

Mountain Wine

JANUARY – MARCH 2024

THE INHERENT JEWEL

This Dharma talk was given by Kwong-rohsi and Nyoze Kwong at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center on December 9, 2023.

Roshi: Good morning, everyone.

The chant that we just did is incredibly profound. And it's not about a teacher or a student, but each individual, that there is a jewel that you inherently possess that is closer than you can ever think, that is within yourself. And it takes a lot of training, things that we don't like to do—discipline, cultivation, or practice to reverse the karmic trend. I remember Thich Nhat Hanh used to say that we have to look at our suffering. I didn't like to hear him say that because I didn't want to admit to having any. But when you start looking deeply, you see everyone has suffering. It's like ending the war in the mind. It's almost too late when war is out there, because it starts from within. It's part of the path to resolving greed, anger, and ignorance. But that is not the completion of the self; Buddha's knowledge is the completion of the self. But it has to be trained, so that whatever we are conscious of has a deeper meaning than what we see on the surface, or think we see. Everything you think you see is a delusion. I was always puzzled by the Buddhadharmas saying that everything you see is delusion. Because here is the table, the lectern, the floor. Sure, that's real—but those are only objects outside of yourself, and this subject/object world has to be dissolved. That's reality. And you've actually seen it, already experienced it. But you still have to realize it. It's not outside yourself; it is inherent in your being. That's the wonder of it.

So before we go on together, I discovered that

there are several practices or trainings that Sasaki-roshi wrote about in a small book called *About Tatagatha Zen*. The first one is *shugyo*, the Japanese word for practice. People in Zen use the word “practice,” but it is misunderstood. “I'm practicing Zen.” That is hardly an explanation or even an experience of what practice is. *Shu* means that practice and realization of your inherent self coexist; they are one. When you practice and train, that is realization. It's happening all the time, but you still have to realize it. So *shu* is the discipline or completion of the self. *Gyo* is the cultivation, training, discipline, the conduct of that completion of the self. Practice means realization. But realization means the realization of Buddhist knowledge.

The second practice is *shushu*, which means to unify the scattered mind. This is what you are doing in meditation. You can all experience it by seeing how long you can concentrate. Because you want to be quiet or calm, the opposite happens. Your concentration or focus is very shallow; it needs training. All these years you've been training the opposite, an unfocused mind. I won't go into the details of an unfocused mind. But *shushu* means unifying the scattered mind.

There is also *jissbu*, which is the practical application of what is learned. Most people studying Zen do not apply this. It took me years of application to understand it. We have a ritual called *oryoki*. It is ritualistic eating with a limited number of bowls and utensils. The meaning of *oryoki* is “just the right amount.” What is just the right amount for you? Too much, too little, not enough? In using or being used by the utensils and bowls, you begin to dissolve the distinction between subject and object. This is the practice and training of *oryoki*. But I think we do

continues next page

not have any idea that this applies to *all* activity. Every action you do in your everyday life is actually a ritual. You become one as the subject to the object. And these objects have a life in themselves. They give life, as well as we give them life. It goes both ways. We can apply this anywhere to our movements. See how quickly you move? Slow it down. Pause for a minute and see what happens. Take yourself out of the rushing pattern of quickness. Or when you are quick, be wholeheartedly quick. But no, you are going “quick.” So that’s *jisshu*.

And there is *shuren*. The metaphor is like a blacksmith who hammers a hot piece of metal. It only works when the hammer hits one spot; the others are extra. It only shapes itself when it is struck on one spot. That is *shuren*, the metaphor of the blacksmith.

Another one is *shuyo*, the practice of helping someone. If you are a parent, you are raising and nurturing your son or daughter. It could even be an animal. But you are helping. You help someone, naturally.

So much for my talking. We are kind of improvising today. Maybe someone has some questions about practice?

Are practice and training the same thing?

Roshi: The same thing. And that means completion of the self. You are liberated from the idea of who you think you are. Because who you think you are is bondage, the limitation of yourself. It is the subject/object duality, which causes suffering. We dissolve the dichotomy, the dualism. That’s unifying the scattered mind. Yes!

So in the awakening is the awareness?

Roshi: Awakening is pure awareness.

Nyoze: I don’t think we should get out there too far, because these points that Roshi mentioned all have to do with coming back to the mat and sitting *zazen*. The posture of *zazen* actually includes all of it. So awakening: Yeah, you could call it awakening or coming back to your life as it is. But it is kind of interesting that what brings us here is our greed, anger and ignorance. It is hard to distinguish what is greed, anger, and ignorance when we come to the mat. We can label it: I came here to do this, or I’m going to let go now. But to really let go, one has to come back over and over again. I could just aim at the posture of *zazen*. Whether you call it practice, whether you call it greed, anger, and ignorance, whether you call it “learning about meditation,” you let all that go. And at the same time, there is something that comes up within which is not contrived.

This morning Gosia emailed to remind me about doing a service. Roshi said, yeah, Nyoze, remember you do service on Saturday morning. So I came in, and to make a long story short, I’m flying out to Denmark, and I’m trying to get everything squared away, so I’m rushing, right? I sat down to take this great seated posture, and then I forgot. What do you do when you forget? So I walked to



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—Kwong roshi



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Beyond taking sides, beyond
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It's a true peace that the practice
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—Hojo-san

the office, printed something out, and then I found myself rushing back. And it was interesting, because December the eighth, you know the weather has been fairly warm, but December eighth is usually very crisp, and that started yesterday, so I said, “Nyoze, stop,” and that’s actually what the Buddha did.

That’s what we are doing: Stop. And I looked up at the sky, and saw the clearness of the sky. It can happen in many ways. You know the practice. But I think the most important thing is actually to sit down. You know meditation is good, but it only goes so far because you feel relaxed and so that's good. But to wrestle with yourself, and transform the dark into light, or transform your greed, anger, and ignorance into something greater than yourself—that’s the practice of zazen. I think most people when they come, they want to learn about Zen or get rid of their greed, anger, and ignorance, or become more confident. But your greed, anger, and ignorance are all good qualities, you know, but then we digest it in a way that comes out pure. I was going to say it’s like a garbage disposal, but maybe it’s like a ripening of all those qualities within yourself.

So you don’t have to become a different person. But we need to understand greed, anger, and ignorance, and the suffering of the world by just sitting and not saying anything, right? We’re not seeing. No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body. It’s freeing yourself from karmic conditions. The practice—it’s big to sit down, and that creates peace. So I was saying this morning, to put your hands together and feel yourself on the spot, that’s true peace. Beyond taking sides, beyond what we think is right and wrong. It’s a true peace that the practice is great, but we must actually come back to our life in this way. I think we inspire each other too, coming together in this way. A lot of times when we see greed, anger, and ignorance in the world, we only see that subject and object, and then we become that. And when we practice like this together, reality, or the world, is like this.

Nyoze, were you just saying that meditation and sitting zazen are two different things, or are they the same?

Nyoze: You could say they’re the same and different. I was talking about meditation as doing something, but zazen is true work. When you do the work, you have to get out of the way, right? And when you truly let go, it has to happen like the way Roshi was saying, it’s a training to come back. And then it’s a resetting, actually a recircuiting of the conditioned mind to be different from our habitual way of thinking. So meditation is doing something.

You can swing zazen in your own style. You can swing zazen around however you want, you know, purple, red, green, this way, that way—but when you strike and you hit the spot, there’s something different that happens. Then your swing is the swing of the axe of the universe.

Meditation and zazen are different, very different. We do something to appease the hungry ghost in ourselves, that's good. But when meditation goes deeper, we hit something that's very true and pure to the heart. Once you do that too, then you don't do zazen. Zazen does zazen.

Roshi: It takes a lot of sitting, you know, lots of sitting. You can't imagine how many hours of sitting it takes to gradually unify the mind. In Soto Zen we have a saying, if in ten years you have a good seat, it means that you've seen your true nature, you've experienced it. But that's just once. Because you're still alive, there are many more years to refine that. How many years have you got left? No one knows, but to refine that realization, you know how you do it? By not doing anything—not thinking. When you think nothing is created, you are liberated. But again, you have yet to realize it, or someone has to point it out. And that's why people like to sit—because they go into that spaciousness, but they don't know it. That's the unproduced, the uncreated, non-doing. Very difficult, lots of training.

Nyoze: Maybe years, if you put it in years. If we put it in seconds, then there's a lot of time, and there's space that everyone can do it.

Roshi: Either way, seconds or years.

Nyoze: Either way, seconds or years, I'm being a little more kind to humanity, but it can be done when you're driving, when you're with your children, when you're at your computer. But it's a reconditioning, a recalibrating we must do. I mean, it's the only life that we have. What

better thing to do than to live in this way?

"If we are yet to realize it..." when we finally realize it, then that disappears, that concept disappears. There's nothing to realize.

Roshi: Yeah, when you realize it, there's no concept, there's nothing. Nothing can be there, but there will again be subject and object.

So we have yet to realize it. Doesn't that suggest that at some point we're going to realize it if we practice it enough?

Roshi: If you train and practice in the seconds or the years, you can realize it, but it takes you to be there. I remember Suzuki-roshi after his talk sometimes he would say this is just the talk, but you have to do it, and by doing it you have to come together with people and sit—that's the most important thing. Nobody else can do it for you. It's your karma, not your parents' karma. You have to undo your own karma.

I feel that sitting zazen comes back anywhere you are, anyplace you go, and it just happens—you can take it wherever you go. It's not just sitting on the zafu. Everywhere you go, it goes with you. I think that's an important thing to realize—if you practice enough, it goes with you everywhere. It's who you are.

Roshi: I think the most important thing, it goes wherever you go, but first you have to sit down. That's the most important thing. I sat for a long time. No one wants to



do it for a long time anymore. Nyoze is a little bit kinder when he says it can happen in a second, a minute, but I say for a very long time. Lots of discipline, you know? It's a lot of training. It can't happen any other way, and not just to do it by yourself, but with people, and with a teacher. We received some calligraphy from the late Master Sheng Yen, from Dharma Drum, and there were four characters. The first one was happiness, second one was wisdom, the third one was self, *ji*, and the fourth one was *zai*, so *ji-zai*. That struck me, because in the Heart Sutra is *kan ji zai*. *Kanjizai* is a bodhisattva. In truth, we are all bodhisattvas, realized, but we don't know it yet. So *kan ji zai*—it's in the library, on the door, it's a red scroll—it says happiness, wisdom, *ji-zai*, self. *Zai* is a simple Chinese word which in Cantonese means freely or at will. So the blessing means that you can create it at will, you can clarify the mind. *Kan* means contemplating, and it also refers to clarifying the mind. You can do it at will with training, anywhere, anytime. That was a big one for me, because we chant every morning *kan ji zai*, and it means that you are able to clarify because you trained so much, at will, anytime. To be present anytime without thinking. To be where you are. All these bodhisattvas, Manjusri, *kan ji zai*—they are images or reflections of deep parts of yourself. They're not outside of you, and they're more than saints. You can realize that Buddha's knowledge is within yourself.

And please join us. If this is too early, come in the evening. This place is here for you. We've been here 50 years, and Nyoze is the new abbot now. Same thing, maybe a

little bit different. We are looking for younger people, because my generation is slowly fading. I'm 88, and all the students, they're old now and don't come so much, though actually this is the time to come, because you will die soon. But the schedule is a monastic schedule for young people, like 20 or 30. When you pass 60, we don't have to sit so much, because our bodies can't. But this is the time we should sit. We need to sit to prepare for graciously finishing our life. So young people, please come, and old people, do it for yourself, like Gosia's father who died from drinking. Do it for him, do it for the sick, do it for the war, for the war in the mind, not just for yourself. ❖



Sanmon Taking Shape

by Mitchell Hoden Katzel



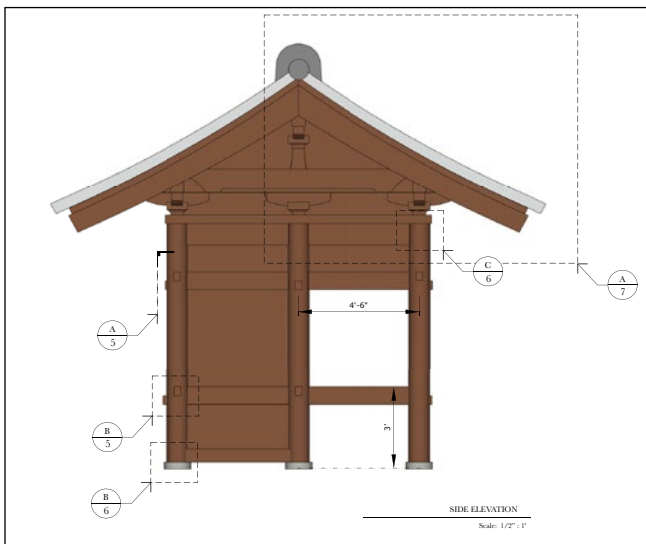
Sanmon (Mountain Gate) is a traditional entryway to Zen Buddhist temples in Japan. In the larger, more prestigious temples, it is located between an outer gate and the *butsuden* (main Buddha Hall), which is often a large building consisting of two stories. The *sanmon* at Genjoji will be a simpler structure, one story high, designed in proportion with the other buildings on site. It will be our entryway to the new temple from the lower parking area. As you climb a few steps to the *sanmon*, the future Manjushuri Hall will be visible through the Mountain Gate. Architectural plans are on display in the Sangha House.

It's been almost a year since we started work on the vision for the gate. Initially the plan was to use lumber from redwood trees that had fallen over naturally, using a portable mill on site to cut the wood. After weeks of discussion with the county permitting office, it became clear that county regulators would not allow us to remove the fallen trees from the designated riparian zone, an ecologically sensitive area along the intermittent stream flowing along the northeast side of SMZC property. We moved toward looking for local sources of redwood, including a small mill in nearby Glen Ellen, but they did not have enough material to meet our needs. In the fall we contacted the East Fork Lumber mill in Myrtle Point, Oregon, and decided to construct the *sanmon* from cedar, since we could get a higher grade of lumber for nearly the same cost as redwood, and the Genjoji workshop is also made of cedar.

Right before Christmas we submitted the building per-

mit application to the county. It will take about 12 weeks for the application to be reviewed, so a permit could be issued by the end of March. The building plans were prepared by our architect Shizue Seo, with supporting plans prepared by our structural engineer Mark Level. Once the permit has been granted, we will order 7,550 board feet of cedar needed to construct the Mountain Gate. It will take about eight weeks to mill the lumber and have it kiln-dried. The lumber will be transported from the mill in Oregon to the workshop of designer-builder Lucas Benjamin, who will cut and plane the lumber to dimensions needed for assembly. About 70 percent of the construction work will be done by Lucas at his workshop in Richmond, California, with the rest on site at Genjoji. If all goes well, the Mountain Gate will be ready for assembly this summer. ❖





*Upper: Sanmon replica stands on the location of the future Mountain Gate.
Lower: Architectural design by Lucas Benjamin shows a side view of the Sanmon.*

Sanmon (Mountain Gate) is a traditional entryway to Zen Buddhist temples in Japan... The sanmon at Genjoji will be a simpler structure, one story high, designed in proportion with the other buildings on site. It will be our entryway to the new temple from the lower parking area. As you climb a few steps to the sanmon, the future Manjushuri Hall will be visible through the Mountain Gate.

**Feb 23 February Fusatsu Ceremony
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

Come up & experience the Fusatsu Atonement Ceremony of confession, purification and renewing vows. Participate in this beautiful monthly Zen tradition.

7:30–8:00pm Zazen, 8:00–9:00pm Service.

**Feb 24 Winter Ango Closing Ceremony & Mondo
On-site + Online (Zoom)**

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM PST

Join us for Winter Ango 'Revealing the Dharma' Closing Ceremony & Mondo with Shuso Shinei Brown. 10:30–11:00am Zazen, 11:00–11:45am Closing Ceremony & Mondo.

Feb 26–28 SMZC Closed

**Mar 2 Meditation Instruction
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)**

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

Perfect for beginners wishing to learn meditation form. Meditation is a way to calm the mind and find balance in your daily life. Join us for our regular Saturday Community program (included in the fee) immediately following instruction. Please arrive at 8:50 am at the Sangha House to check in.

**Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Nyoze Kwong)
On-site + Online**

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Dharma talk will be given by Nyoze Kwong, abbot of SMZC, following 10:30–11:00 am zazen. 10:30am–11:00am Zazen, 11:00am–12:00pm Dharma Talk.

**Mar 5 Spring Study Group (Week 1)
On-site + Online (All-Class Pass for 8 Weeks)**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

Explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on the book "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind" by Shunryu Suzuki-roshi.

The "All-Class Pass" includes 1 free class. You may attend either on site or online.

**Mar 8–9 "Just This Moment"
1-Day Sitting
On-site + Online (Zoom)**

Mar 8 6:00 PM PST – Mar 9, 5:30 PM PST

This retreat is an introduction to Zen training and an opportunity for beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. RSVP and we will contact you to complete your registration. \$85/night & up. 10-20% discount for members.

Mar 11 SMZC Closed

**Mar 12 Spring Study Group (Week 2)
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 5.

Mar 15–16 Spring Temple Stay

Mar 15, 3:00 PM PDT – Mar 16, 1:30 PM PDT

Temple stay is an opportunity to experience authentic Soto Zen Buddhism, its lifestyle, rituals and spirituality. Take the backward step, sit down and illuminate the jewel within yourself. \$150 & up.

**Mar 16 Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Katsuzen King)
On-site + Online**

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Dharma talk will be given by Katsuzen King, Founding Teacher of Windsor Zen Group in Windsor, California, following 10:30–11:00 am zazen.

**Mar 19 Spring Study Group (Week 3)
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 5.

Mar 23 Workfest

8:30 AM – 12:30 PM PDT

In the spirit of together-action, come help breathe new energy into the center with friends and families of the Sonoma Mountain Sangha. Bring a pair of work gloves if you have them. Light lunch will be provided afterwards. RSVP to offer your hands of compassion!

**Mar 26 Spring Study Group (Week 4)
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

Explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on the book "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind" by Shunryu Suzuki-roshi.

**Mar 29 March Fusatsu Ceremony
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

Come up & experience the Fusatsu Atonement Ceremony of confession, purification and renewing vows. Participate in this beautiful monthly Zen tradition.

7:30–8:00pm Zazen, 8:00–9:00pm Service.

**Mar 30 Meditation Instruction
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)**

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 2.

**Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Uji Markiewicz)
On-site + Online**

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Dharma talk will be given by Uji Markiewicz, Abbot of Kannon Sangha Warsaw, Poland, following 10:30–11:00 am zazen. (The talk will be given on Zoom from Poland.) following 10:30–11:00 am zazen.

**Apr 2 Spring Study Group (Week 5)
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 5.

**Apr 3–6 Buddha's Birthday
3-Day Sesshin (1 to 3 Overnights)
On-site + Online**

Apr 3, 6:00 PM PDT – Apr 06, 3:30 PM PDT

This retreat is a period of time set aside to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature in the spirit of Shakyamuni's birth. RSVP and we will email you to complete your registration. \$85–160/night. 10–20% discount for members. (Please log in first to receive the discount.)

**Apr 7 Buddha's Birth Ceremony
On-site + Online**

Apr 07, 1:00 PM PDT – Apr 08, 4:00 PM PDT

Join us on site for this joyous occasion to celebrate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha by offering incense and pouring sweet water over the baby Buddha, symbolizing the soft rain in the fragrant garden of Lumbini when Buddha was born. Open to the public. Everyone welcome!

Apr 8–9 SMZC Closed

**Apr 13 Meditation Instruction
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)**

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 2.

**Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Uji Markiewicz)
On-site + Online**

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Dharma talk will be given by Nyoze Kwong, abbot of the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, following 10:30–11:00 am zazen.

**Apr 16 Spring Study Group (Week 6)
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 5.

**Apr 20 Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Genzen Ed Cadman)
On-site + Online**

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Dharma talk will be given by Genzen Ed Cadman, senior student of Kwong-roshi and ordained priest, following 10:30–11:00 am zazen.

**Apr 23 Spring Study Group (Week 7)
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 5.

**Apr 27 Meditation Instruction
(Includes Saturday Community)
On-site + Online (Zoom)**

9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 2.

**Saturday Community
(Dharma Talk by Jason Shinmei Nichols)
On-site + Online**

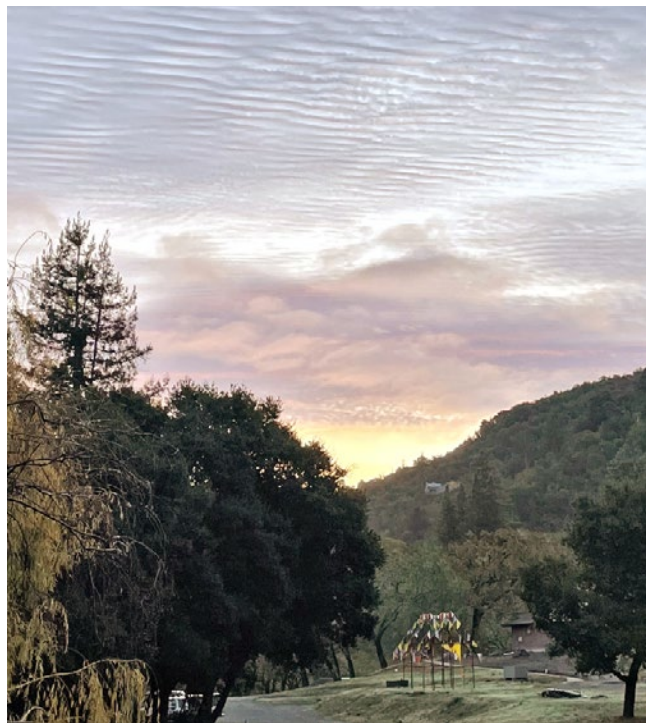
10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Dharma talk will be given by Jason Shinmei Nichols following 10:30–11:00 am zazen.

**Apr 30 Spring Study Group (Week 8)
On-site + Online**

7:30 PM–9:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, March 5.



Morning Zazen: Monday–Saturday, 5:15–7:00 am
Evening Zazen: Tue–Fri, 7:30–9:00 pm

Ongoing online Zazen on Zoom. For more info, visit the online Zendo at <https://www.smzc.org/online-zendo>.

NEW TO THE SANGHA

Lin Naylor, Petaluma

I was born and raised in southern Pennsylvania, and had my introduction to the dharma at Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts, practicing *sattipathana vipassana* meditation with both Asian and Western teachers, which I continued after moving to California in 1982. The pressures of work, commuting, and family took its toll on my commitment in the mid-1990s, but my father's death in 2015 brought the value and urgency of practice more clearly into focus, and encouraged me to renew my commitment while caring for my aging mother. I retired in 2020 and became my mother's full-time caregiver at the beginning of the pandemic; her death in April at age 95 inevitably raised the question of what's next. In my years of practice and study of the dharma, I have found that creating and nurturing a clear intention toward serious, committed practice opens unexpected paths. I am grateful for the opportunity to become part of this sangha.

Kathy Kandziolka, Rockport, ME

Well, bang the pots and bring out the melon ballers! Hello everyone. I am from Camden, Maine, and moved to Santa Rosa in June to practice massage at the True North Health Center. My parents live a mile away from me in Maine, while my older sister lives in upstate NY. I have been a massage therapist for 17 years and have done 28,000 hours of massage on people from infants to age 106! Before that I worked as an educator for 20 years, guiding canoe trips in northern Maine, teaching at an alternative high school, and traveling around the continent training educators. I spent 13 years at a wildlife rehabilitation clinic and coached gymnastics. I first remember seeking when I was 16. In 1989 I went to Plum Village in France and enjoyed my first silent retreat. I fell in love with the quiet, humble, and simple way. I have been meditating since then. Of the many teachers I have studied with and visited, my fa-



vorites are Stalking Wolf, Acharya Prashant, Pema Chodron/Shambhala, Byron Katie, Jed McKenna, and Salvadore Poe. Richard Rohr too!

At Sonoma Mountain Zen Center I want the practice and mental correction for a calm, simple, service-filled life with some inspiration and humor. Zen helps me enjoy simply Being Time. For fun, I hike and work in my organic garden.

Conrad Perez, Napa, CA

Born and raised in Southern California, I am a retired fire captain who served 33 years in the Orange County Fire Department and the City of Napa Fire Department. I was also a flight paramedic on an air ambulance helicopter. I live in Napa with my wife, a retired middle school teacher, and we have two grown children and three grandchildren. Since retiring, I have served on a nonprofit board, mentored Latinx college students, and consulted for nonprofits in Napa and Sonoma counties. I am a meditation and mindfulness teacher currently teaching and guiding meditation practice with active-duty and retired firefighters. Both my wife and I enjoy working out, paddle boarding, bicycle riding, and going to the beach. I am currently learning classical piano and practicing painting and drawing.

Ronald Berger, Sebastopol, CA

I am a long-time Zen practitioner who sat my first *dai-sesshin* at Mount Baldy Zen Center in 1975. I studied Rinzai Zen with Joshu Sasaki Roshi for 25 years, until a late marriage in 2001 sent me down the rabbit hole of family life for 20 years. I have now re-emerged with renewed intention to practice Zen, though Joshu Roshi is no longer with us, and Mt. Baldy and Rinzaiji (of Los Angeles) are moribund. I recently left Los Angeles for Sebastopol and find SMZC reminds me of Mt Baldy. Although Soto Zen is different from Rinzai, I am pleased to become a member of your sangha.

A few other things about me: I am a professional level carpenter,



plumber, electrician, shakuhachi player, and a professional Vedic astrologer with an international clientele.

Rika Suda, Santa Rosa, CA

I was born in Japan. After college, I traveled all over the world as a flight attendant at Japan Air Lines. I moved to the U.S. in 2007 to enroll the younger of my two daughters in a Waldorf school. Since then, I have started a home-based online retail export business to Japan. I have always been interested in the humanities—education, philosophy, and religion. I am at an age where I really want to deepen the study and practice of Buddhism to move in the right direction in life. I appreciate having the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center sangha nearby, and hope to gain a better understanding of what life is about. I also love nature, hiking, art, and dance. ❖

Theme for Winter Ango 2024

Shuso – Shinei (Sacred Flower)
Shinei Alison Brown



The Avatamsaka Sutra and the Hua Yen

*“All dharmas are birthless and cannot be extinguished,
one who understands this sees the Tathagata.”*

Avatamsaka
—Eulogies of the Suyama Heaven,
Eulogies of Mount Sumeru

The cosmos is perceived as a wondrous jewel, a nexus of interdependent causes and conditions. Colorful, imaginative, and challenging, the Avatamsaka is considered the crown of Buddhist sutras, one of the earliest Buddhist literatures to enter China. The Hua Yen School evolved in the seventh century, drawing insight from the Avatamsaka. The Hua Yen was highly influential in Zen practice forming the basis of two main sutras we chant in the mornings, Precious Mirror Samadhi and the Harmony of Difference and Sameness. It is key to deepening your understanding of compassion and interconnection in your meditation, and daily life practice. *When the knot has eyes and shows itself as wisdom, the karmic knot or the complexes disentangle, and it does disentangle, disengaging itself from outworn ways, metamorphosing, revealing, its undivided face.*

EDITOR’S NOTE

As we go to press with this issue of Mountain Wind, our Winter Practice Period is still in full swing. We will bring you detailed coverage of this Ango in our upcoming issue of the newsletter. This issue focuses mainly on the work being done on the mountain gate. Please take a look at the inspiring photo of the Sanmon replica on page 4. The picture was taken by Shannon Rossiter shortly after the Sunrise Ceremony in honor of Suzuki-roshi on Dec. 2, 2023.

Our newsletter staff hopes this issue finds you well as we send our warmest wishes for a most auspicious Year of the Wood Dragon!

Katsuzen

FROM YOUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tensan Chuck Ramey, President • Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin, Secretary

The board of trustees would like to express deep gratitude for the sangha's support in 2023. Planning and execution of the Shinsanshiki (Mountain Seat ceremony) and your generosity throughout the year have allowed for improved fiscal stability at SMZC since the pandemic. With Nyoze Kwong (Hojo-san) installed as our new abbot, we are beginning 2024 with new energy and leadership for the future.

At the first quarterly board meeting on January 13, we received a healthy fourth-quarter financial report for the operating fund, thanks to everyone's continued commitment and support.

Our increasingly well-attended zazen programs continue to offer a wide range of opportunities for sangha members and the broader community, which is accepting the invitation to practice zazen in the lineage carried from Dogen Zenji and Suzuki-roshi to Kwong-roshi and Hojo-san. Indeed, to our knowledge, SMZC remains unique as the only family-operated Zen temple in North America.

The sanmon (Mountain Gate) project is progressing into final permits and design review, and we plan to begin construction in late spring or early summer, with completion by year's end. The Mountain Gate will be the only one of its kind in the U.S., a dramatic representation of the Mandala Project coming alive in the future. The board is likewise working to develop a new fundraising effort for the Mandala Project to extend Kwong-roshi's vision into the distant future. We are now focused on finishing the new community building before the new zendo, an approach that best positions us to meet county planning requirements and fund the new zendo. The board has allocated \$20,000 toward marketing expertise to help us accomplish these goals.

Finally, we want to recognize the commitment of our new and existing residents. Their ongoing practice and dedication to the dharma serves a vital role in fulfilling our mission of providing a beautiful refuge for the practice of zazen and sharing the buddhadharma with everyone.

As always, it is an honor for the board members to serve the sangha and the dharma, in support of practice on Sonoma Mountain. Please feel free to approach any of us with questions or concerns as we move forward in 2024.

In gassho,
Tensan and Myoko
January 2024 ❖



Upper: Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi, Kwong-roshi, and Shinko Kwong attend the temple pillar blessing during September's Shinsanshiki Ceremony. (Sanmon replica in background)

Lower: Temple pillar blessing during Shinsanshiki Ceremony. The temple pillar (kactoba) marks the place of the future zendo.



Upper left: Residents Tokan Stepanek and Koten Price inspect recent brush clearing.

Middle left: Tokan Stepanek drilling holes on pergola with Jason Shu assisting.

Lower left: Coco Mellinger works to secure footings for the new pergola.

Upper right: Koten Price cuts plastic PVC pipe with a chainsaw preparing water basin for its location near the Mountain Gate.

Lower right: Greg Grigson works on zendo attic door repair. Greg worked from October 2023 to January 2024 and donated materials for the project.

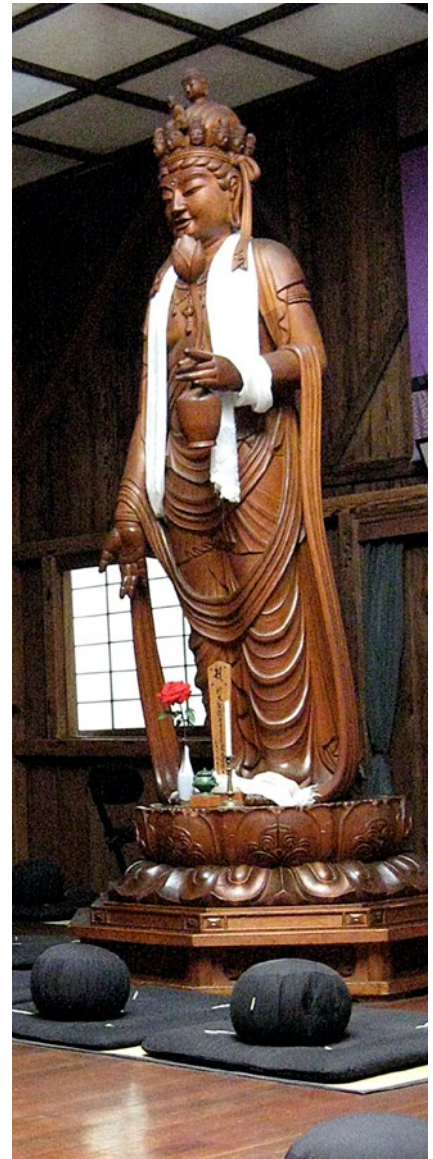
ZEN DUST NEWS

by Carol Adams

Happy New Year to all! We move into this Year of the Dragon with shelves fully stocked in our little mountain store. We continue to offer myriad supplies in support of your training: robes, jubons, meditation cushions, books, malas, candles, incense, incense bowls, prayer flags, and more.

Last fall we welcomed Sheila Robinson into our Zen Dust volunteer group. Sheila lives in Santa Rosa and is new to the Zen Center. She loves (with a capital L) to sew, and has many years of experience as a quilt maker. Sheila is sewing oryoki cloths for wiping,, lap, and wrapping. Thank you, Sheila, for coming forward to help; we are grateful for your contributions.

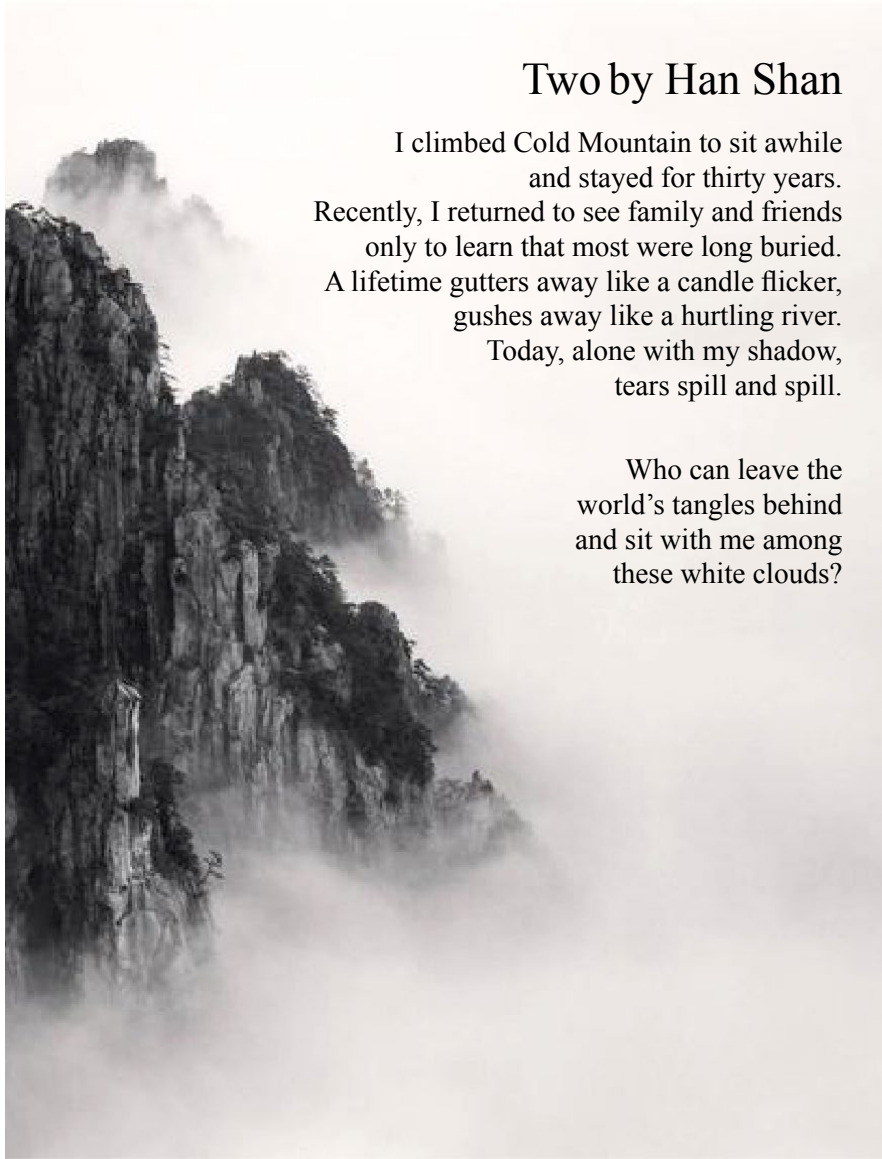
This year, as we ease back into reopening, please plan to visit Zen Dust during Saturday Community practice. Store hours are Saturdays from noon to 1:15pm. For orders or questions, email carol@smzc.org, or call (707) 545-8105.



Two by Han Shan

I climbed Cold Mountain to sit awhile
and stayed for thirty years.
Recently, I returned to see family and friends
only to learn that most were long buried.
A lifetime gutters away like a candle flicker,
gushes away like a hurtling river.
Today, alone with my shadow,
tears spill and spill.

Who can leave the
world's tangles behind
and sit with me among
these white clouds?



All Contributions
Help Maintain
the Buddhadharma!

DONATE ONLINE SMZC.ORG

In order to continue to offer our programs and ensure the future of SMZC, we are asking for your support. Your donation is tax deductible. Sonoma Mountain Zen Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Tax ID #23-7304793

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!* ❖

ONLINE RESOURCES ~ DHARMA TALKS & EVENTS

SMZC's website conveys the essence of our practice to others and invites their participation at the Zen Center. It is found at www.smzc.org.

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 www.vimeo.com/smzc.

"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 at 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"; and Roshi's talks then appear.

Access via Podbean—Go to www.podbean.com; in the 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 or **OPTION 2** (recommended): click on smzc.podbean.com beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



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NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

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.org 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.



SONOMA MOUNTAIN ZEN CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

“For the Beneficial Protection
and Awakening of All Beings”



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