And so they sent a monk on an airplane and he would go to the shrine and do rituals. And after five years, he said no need to come anymore, because Amaterasu-omikami is here now. *Strikes stick*. OK.

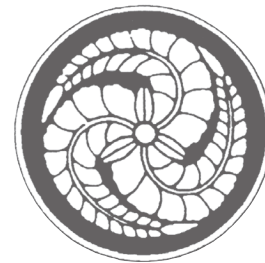
“The precept essay is only chanted once, at the dojo of instruction, as though enshrining a chicken or dove, and thinking it is the true dragon.” This might be going on now. I hope it doesn’t happen here! Laughs It has happened. People go away believing that, because people don’t understand what they are doing, what it is for. “During many years, I” and this I refers to Banjin Dotan, “I was hiding in the deep mountains. I happened to visit an old monastery in a dark alley. After an informal evening lecture, the abbot of the monastery handed me a scroll of calligraphy. And when I looked at it, I saw it was Kyogo’s essence of Indra’s net. When I had the opportunity, I read it a hundred times, and got a glimpse of illumination.” So you could see the time that this happened, the Dharma was going down, not just for a while but for a couple of hundred years, and there was the urgency of someone to step forward. He had heard of Kyogen, so when he saw that, he experienced the essence of Indra’s net. And when he had the opportunity, he read it a hundred times. What makes someone read something one hundred times? Do we still do it? Or do we do it a little bit, and we can’t follow it anymore? We get distracted. What inspires a person to do this? Because he read it one hundred times, he gained a glimpse of illumination.

And finally, “I copied the essence of the essay on teaching and conferring the precepts, and added some notes and tried to clarify keeping and breaking the precepts.” Most of us are raised in duality. This and that, subject and object. There’s a theory called dependent origination about how our suffering begins and continues. And it’s not just a theory, but a reality. So he copied it, and added some notes and tried to clarify keeping and breaking the precepts. Now we have to listen carefully about this. The precepts are hardly about ‘do this’ and ‘don’t do that’. Keep this, don’t break this. Long and short, dark and light, keeping and breaking are all duality. And as long as we

maintain the duality, we live in the world of suffering. We have to break out of duality.

“The intention of the ancestors, and the intention of the sutras and teachings, is like talking about the moon and pointing to the moon. When,” this word “when” is like, WHEN. It’s like the vertical and horizontal. It’s “when eating sesame or rice cakes you need to use a spoon. In just this way, exactly this way, the text can be used like a golden scalpel to remove the film from our eyes.”

You know the short Zen poem about the young student beginning to study Zen. “Before I studied Zen, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers. And then when I began studying and practicing Zen, mountains no longer became mountains, and rivers no longer became rivers. And after a long time of studying and practicing Zen, mountains were once again mountains, and rivers were once again rivers.” So there’s a big difference from the first, middle, and ending. And so, I was wondering – I’ve never met a Kego priest or teacher, but what did they do exactly with Indra’s net? How do they go about using it? I guess in their meditation practice they create this net and this kind of reflection. And the purpose of that whole thing is to end delusion. To go back to the source. How many reflections are there? I heard people talk about going around the world on a sailboat. They said it was not that difficult, they keep near the land. But in the evening, the entire universe or cosmos was reflected in the ocean. What does that do to a person? Each wave is Indra’s net. And they are not just reflecting down there. Down here is reflecting up there, and up there is reflecting. It’s infinite. Beyond infinite. And it all comes from one source. This is what we call it, “One source.”





One of the highlights each year here on the mountain at SMZC is the annual Jukai Ceremony when Roshi invites some of his newer students to receive the Precepts.

Traditionally, those accepting have spent several months carefully sewing their rakusu, or bib-like garment, stitch by stitch, under the watchful, and compassionate, eyes of Shinko and Julie Kashin Kwong - all the while reciting with each stitch, "I take refuge in the Buddha."

Before presenting them with their rakusus at the ceremony, Roshi has mindfully added a beautiful individual calligraphy to the back of each rakusu inscribed with their Buddhist name and the date and place of their "lay ordination" along with an appropriate Zen saying. Each person, similarly, receives an individualized set of hand-printed lineage papers tracing their lineage from Buddha, down through the Patriarchs, Suzuki-roshi and Kwong-roshi to themselves.

Behind that, of course, lies several years of demonstrated commitment to the Buddha Way, and the community, as well as careful study of the Precepts - and lots and lots of sitting!

Although often superficially described as the "Ten Commandments" of Buddhism, one has learned that there are a lot more than ten of them! And, they are not simply a list of negatively stated prohibitions. They go a lot deeper and are far more profound than that. They are our guidelines for living the enlightened life. Indeed, they are the enlightened life itself. Manifestations of the Way. "Not to kill" is not merely a prohibition against killing other human beings. Or even, a prohibition against killing other sentient beings. It may - if we open ourselves up widely enough and are aware enough - be an invitation, a commitment, to live our lives in a manner that causes no harm. No harm to ourselves. No harm to other beings. No harm to the environment. To receive the Precepts is to commit to explore each of them as deeply and fully as we possibly can throughout our life time. It is to respect and appreciate their limitless nature.

Receiving the Precepts in that spirit on November 29, 2014, were ANGUS CHOAN ATWELL (Infinite Peace), MICHAEL GENREI PERSINGER (Original Spirit), TOM JAKURYU HOFFMAN (Serene Dragon), JESSE SHOGEN BRUNETTE (Illuminating Source), BRIAN SEIDO WATSON (Pure Way), KURT SHOKI MORELLA (Beginner's Spirit) and AZEB GENJU CLARK (Evening Pearl).

Our best to them all as they continue The Way. ❖

see more photos on pages 13 & 20

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to our newest members TERRY CRAMOLINI and JASON NICHOLS!

TERRY CRAMOLINI attended the Art Center College of Design and is a professional artist who does commissioned art and has her own small art gallery in nearby Santa Rosa. Besides painting, she enjoys reading, hiking, cooking and eating good food. She took refuge in the Buddha at Manjushuri Temple in England in 2001. She heard of us from a Framer at Riley Street Art Supply, visited us, liked what she found and decided to join us because SMZC "speaks to my heart so deeply without words." She sits twice a day every day and is looking forward to attending our One-day Sittings and participating in our Spring and Fall Study Groups.

JASON NICHOLS obtained his B.A. Degree from the College of William & Mary in Virginia and a M.B.A. from New York University. He currently works as a farmhand for WHOA Farm (Work Horse Organic Agriculture). He is into Horsemanship and lists as his "child" a three-year old Mustang. He also enjoys string instruments, drawing and painting. He has practiced at San Francisco Zen Center, been a volunteer baker at Green Gulch Farm, and recently attended our Rohatsu Sesshin after finding us on the internet. "SMZC people are great: earnest, mindful, friendly, unpretentious." He wants to sit with, and be a part of, the community.

Great to have you both with us! ❖

MIKE HARDIN



It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of our longtime Dharma brother MIKE HARDIN who passed away January 13 after a series of long debilitating illnesses. Throughout those difficult years, Mike was fond of quoting Roshi that, "Pain is unavoidable but suffering is optional" and vowed at the outset never to complain.

In November, he was reunited with an old artist friend, Richard, and Richard's wife Pam, who he had not seen in years. Noticing that he looked very frail, they took it upon themselves to move him, from what he called his little "Monk's Hut," into a nice new apartment at the Finnish American Home Association in Sonoma. They bought furniture for him, beautifully displayed his paintings, and were with him every day. Also among his frequent visitors were Roshi, Shinko, Nyoze and Julie Kwong, Joseph and Marian O'Neill and Mark Petersen.

During his last month, Mike was in good spirits and held an open house at his apartment on Christmas Day to celebrate the holidays with many of his friends and, as always, paint. He was particularly noted for his cityscapes of San Francisco street scenes.

Over the years, Mike generously and graciously gave of his time and energy to Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, holding art shows for the benefit of the Sangha and - to the very end - working tirelessly to catalog and preserve many of the valuable works of art that SMZC has accumulated.

As Shinko noted, his body was frail but his spirit was an inspiration to us all. We wish him a wondrous journey to the other shore: Gate, Gate, Para Gate, Para Sam Gate, Bodhi Svaha!!!

In death, as in life, he brought home to us the age old Zen saying "Do not waste your time by night or day." He practiced assiduously for the benefit of all beings. May we do the same.

He is survived by his indomitable Zen Spirit, his art and his cat companion, Leonardo.

A Memorial Service will be held at SMZC on February 7 at 2 p.m. ❖



CELEBRATING MIKE'S LIFE

Saturday, February 7th at 2:00pm a service inviting Mike Hardin's closest friends "Celebrating Mike's Life" will be held at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. In addition, in tribute to Mike some of his friend's have scheduled a one day show of his amazing body of work at the Sonoma Community Center on Sunday, February 1st from 11:00am until 2:30pm.

Mike had no immediate family. He was surrounded by loving friends from Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, as well as the community of artists in Sonoma. He was held in deep regard by all who knew him. In accord with his wishes some of his paintings have been bequeathed to his closest friends and caregivers. However, many of his paintings that, as yet, have no home. He wanted the paintings to be given to his friends and admirers. If you are one of them, come early to the show and claim a painting. There are more than 30 paintings that will be given away. He will not be forgotten -- his art and spirit lives on!

The claimed paintings may be removed after 2:00pm. The Sonoma Community Center is located at 276 E. Napa St. in Sonoma. Gallery 212 is upstairs. ❖

RESIDENT UPDATE

by Susan Frey

Perhaps the most inspiring activity this quarter for the residents was simply witnessing Nyoze's week-long single-minded practice leading up to the first part of his Dharma transmission ceremony in early October. For eight days, every morning after we had finished our morning zazen, he began sutra chanting accompanying himself with bells and drum in the zendo, and making slow prostrations to every ancestor the lineage while chanting the lineage names (see Interview on page 16). He just came in and out of our presence with no disruption, as if no one had entered the room. During those same days, we residents cleaned and prepared the studio, pathways and zendo, special altars and "curtained room" for the final midnight ceremony. Everyone did their part seamlessly. Ellen Huffman expertly sewed the red curtain that was used to create a separate room in the zendo with fabric that Julie Kashin had selected, and which hung flawlessly. Snorri Baldursson, visiting from the Icelandic Sangha, helped with hanging the curtain and preparing paths. The final midnight ceremony was between Roshi and Nyoze, with Koten and Julie Kashin attending as Jishas. Roshi encouraged all of us to have especially strong practice all week in support. Everything was done traditionally and respectfully.

Rohatsu sesshin was especially well attended this year and we were able to have our meals in the zendo. It rained most of the days. Things proceeded without sensation. People worked together without distinction. During the all night sitting, the sound of rain and wind was much like being in a ship in a storm. The weather cooperated by clearing up just in time for our early morning silent procession to Suzuki-roshi's stupa.

Comings and goings: Snorri Baldursson visited for about a month from Reykjavik, Iceland, where he is a member of the Wisteria Wind Icelandic Sangha and one of four managers of Vatnajökull National Park (which makes up 14% of the land mass of Iceland). While here he rang the bonsho each morning and did gardening, cleaning, cooking (good cook!) and maintenance samu tasks. He will remember Genjo-ji temple most for its quiet beauty and feeling of practice, and we will also remember him for his quiet practice spirit.

A recent guest, Angela Shanley, came to practice with us for Rohatsu sesshin from London, England on her way to visit family in her native New Zealand. She practices with the Sanbo Zen sangha in London and was interested in seeing how our forms and practices compared to theirs.



Su-Yeon, from Seoul, Korea is currently practicing with us in our daily schedule for a week as part of her trip to the US and South America, visiting family. In Korea she practices koans with a Zen teacher and has also practiced with monks in a Zen monastery. She is interested in studying meditation and Zen practice to apply to her work in psychotherapy.

And finally, and a little sadly, Malgosia Szieradska, our Shika for the past 6 months, has returned to Warsaw, Poland where she will be living in the Warsaw sanghas's new zendo. She will sit every morning and is hoping that soon other sangha members will join her for daily practice. While she was a Genjo-ji resident, in addition to all the normal duties, she was a leader in ticket sales for our September Bazaar. Her reliability, organizational skills and active, harmonious presence are already sorely missed. Her strong commitment will certainly continue to inspire and strengthen others both inside and outside the Wisteria Wind sangha.

Here on the mountain it has finally become winter, with the mornings edging down into the low 40's. The big storm that was recently predicted to have near record-breaking winds turned out to be just normal for us, but we did get quite a bit of badly needed rain. We are grateful that we didn't have any damage from wind, falling trees or flooding.

As I write this it occurs to me that while all of the special events, ceremonies and opportunities to meet people here are quite inspiring, the most valuable thing about being a resident is just our everyday, ordinary life—that which is not thought about—because it is LIFE. ❖

ICELAND'S NIGHT PASTURE

by Helga Kimyo and Mikhael Zentetsu



You may not know that since 1986, Kwong-roshi has been the teacher and spiritual director of Natthagi – Night Pasture, the Icelandic sangha within Wisteria Wind. Roshi has been coming to Iceland every year since that time and sometimes twice a year to conduct sesshin, guide his Icelandic students and foster the growth of the Sangha. With the help of his effort and hard work, Night Pasture has flourished and is now a thriving community of practitioners. Recently, the editor of Mountain Wind asked if we could write a short piece to inform the Wisteria Wind sangha about the things we do here in Iceland as a spiritual community.

We are always trying to meet our members where they're at and find ways of inspiring people to practice without diluting the actual practice. For many years we sat together as a sangha three times a week, two weekday evenings and every Saturday morning, but after we acquired our own place we had more legroom and started to offer morning sittings several times a week. A few years ago Roshi strongly encouraged us to sit together as a sangha every morning. This seemed like a lot to begin with but sitting every morning together (except for Sundays which are days off) has worked really well for us and strengthened the sangha a great deal. We can't say that every seat is always taken but we don't bother about that. We just keep going.

Besides offering formal practice 6 mornings and two evenings a week, we have Hoshi and student talks once a month and a study group twice a month, averaging at about 6 study group meetings per semester, in the fall and in the spring. Some years ago we decided that all our study group materials would be presented in Icelandic translation. This was not always the case as we often would read texts in English, but since we made this decision someone has always done the translation for the study group, and for the most part it has been three of our members, Mikhael Zentetsu, Andri Fannar and Gunnlaugur Már. There are very few books about Buddhism in Icelandic (Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind was translated years ago but has been out of print for many years), so we are all very happy and grateful to be able to study the Dharma in Icelandic and we all agree that being able to study and discuss the Dharma in our native language helps us to see the teachings in a way that is close to home. This semester we have been studying the chapter on the Heart Sutra in Living by Vow by Shohaku Okumura-roshi, and previously we have studied Not Always So by Suzuki-roshi, Returning To Silence by Katagiri-roshi, and various teachings from

Maezumi-roshi, Uchiyama-roshi, Dogen Zenji, Dae Soen Sa Nim, Chinul, Trungpa Rinpoche, and many others, but for many years we only studied Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind. Our study group is very popular and it is apparent to us that we all have a need to study the teachings in depth and talk about them together. For the past two years we have also translated excerpts from No Beginning, No End by Kwong-roshi and sent them to all of our members and friends via email.

For many years we have been offering a short Introduction to Zazen once a month to beginners. Many, many people have come to such events throughout the years to find out about what it is that we do here in Natthagi, and once in a while someone decides to stay on. For the past three years we have offered a longer introductory course, once a week for four weeks in the beginning of each semester, in which we combine formal practice and Dharma study. This introductory course is constantly evolving and has been quite popular. We are always trying to find ways to inspire people to practice and it seems to us that the most fruitful way is to offer both practice and study together.

The most important event of the year in our sangha has always been the visit of our teacher Kwong-roshi. Throughout the years (starting all the way back in 1986!) he has given public Dharma talks and interviews in the media, and many Icelanders know of him. For the past three years Roshi's public talk has been in the form of a dialogue between Roshi and various participants, both from our sangha and from the Icelandic cultural scene, namely Friðja Björk Ingvarsdóttir, the dean of the

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DEL RAY ZEN GROUP ROHATSU

by Peter Shodo Pocock

"Iceland's Night Pasture"
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Icelandic Arts Academy and a teacher of literature, and novelist and writer Oddný Eir Ævarsdóttir. Last year, Nyoze Kwong came to Iceland during Kwong Roshi's visit and participated in the dialogue as well as in sesshin, which was a great pleasure for us. During Roshi's stay, usually in the month of May, we conduct a four or five-day sesshin in the countryside, practicing together under Roshi's supervision and guidance, and during the retreat Roshi gives dokusan interviews and Dharma talks.

Roshi's visits are always the high point of our year. His visits have made it possible for us to continue Zen practice here in Iceland in the spirit of our teacher and lineage.

We also conduct a sesshin retreat in the fall, and for the past two years we have held a so-called "urban sesshin," in which the participants practice together in the morning, then go off to work, only to return at 5pm for zazen and oryoki practice until 9pm. After two or three weekdays in that rhythm we sit together for a full day on a Saturday. This arrangement has worked well for our members who feel that it gives them an opportunity to combine the spirit of formal practice with their work and family life.

We are currently in the process of updating our website, which is hosted at www.zen.is and we regularly post on our Facebook page "Zen á Íslandi – Nátthagi."

We would like to extend our welcome to the entire Wisteria Wind Sangha to come and practice with us in Iceland!" ❖



As we settled onto our zafus for the final hour-long meditation of the night, our makeshift zendo was no longer just a dining room with cushions on the floor. Our practice, inspired by the traditions of our ancient lineage, had transformed the room into a spacious hall.

We were concluding the Del Ray Zen group's first Rohatsu Zazenkai. Seven members gathered in the evening of December 6 for a six-hour intensive that included eight periods of zazen interspersed with kinhin, brief rest times, and a simple one-bowl supper. After the initial introduction, we maintained silence throughout.

As with the dining room zendo, we have to make do with the possibilities offered by a small house. The kinhin path snakes through three rooms; for supper we served ourselves from a rice cooker and crock-pot in the kitchen, then settled on cushions around a coffee table in the living room.

An abbreviated meal chant helped root the supper in tradition, which we try to maintain as much as possible throughout our practice. Meditation periods begin and end with the ringing of the kessu; the sound of wood clappers regulates kinhin; candles and incense burn on the altar, the one installation that remains in even when the dining room isn't serving as the zendo.

The Rohatsu Zazenkai took place just days before we marked the third anniversary of the Del Ray Zen group. Over the three years of our existence, more than 30 people have sat with us at least once. About a dozen have remained active; half of those have been with us since the beginning.

The group's main activity has been zazen, conducted every Wednesday evening and Thursday morning. To help members get to know each other, we've had occasional Sunday afternoon meetings for tea and conversation. In the past year, that has expanded to group discussions of agreed readings, ranging from a chapter by Robert Aitken to a presentation of the Oxherding Pictures. In the new year we hope to begin a monthly reading/discussion of Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*.

After three years, our shared practice is building new traditions on the old. All who took part in the Rohatsu Zazenkai agreed we should do it every year and some members who missed the event voiced the hope that we could offer other intensives throughout the year. Buddha's birthday, perhaps? Stay tuned. ❖

THE FORM AND FREEDOM OF TEA

by Shannon Gray DeJong

I had been longing – and resistant – to return to Sonoma Mountain Zen Center; it had been about a year. While I know I carry my Home with me – that infinite chamber with no walls – a visit to SMZC is an opportunity to touch upon this no-place deeply. So when my partner Justin showed interest in the tea ceremony workshop, I knew it would be a perfect segue back. Home, is practice.

Approach the chashisu. Slide the door open with your left hand to 70%. Stop. Slide the remaining 30% with your right hand. Bow. Cross the tatami mat at the fold – do not step on the fold. Six steps per mat. Kneel. Look at the scroll. Look at the flowers. Look at the scroll. Don't forget to bow.

I have always loved tea. It roots me to the day. I become present with the earth or grass or musk or berry of the hot nectar in hand. I'm a playwright and performer, and while my sitting practice is at times rocky, I without fail or fuss slide easily into the routine of coaxing open fertile leaves to keep companion during writing practice. Home, is tea.

Ready to greet the furokama? The kettle is waiting. Turn, but never with your back to the host. Left foot, right foot, left. Did you remember to bow?

Justin and I arrived Friday for the first class: the history of tea and Zen. Saturday morning we attended zazen, oryoki and the second tea class: learning basic steps of the ceremony. By the third class – serving tea – I was revisiting the affection and struggle I have for a Zen aesthetic. Last time I was at SMZC I had come for an evening sit and made some minor mistake of which only I probably noticed. And while I can't even remember the specifics now – my body remembers: the terror of Doing it Wrong.



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More guests enter. Bow. The cookie jar arrives. Bow. "Osakini." "Douzo." Bow. Sugar cake breaks softly on your tongue.

Is that what had kept me away this entire year? Kept me away from sangha, Buddha, dharma? I could blame it on work, or weather, or living too far away. But resistance is deeper, and visceral. So why am I drawn to Zen in the first place? To the meticulous order and nuanced gesture that seems impossible to perfect?

Perhaps your mind has wandered. Let the whip of the persimmon-colored cloth wake you. The host prepares the tea. Return to the sweet snap of tatami against your nostrils, smell the wet warmth of mulching leaves in the thin Sonoma Mountain sun.

As an actress, I know the importance of a script. On stage, when the stakes are high, there is freedom in surrendering to the text. No matter nerves – all that matters is that there is a structure, a spine upon which to rest. Formality may pinch, but it also makes free. Without the container there would be no tea.

Enjoy one last sip –

We returned home Sunday evening. While unpacking I noticed I had inadvertently kidnapped one of the Zen Center's flashlights. Justin shrugged. "Looks like we'll have to return sooner than later," he said. I smiled. "Thank goodness." Home, is Freedom.

Time to exit the teahouse: bow. Stand. Right, left, right. Pivot, kneel, fall – laugh, laugh – or cry, no matter, but shed no time for embarrassment. If you for one microsecond come out of Right Here, you'll be 20 steps behind and missing. Bow. What exquisite imperfection. ❖





Jan. 3 Sat. NEW YEAR'S ONE-DAY SITTING

4:45 a.m. to 5 p.m.

An opportunity for beginners as well as experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. 8 periods of meditation, formal meals, chanting and work. Includes Friday 6 p.m. dinner and overnight stay.

Non-Members: \$65 per day/overnight General M: \$55 Practicing M: \$45

Jan. 5 Mon. CLOSED

Jan. 10 Sat. SATURDAY COMMUNITY DHARMA TALK Jakusho Kwong-roshi

11 a.m. Zendo

Jan. 11-16 HOST HOLLOW BONES RETREAT
closed to the public
REOPEN Jan. 17 Sat.

Jan. 17 Sat. SATURDAY COMMUNITY DHARMA TALK Shinko Kwong

11 a.m. Zendo

Jan. 24 Sat. SATURDAY COMMUNITY DHARMA TALK Demian Nyoze

11 a.m. Zendo

Jan. 30 Fri. SPECIAL GUEST DHARMA TALK Shohaku Okumura-roshi

7:30 p.m. Zendo.

Shohaku Okumura is the founder and Guiding Teacher of Sanshin Zen Community in Bloomington, Indiana. After Okumura-roshi studied under Kosho Uchiyama, he traveled to the U.S. where he co-founded Minnesota Zen Center. He is the author of several books including *Living by Vow* and *Realizing Genjo Koan*.

Jan. 31 Sat. SPECIAL GUEST DHARMA TALK Shohaku Okumura-roshi

11 a.m. Zendo

Shohaku Okumura is the founder and Guiding Teacher of Sanshin Zen Community in Bloomington, Indiana. After Okumura-roshi studying under Kosho Uchiyama, he traveled to the U.S. where he co-founded Minnesota Zen Center. He is the author of several books including *Living by Vow* and *Realizing Genjo Koan*.

Feb. 2 - Feb. 28 WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD

Winter Ango begins Mon., Feb. 2nd at 7:30 pm, and ends Saturday, Feb. 28 at 12 pm, followed by a Celebration Dinner at 6:30 pm. This 27-day practice period includes six daily sittings, oryoki meals, study, chanting, and work practice to enhance mindfulness. Members and visitors are welcome to join us for zazen meditation anytime Monday through Sunday. Please pick up the February schedule for the meditation period times. This is a wonderful time for the entire Sangha to participate in this practice - whether in the Zendo, at work, or as a householder. Direct your focus to extend your meditation into all your activities and be wholeheartedly present moment after moment. Be sure to come Monday, February 2nd at 7:30 p.m. for the opening ceremony, as the Shuso Mike Jundo Farrand "Purehearted Way" will present the theme for Ango. Non-Members: \$65 per day/overnight General M: \$55 Practicing M: \$45

Feb. 7 Sat. SHUSO TALK Mike Jundo Farrand "Purehearted Way"

11 a.m. Zendo

Feb. 14 Sat. SHUSO TALK Mike Jundo Farrand "Purehearted Way"

11 a.m. Zendo

Feb. 15-22 ACTUALIZING THE WAY 7-DAY SESSHIN

Sesshin, literally "to touch the Mind" is a period of time set aside for an intensive meditation retreat to let go of the conditioned self in order to resume our original nature. Begins Sunday at 7:30 p.m. and ends the following Sunday at 5 pm. 10 periods of zazen daily, 2 hours work practice, 3 oryoki meals, dharma talks, interviews with Kwong-roshi.

Non-Members: \$65 per day/overnight General M: \$55 Practicing M: \$45

Feb. 28 Sat. ANGO CLOSING CEREMONY - "REVEALING THE SELF"

10:30 a.m. zazen; 11 a.m. Ceremony.

All members should come for the closing of our Practice Period. Participants will ask the Shuso dharma questions to reveal the truth of practice. Please join us for the Shuso celebration dinner following the ceremony at 6:00 pm. CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.

Mar. 1-3 CLOSED

Mar. 5-8 HOSTING HOLLOW BONES RETREAT
closed to the public
REOPEN MAR. 10 Tue.

Mar. 10-Apr 28 SPRING STUDY GROUP

Every Tuesday, 7:30 to 9 p.m.

Investigating and "turning our radiance inward" through Zen practice, we begin to discover the intimate nature of Mind. Shinko Kwong with senior students will be lecturing and leading discussions on a book to be announced. This will be a six-week course.

Non-Members: \$65/\$12 per class General M: \$60 Practicing M: \$55

Mar. 14 Sat. "ACTUALIZING THIS MOMENT" ONE DAY SITTING 4:45 a.m. to 5 p.m.

An opportunity for beginners as well as experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. 8 periods of meditation, formal meals, chanting and work practice. Includes Friday 6 p.m. dinner and overnight stay.

Non-Members: \$65 General M: \$55 Practicing M: \$45

Mar. 16 Mon. CLOSED

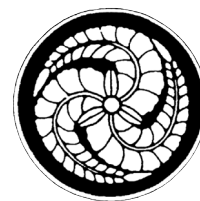
Mar. 21 Sat. GUEST SPEAKER Susan Moon

11 a.m. Zendo.

Join us for a special presentation by Buddhist writer and teacher, Susan Moon. Susan is the author of *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from 25 Centuries of Awakened Women*, as well as the editor of *Not Turning Away: The Practice of Engaged Buddhism*. Moon was also the editor of "Turning Wheel," a journal on socially engaged Buddhism. Susan has been a Zen student since 1976, practicing in the lineage of Suzuki-roshi at Berkeley Zen Center, Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery, Green Gulch Farm, and now with Zoketsu Norman Fischer's Everyday Zen sangha. She received "entrustment" as a lay teacher in 2005.

Best to check website or call in case of changes:

707.545.8105 • www.smzc.net



JOIN US FOR DAILY PRACTICE

Mar. 21 Sat. INTRODUCTION TO ZEN WORKSHOP

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

An introduction to Zen teachings, Zendo form, rituals, instruction on zazen, and also main concepts as basic foundation for Zen practice. For beginners and intermediate people who would like to gain more in into the philosophy of Zen and how to actualize those principles in everyday life. Includes vegetarian lunch. \$55. Instructor: TBA

Mar. 28 Sat. SPRING WORKFEST

8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

All Sangha members, families, and friends are invited to come for a day of fun and work in the spirit of traditional “barn-raising” effort and together action. Snacks and delicious lunch provided.

Mar. 30 Mon. CLOSED

Apr. 3-4 UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO STUDENTS VISIT SMZC

Professor John Nelson brings his class to experience a day of Zen practice.

Apr. 4 Sat. SATURDAY COMMUNITY DHARMA TALK

Eric Konpo

11 am Zendo

Apr. 8 - 11 BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY SESSHIN

A silent retreat to commemorate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. Sesshin, literally “to touch the Mind” is a period of time set aside for an intensive meditation retreat to let go of the conditioned self in order to resume our original nature. Begins Wednesday, 7:30p.m., and ends Saturday, 3:30p.m. 10 periods of zazen daily, 2 hours work practice, 3 oryoki meals, dharma talks, and interviews with Kwong-roshi.

Non-Members: \$65 per day/overnight General M: \$55 Practicing M: \$45

Apr. 12 Sun. BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

1-4p.m. All Sangha, friends, and family are invited to come and join us. Ceremony: 1 – 1:45p.m. Outdoor reception: 2 - 4 p.m. Bring prepared food ready to serve and flowers for offering.

Apr. 13-14 CLOSED

Apr. 17-19 HOSTING DRALA – *closed to the public* – REOPEN Apr. 22

Apr. 25 Sat. SATURDAY KIDS COMMUNITY

10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

This program is an opportunity for Sangha members and friends to introduce their children to the Zen Center in a fun and creative way. Supervised, age-appropriate activities introduce children to the Zen Center as a fun, safe, nurturing environment. Children can join their parents for an informal vegetarian lunch following activities. Parents are welcome to join in the fun along with their children or participate in Saturday community practice.

Apr. 25 Sat. SANGHA POTLUCK

10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Members as well as the public are invited to come to the Zen Center for a day of sharing Dharma and food together as a Sangha. Please bring your favorite dish to share. There will be a short period of zazen followed by an opportunity for new members, and anyone wishing to renew their vows, to offer incense in the Zendo. Kashin will do a short presentation slideshow of the history and background of tea at the Sangha Potluck and introduce the tea workshop.

Apr. 25 Sat. WABICHA: TEA OF QUIET TASTE

Instructors: Soei Mouri Sensei and Julie Kashin

1-4 p.m.

This program provides an opportunity to study tea in the Omote Senke tradition. Join us for Japanese sweets and tea, silent meditation, investigate Zen and the Way of Tea through conversation, relax in the peaceful temple setting of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Kashin will do a short presentation slideshow of the history and background of tea at the Sangha Potluck and introduce the tea workshop. Teachers will lead participants through the basic forms of preparing and serving matcha (whisked green tea) and the various roles of a tea guest. No tea experience necessary.

All participants: \$35

Apr. 25 Sat. SRJC CLASS VISITS SMZC

Led by Chris Katsuzen King 9 a.m.

Monday - Friday

5:15 a.m. meditation

5:50 a.m. walking meditation

6:00 a.m. meditation

6:40 a.m. chanting

7:00 a.m. breakfast

8:45 a.m.-3:30 p.m. work practice

Tuesday* - Friday**

7:30 p.m. meditation

8:10 p.m. walking meditation

8:20 p.m. meditation

9:00 p.m. end of day

* Tuesday evening zazen not scheduled during Tuesday evening study group.

** Friday evenings join us for the **Gate of Sweet Nectar** service to feed all the hungry spirits of the world.

Friday Oryoki Instruction:

6:40 - 7:15 pm with Koten

SATURDAY COMMUNITY

5:15 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

This half-day schedule will give you a taste of everyday Zen in silence, stillness and activity. You may also join us for part of the schedule if you wish.

Your first time at the Zen Center, come at 9 a.m. for meditation instruction and join us till noon. \$10 minimum suggested donation.

5:15 a.m. meditation

5:50 a.m. walking meditation

6:00 a.m. meditation

6:40 a.m. sutra chanting

6:55 a.m. formal oryoki meal

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. work practice

9:00 a.m. meditation instruction

10:30 a.m. meditation

11:00 a.m. Dharma talk

12:15 p.m. buffet lunch

Saturday Zazen Instruction

9 - 10 am, Godo

Meditation instructors:

Jan – Koten Feb – Kaian

Mar – Konpo April – Ray

SHUKKE TOKUDO PRIEST ORDINATION 2014

by Konpo Imboff



For over 2500 years, monk ordination has been a part of Buddhist tradition, starting in India with Shakyamuni Buddha. In Japan, the ceremony is known as Shukke Tokudo. Shukke means to “leave home”, and tokudo refers to attaining a level or degree. The phrase is often translated as “leaving home to attain the Way.” In October, Kwong-roshi ordained three of his longtime students: Julie Kashin Kwong, Chuck Tensan Ramey and me.

Although the ceremony itself was in October, our preparations began earlier that May. Kashin coordinated a sewing retreat that focused on making our okesas, which are the rectangular outer robes that Buddhist monks wear across the left shoulder. These were hand-sewn by members of the sangha over a period of one week in the traditional way. During this time, our sewing teachers also gave us teachings on the meaning and importance of the okesa. What I remember most from this time was the very profound

feeling of community as we all worked so diligently together. Seeing these garments being created from such devotion and care, I realized it is actually the sangha as a whole who wears the robe, not just the individual monks.

The night before the ceremony, the ordainees met with Nyoze on the zendo deck, where we shaved each other’s heads, leaving only a small patch at the crown to be cut off by Roshi the next day. It was dark, with just enough light to see. The mood was soft, warm and deep, and gently joyful. Few times in life will one experience intimacy like this with another person, and as I shaved Kashin’s head, I knew I had a genuine Dharma sister.

The day of the ceremony was so very beautiful. Many sangha members and family made the journey up the mountain and encouraged us with their kind presence. I don’t remember being nervous; perhaps I was, but as we entered the zendo in our kimonos, I do remember feeling

naked and raw, like a newborn. It was comforting to have my sangha with me, and to see Roshi there waiting for us. I knew then that I’d be alright. In the ceremony we received several items: our koromo, which is the long-sleeved robe worn outside the kimono; the bowing mat, or zagu; the okesa; new oryoki bowls; and the kechimi-yaku, which are the hand-written lineage papers tracing all the disciples from Shakyamuni Buddha to Bodhidharma, Eihei Dogen, Suzuki roshi, and finally to us. Each are precious gifts, yet the truest treasure we received that day was ourselves.

I offer my warm congratulations to my fellow ordainees, Kashin and Tensan. I know they will wear the robes with dignity and grace. Many thanks to all of you who have supported the Zen Center with your time, your donations, and your good hearts. And finally, the deepest of thanks to our teacher, Kwong-roshi, for continuously showing us the Way with such kindness, compassion, and wisdom. ❖

see more photos on next page

SHUKKE TOKUDO PRIEST ORDINATION 2014

see article previous page



INTERVIEW WITH DEMIAN NYOZE KWONG

November 3 – 9, 2014 Nyoze received Shiho, also called Denpo (Dharma transmission) from Jakusho Kwong-roshi. Shiho consists of Kegyo - 6 days of supplemental practice leading up to the actual ceremony, and on the 7th day finishing with Denpo when the teacher transmits and the student receives.

This lineage ceremony was developed in China. In the 13th century Eihei Dogen received it from his teacher Tendo Nyojo while practicing at Tiantong Temple and brought it back to Japan, and further refined shiho into this particular form.

The following interview between Neil Myers for *Mountain Wind* and Nyoze Kwong, took place on December 12, 2014.

What was the transmission period like?

The six days leading up to the shiho ceremony Roshi and I spent many hours each day intimately working together in Roshi's studio. I recall a very warm feeling. Oh yeah, the woodstove! An impression that stayed with me is that every morning I would stoke Roshi's wood-burning stove to warm the studio before we began each day—a very grounding and simple task. I would open the studio windows for fresh air, empty the ashes in the stove to revive the remaining embers, stoke the stove, and adjust the stove's air vents to light the dry pieces of fresh wood.

The days were very rich and full. Like sesshin, a very tight schedule. Very little time to rest, eat or let my mind wander. I was aware and focused the minute I woke up to when the lights were out for sleep. Days began with 5:15am zazen and morning sutra service with others. After service at 7:00am, I made rounds to Genjoji's temple buildings while reciting a disaster-preventing dharani. I offered incense and made 3 prostrations in front of nine main altars of the Buddha, the ancestors and bodhisattvas. After the last rounds at the sangha house I returned to the zendo to perform a service by myself honoring all the Buddhas and ancestors. I would chant the

Sandokai, Hokyozanmai and other sutras in Japanese and ended with all the names of Buddhas and ancestors in our Soto lineage. In honor of each ancestor I would do a full prostration as I recited each of their names.

How many prostrations did you do?

Bibashi Butsu Daiocho to Shogaku Shunryu Daiocho and ending with Zensan Jakusho Daiocho the 97th in line. Kwong-roshi is the 91st generation and we are the 92nd from Shakyamuni Buddha. Too many to count. Everyday I did many prostrations. I remember the feeling of touching my head to the ground and raising my palms over my head in front of Roshi many times. The prostrations were good for me. They kept me grounded. There's a feeling of humility, vulnerability and a humbling feeling of throwing everything away. Learning physically through the body is extremely important.

Most of the days were dedicated to writing down the names of our lineage, and the Buddhas in 3 different charts - first, the blood lineage, second, the illustration of the succession of Buddha's wisdom, and third, the succession of Buddha-Dharma with no beginning no end passed from one Buddha to another. Each document was hand brushed on a sheet of pure white silk plum fabric ordered from Soto headquarters in Japan. I don't have much experience with calligraphy but I tried my best. At times I remember my hand would shake when writing down a name. Breathing in and out, I carefully hand copied each name line by line. Brush stroke after brush stroke, one ancestor after the other, something happened—the Buddhas and ancestors gradually came to life.

All this by hand with a calligraphy brush?

Yeah! I don't know how Roshi and I finished all the documents in 7 days. I'm also left handed, but wrote all the calligraphy with my right hand. Day-by-day we continuously worked on each sheet filling them with ancestral names, kanji, symbols and connecting them with red blood-lines. On the first day when we looked at the amount of work that we had to do, we didn't know if we could even finish just one of the charts. However, to our surprise, we completed the kechimyaku (blood lineage) by the 3rd day and finished the next 2 documents by the 6th day. We were so relieved and happy. Everyday I became more settled, more in my body, just feeling the strokes through the brush and ink meeting the paper. Many of the characters and kanji were so small that I used only 2 hairs on an extremely small brush. Sometimes I would check the characters with a magnifying glass. It seemed like such an impossible task!!

In the middle of the week it became just the activity of one brush stroke after the other, dropping off thinking, and going onto the next activity. To receive something a lot bigger than oneself is it. Just like witnessing a beautiful sunset - you become rejuvenated and connected with the entire universe! I was also fortunate to work from Shunryu Suzuki-roshi's original calligraphy of all the ancestor's names that he wrote together with Kwong-roshi in the past.

How'd you learn to do this?

Each day was different. We reviewed Roshi's notes written on old paper of when he received

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shiho from Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi at Rinsoin(Shunryu Suzuki's home temple) in Japan, 1978. Kojun Noiri-roshi was the guiding teacher and lead Suzuki-roshi and Kwong-roshi through the entire transmission process. At that time Noiri-roshi was one of the leading transmission masters in Japan. The transmission ceremony was his specialty. Noiri-roshi was very strict! I mean a good strict! I met him when I was 8 years old. Being in his presence you could not help but be awake and stand up straight! Shunryu Suzuki-roshi wanted Noiri-roshi to transmit the tradition of transmission ceremony to America but it never happened. Also, we were fortunate to receive a manual from the Soto Zen European Office in Paris by Genshu Imamura-roshi, Bishop of Europe's Soto Zen and leading teacher at Soiji Soin. In 2009 I had the opportunity to meet Imamura-roshi at Zenshoji's mountain seat ceremony in Hiroshima Japan.

It's hard for me to believe that Roshi and I did all this work in 7 days! Quite amazing!

But you did! Can you say a little about the shiho ceremony?

Yes, we did it, but with a lot of support. Months before, SMZC students helped prepare and deep clean Roshi's studio to lay the ground for the supplemental part of shiho to happen. Many hours of work and support from other people went into the ceremony that was unseen. I felt a lot of support from each and everyone!

Shiho is the acknowledgement that transmission was taking place long before. Shiho may not have to do with the documents received, certification from Sotoshu or any deep Zen experience, but in fact, the thousands of hours of day to day practice spent with your teacher – is in fact transmission itself! It is the thousands of hours of zazen sweating and freezing together during the hot summer and cold winter months. It is walking together sharing moments looking at the sun, moon or stars. It is sharing the thousands of oryoki meals together. It is tirelessly working together preparing for an event, washing dishes side by side, stacking

wood and building a fire to warm his room. It is intimately knowing through one's body the blood, sweat, and tears of your teacher. I have served him meals, I know how he likes his coffee, how hot he likes his tea and what kind of sweets he likes. I have cooked for him. All activities that you have intimately experienced with your teacher is the entire process of transmission. It is a very ordinary and subtle teaching. And most of the time, we are not there to receive it.

On the 7th day, from 12:00am to 4:00am in the morning, the ceremony was in the zendo. The zendo was dimly lit with burning candles on the altars. The dark of the night brought on a coldness which triggered memories of my training at Eihei-ji; a lot of running around, waiting, the sound of rustling robes and moving ceremonial objects around to their correct places. In the middle of the night everything was very still and quiet. Owls made their

continues next page

hooting calls from the redwoods above. Kashin and Koten were quietly present, making sure things ran smoothly and assisted in a few parts of the ceremony. The ceremony took place inside a red room set-up in the zendo. We were lucky to have help from Ellen LaBruce, Tom Huffman's wife, who sewed the bright red transmission curtain. It was very different from ordination, which is a public ceremony. Shiho is mind-to-mind only between teacher and student. Roshi recited numerous lines of text and instructions and I replied with prostrations in between. Many times we circumambulated the room together, while reciting mantras. Then Roshi and I would make full prostrations facing each other. At one point, Roshi gifted me with the lineage documents, then traced the line of succession from the Buddha to the present generation with a burning twig, a "fire-torch" he had kept from his own transmission under Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi at Rinsoin in 1978. Closing the ceremony, Roshi handed me each ceremonial item where I made many prostrations – first item, 9 prostrations, second item, 8 prostrations, then third item, 7 prostrations.

All this sounds hard to describe but deeply significant. Would you call it a kind of "enactment"?

Ceremonies are very important. Ceremonies create a container in which something bigger than oneself emerges. Yes, you can call it a kind of enactment. Just like sitting zazen. You take the posture of Buddha and something happens. Actually that something is nothing. The very posture of zazen is Buddha, and zazen is the direct mind to mind transmission from Shakyamuni Buddha to you.

The days spent with Roshi in his studio were extremely concentrated and focused, very much like a sesshin. The act of just writing the lineage name after name the ancestors began

to come to life. Through the writing there is a physical connection and body memory. This is invoking the Buddhas and ancestors. A relationship and connection not just through the thinking mind but physically felt through the body.

All this was very moving for me. I think it is having a much greater impact on me than I am aware of. At one point, as we cleaned out Roshi's studio, I found myself looking through photos taken in 1978. I was only eight years old when I went with Roshi for his transmission in Japan. Many deep memories of Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi, Rinsoin, and Eiheiji Monastery stayed with me, until I returned to Rinsoin with Ejo and Julie in 2009. And again in 2011, when Suzuki-roshi invited me back to Rinsoin, specifically to train at Eiheiji. I did not know it; but many of these events, ever since I was a child, had already set in motion for this transmission to occur. That's why though it seemed impossible, it was deeply familiar. As my life's journey unfolds I realize how interconnected and auspicious these events were. And in particular how vital the ancestors' blood lineage is! A truly living lineage!

Can you say more about your personal experience of all this?

At the beginning I was excited, but also nervous. As I mentioned before, as I surrendered to what needed to be done – zazen, morning service, stoking the fire, doing calligraphy, one thing after the other, I became more grounded. All this was extremely personal. When I say personal, I really mean "intimate". It wasn't just about finishing the calligraphy, but it's the entire experience that makes it very intimate and close to the heart. Once you receive the entire experience then it unfolds very naturally. It was physically demanding. Near the latter part of the week, I became quite exhausted. And that's when something much deeper begins to happen. You are more in your body. You let go and you become more open to it – much

like sesshin. A bigger and warmer world appears.

So the schedule was critical. You were aware of the time!

It is said that the first teacher is to surrender to the schedule. The schedule was extremely important! It was a guide that kept pushing us along. First, we were thinking we could add more days so we won't be under so much pressure, but the schedule made us do what was needed within the 7 days. We got a lot done!

This is far out, but it also sounds a bit like a bonding trip, between father and son — you're in a boat, you've got three days....

And nowhere to go! At the beginning my mind went in many directions. I remember saying to myself, "How can I do all this calligraphy in such a short time? I'm not a calligrapher?" I noticed myself being a little agitated with Roshi and gave him short responses, "I'm trying to concentrate." I felt overwhelmed, under pressure and nervous at the beginning. On the other hand, the entire experience was extremely rich.

A very good, warm and positive feeling. Just being with your teacher, side by side in one room for 7 days is a rare and precious experience. I don't think I've ever spent that much time with him one-on-one. It was very intimate, and yet very ordinary and everyday. I built him a fire, got him water as Roshi hand wrote calligraphy in designated sections of the charts. When I was busy working on one chart he would trace the lineage lines, then brush them in red. It's subtle and mysterious. In the Sandokai (intimacy of the relative and absolute) there's the line, "The mind of the Great Sage of India was intimately conveyed from...the subtle source is clear and bright." It's always so close and near to us that we can't see it. We constantly search always looking somewhere else. It's here!

continues next page

How do you see this in connection with the future of the zen center?

On a relative level it means that the 92nd generation is next in line to carry on our Soto lineage. When my small mind begins to think of all the things that comes with being a teacher...a big task... to carry on this lineage... I become quite overwhelmed. However, in Zen the “Now” includes the past, present and the future. The importance of shiho is to invoke all the Buddhas’ and ancestors’ support by deeply saying, “Yes I will.” The night of the ceremony, enshrouded by the red curtain, Roshi read many lines of text, then he said, “Will you keep it?”, and I replied, “Yes I will keep it.” We repeated this question and answer over and over again, many times. It’s a matter of saying, “Yes!” and being fully present in the activity. When I could feel my body and mind fully present - copying the ancestors’ names, doing prostrations, saying “yes” to Roshi’s questions, I felt very grounded, and that everything was okay. It is a moment by moment unfolding. This is how we can commit to do our very best to walk in the same direction and in the Way of the ancestors and Buddhas before us. It is all related in an amazing way, if we are relaxed and can receive it.

One apparently authoritative comment on this ceremony that I read states that you’re being presented with the dharma by your teacher, but you’re not being asked to rigidly reproduce it. In a sense, you’re being given permission to develop a dharma as you come to see it.

Yes. When you look at the term “blood-lineage”, you might think of genetics and family, and that’s a very small and limited view. The spiritual blood-lineage goes beyond DNA and family karma. It’s quite big. When we look at the lineage chart we see that the life of the Buddha and ancestors and our lives are exactly identical. The thought that we can reproduce dharma in our

personal way is a mistake. It’s a matter of actively working with dharma or our very life that will manifest it into the context in which it needs to be. Dharma is completely pure and cannot be developed, changed or tainted - it just is! We can dress it different ways, but in essence it always remains the same.

When you wholeheartedly live daily life with a deep direction - drive your kid to school, cook dinner, have a cup of coffee, that’s much more concrete and tangible, than determining if the correct dharma will come out of this or that. The true dharma will unfold as you do it. That’s a matter of deep trust, in the tradition of just being okay with your feet firmly on the ground. Transmission is a matter of the heart, a warm hand-to-hand intimate feeling. Standing with dignity and confidence and vowing that I will maintain and do this.

Last question. You’re doing this in an American context. You talked in Japan, at Eiheiiji Monastery about American Zen. I wonder how you see that now, in the light of what we’ve been discussing here.

These days many people are calling themselves teachers and their practice does not come from any specific lineage. I think lineage and tradition is extremely important. It is with the

help, background and tradition of all the Buddhas and ancestors that we are able to continue this wonderful practice. At the top of the lineage chart is an empty circle representing the great Dharmakaya – emptiness, the “jeweled mirror of Samadhi”, realization or enlightenment. Out of this empty Dharmakaya circle comes Shakyamuni Buddha and from the Buddha comes Mahakashyapa. Then Ananda from generation to generation in an unbroken line to the student’s teacher...then to the student...then the blood line returns back to the circle of Dharmakaya and it disappears into emptiness. The chart is a giant circle that is continuous that has “no beginning, no end.” When you place your name in this blood lineage circle, under your teacher, receiving the precepts you are making a vow of how you want to live and practice your life. Banjin Dotan writes, “to perform Shiho is to overcome past, present and future. It is the realized evidence that the spirit of precepts is eternally inherited, conferred from Shakyamuni to Mahakashyapa and then to Ananda, transmitted directly from master to disciple.”

I think this is all a lifelong journey and it’s going to take a long long time before I fully understand it. This is only the beginning. ❖



CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP DUES POLICY

by Neil Myers

Members of the Accessible Mountain Council have been meeting with the Kanin for the past year to discuss changes in SMZC Membership procedures. Here are a few results of their discussions:

Income for SMZC comes largely from donations, intermittent group hosting, Zen programs and membership dues. The past few years, however, have shown substantial yearly cost increases for items such as utilities, food, and especially insurance. SMZC membership dues in particular have always been low in comparison with similar communities. Now, it seems time to raise them minimally, by \$5 per month, or \$60 per year.

Other recommendations include a new fourth category, "Sustaining," for those who would like to increase their financial support of Zen Center; and a provision for a "Family Membership", in each category. Family Membership will include 2 adults and 2 children. Changing the membership category names is also in the works.

Accordingly, as of March 1, 2015, new dues will be:

- Sustaining:

\$70 mo individual	\$840 yearly
\$108 mo family	\$1296 yearly
- Practicing:

\$40 mo individual	\$480 yearly
\$60 mo family	\$720 year
- General:

\$25 mo individual	\$300 yearly
\$40 mo family	\$480 yearly
- Supporting:

\$15 mo individual	\$180 yearly
\$25 mo family,	\$300 yearly

Equally as important as increasing the monthly dues is simplifying Zen Center's dues payment procedures. This new payment procedure will reduce the burden on our hardworking office staff, simplify the process and eliminate many hours of record keeping. Beginning March 1, 2015, dues can be paid by check either semi-annually or annually, automatic bank transfer or automatic bank bill pay monthly, semi-annually or annually. Automatic bank transfers and automatic bank bill payments to SMZC can be set up independently with your own particular bank.

We will be sending additional information detailing the membership changes to all members in the coming months.

Please contact Shunryu at kanin@smzc.net if you have any questions and/or comments. ❖



*Jukai, 2014
(see Sangha News on page 5)*

JULIE KASHIN RECEIVES THE GEIDO POSITION

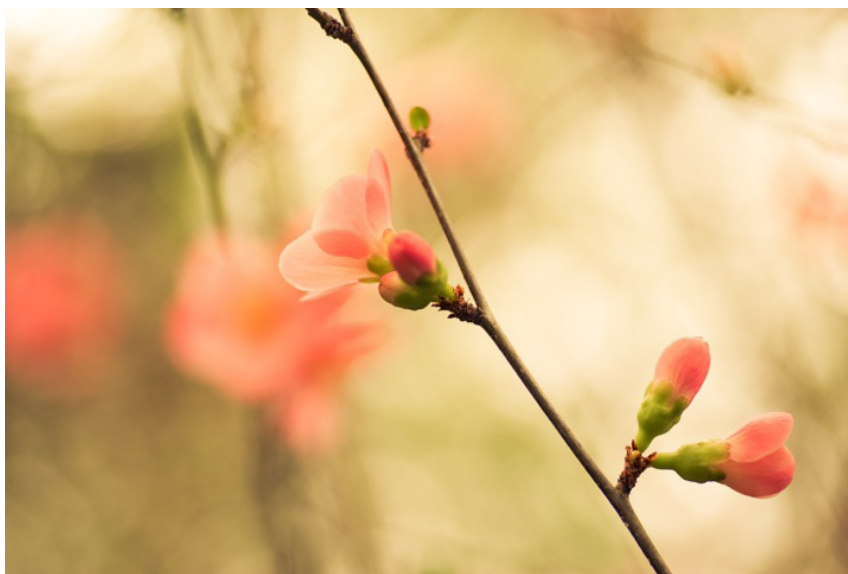
The position of Geido refers to the various traditional Japanese art disciplines - Noh Theatre, Kado (Flower Arrangement), Shodo (Calligraphy), Sado (Tea Ceremony), and Yakimono (Pottery). All of these disciplines carry an ethical and aesthetic connotation and teach an appreciation of the process of creation. To introduce discipline into their training, Japanese warriors followed the example of the arts that systematized practice through prescribed forms called Kata - imagine the tea ceremony and how structured the form is, so participants can have a glimpse of it's inherent aesthetics and presence.

As a disciple and successor of Shunryu Suzuki-roshi, I was deeply influenced by his appreciation of subtle aesthetics in our everyday environment. He never spoke directly about aesthetics, but he mostly demonstrated his respect for everyday objects by the way he would arrange the various things in his home and at Sokoji temple in San Francisco. He was very aware of his surroundings, and would place a flower arrangement, a calligraphy, or a Mingei teacup very carefully, displaying a sense of color and exquisite composition with a subtle beauty that was also calming. I wasn't even aware that I was receiving this wonderful teaching about aesthetics, until years later when I noticed that I also developed an awareness and appreciation of arranging things in my environment with this subtleness to this day.

Because of this, I think it is essential that we sustain this lineage of simple, ordinary aesthetics and form at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. It is so easy to rush through the day, getting things done quickly on only a functional and practical level, that we forget the importance of creating beauty in the end result. I am appointing Julie Kashin to the position of Geido, as she has been overseeing the interior and exterior design and furnishings of the zendo, the sangha house as well as all the various buildings for many years. Her qualifications include many years of Zen practice, art background, fashion design and hand-sewing unique artifacts, teaching rakusu sewing, leading Okesa sewing sesshins, and leading Tea Workshops. In addition, for the past 8 years, Kashin has been studying Tea with Eiko Mouri-sensei of the Omotesenke school.

There will be a ceremony appointing and honoring Julie Kashin for the position of Geido on February 14, Saturday at 12 noon. Please come to celebrate and congratulate Kashin in her new position. May ordinary aesthetics continue to flow throughout the grounds at Genjo-ji.

Jakusho Kwong-roshi ❖



ONLINE RESOURCES ~ DHARMA TALKS & EVENTS

A selection of Dharma Talks by Jakusho Kwong-roshi, and more, are available online in video, audio, and podcast formats.

Roshi's **Vimeo** channel offers several of Roshi's and Shinko's Dharma talks plus other notable events from SMZC. Please check it out! Just go to vimeo.com/smzc.

The latest video additions to the SMZC Vimeo site are:

- Jakusho Kwong-roshi - Years End Talk - 12-13-14
- True Dragon / Thru and Thru
- Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi's Lecture
- Shuso Hossen Shiki Ceremony for Demian Nyoze Kwong at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center - Genjoji February 22, 2014

"The best" of Roshi's talks are available free through two websites - Podbean and iTunes. Access via **iTUNES** - Open iTunes on your computer; click "iTunes Store" in the left navigation column; click "Podcasts" on the top row; in the small box in the very upper right side shown with a "Q", enter "smzc"; hit the enter key on your computer; in the middle of the page with Roshi's picture, click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" under the heading "Podcast"; Roshi's talks then appear.

Access via **Podbean** - Go to www.podbean.com; in box at top right of page, enter "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" (not case sensitive); click "SEARCH"; click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" next to Roshi's picture or on the picture itself. **OPTION 1** - click on the "Listen" button beside any talk; **OPTION 2** (recommended) - click on <http://smzc.podbean.com> beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



Donate Now!
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IN APPRECIATION

The Zen Center wishes to thank the following members for their generous donations.

Jim Sexton for the Bosche table saw; Bill Milligan for materials and labor for the new concrete Sangha House porch; Neil and Lorna Myers for an Apple computer for the office and Terri Cramolini for several pairs of weeding and work gloves for the garden. A deep bow to you all and to everyone who has offered their support of the Zen Center in myriad ways this past quarter.



All Contributions Help Maintain
The Buddhadharma!

Visit us on Facebook



MEMBERSHIP

We invite you to become a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Our purpose is to offer Soto Zen meditation practice and its basic teachings to people of all religious faiths. The practice of meditation allows us to see beyond our one-sided perception of ourselves and the world, so that we are able to participate in society with clarity and peace. We are a lay residential practice center and a non-profit organization relying on membership dues, guest practice programs, Zen programs and contributions to sustain our operating cost. *Call or visit soon to join us in actualizing the Dharma!* ❖

ZEN DUST

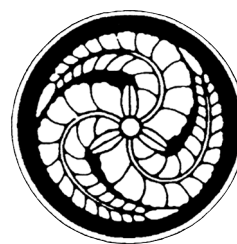
By Janet Buckendahl, Bookstore Manager

Happy New Year to Everyone!

We will be carrying all your favorite items in the store next year, but we will be moving to a new location. At the moment, the plan is to move to the current Library space in mid-January - stay tuned.

Business was good in 2014, so we hope for as much support in 2015. We have just ordered copies of the reprinted and updated version of 'Homeless Kodo' - the teachings of Kodo Sawaki-roshi, written by his disciple Uchiyama-roshi, with commentary by Shohaku Okumura. We will also be getting copies of 'Buddha's Daughters' - teachings from women who are shaping Buddhism in the West.

Our ongoing sale of used books and publications is very popular, so if anyone has good used Buddhist material that they would like to donate, please bring it to Zen Dust or leave on the store desk in the Sangha room. Thank you and we look forward to seeing you soon.



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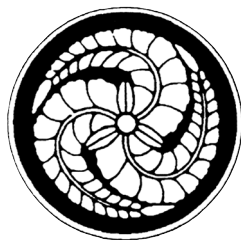
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This newsletter is available to all members of the SMZC sangha. If you are not a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and would like to receive the newsletter, the cost for a one-year subscription is \$25. Please call the office to request a subscription, or visit online at www.smzc.net and donate via Paypal. When subscribing via Paypal, once you have made your donation please email us your receipt and include your newsletter format preference (print or electronic), and your contact information. If your subscription is due to expire, please renew. We also welcome submissions of poetry, prose and art relating to the Zen experience.



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