

Mountain Wine

JANUARY – MARCH 2019

THE INSTANT BEFORE THE MOMENT OF THE PRESENT

The following is a Dharma talk given by Kwong-roshi on July 14, 2018 at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.

Good afternoon.

The plaque I have here was in front of me when I was keynote speaker for the Global Buddhist Community Dialogue in Taipei in June. This forum was the opening of the 7th Chinese Buddhism & Sheng Yen International Bi-annual Conference in Taiwan. I was supposed to talk about the theme, “The Buddhist approach to calming the mind in a changing world.”

I was surprised to be given the plaque, and deeply honored. I didn't feel I deserved the honor of speaking in front of 500 or a thousand people. On this plaque, the kanji before my name said I was “kan.” I looked up the word, kan. It doesn't translate as keynote speaker; it has two meanings: barrier or gate. I'm a barrier to you, and also a gate. Do you understand what this means?

The conference was held at Dharma Drum Mountain Center, which was established by the Chinese Chan master Sheng Yen, at the Nung Chan Monastery in Taipei. I was surprised at the grand scale of the event. I had met the late Sheng Yen over 20 years ago and I had no idea what he had established, and how much of what he had done had grown over the years. The Dharma Drum Mountain sangha is very large, and Taiwan is a very wealthy country. In their Buddhist culture and tradition, it is customary for Taiwanese to make large donations to support temples, so they have this beautiful temple. [Unlike here!] Here, people hardly donate at all.

When I travel, people always ask me, “Oh, is your wife going with you?” and “It's a long trip, isn't it?” as if it's a vacation. But those are small misunderstandings people have when I make a trip. It's not a pleasure trip. It's about the Dharma. It's not vacation time (although you know we did find the best coffee place in Taipei!). It's work time. When Nyoze and I got off the airplane in Taipei the temperature was in the 90s, probably reaching 100° with very high humidity. Being from California, I'm not used to that kind of heavy humid weather and have to watch out for heat exhaustion.

So we went to this beautiful temple at the Nung Chan Monastery in Taipei. This is Dharma Drum Mountain headquarters. [Roshi shows a picture] I'll leave this on the table in the Sangha House for you to see.

That is the temple. It's made of concrete and is modern and really beautiful. This is the main Buddha Hall. And you see the interior is wood behind the concrete pillars, and there's a big body of water in front of the building. It's said that Sheng Yen wanted this pool to look as though something mysterious was happening, as if it were floating. So he called it the ‘Water Moon Pool.’

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The Buddha Hall is probably about twenty times the size of this zendo. On one side there are niches with Buddhas and Bodhisattva figures cut through the concrete, probably made of crystal. Unlike Chartres Cathedral, where the light comes in through stained glass, here the light is without color. But when the sun comes in at a certain time of day, it casts a wonderful light in this Dharma hall.

I read in a book about Sheng Yen that he had a very difficult life. He was born when China was at war with Japan, a calamitous period with a great flood and famine. Somehow he became ordained when he was thirteen years old, which is the traditional age. And then, in order to escape Communist China during the Chinese Civil War, he made it to Taiwan where he joined the Nationalist Chinese Army. After leaving the army he was re-ordained, and he did a solo retreat for six years. We saw the room where he did his retreat - a very small room, probably smaller than our kitchen in the Sangha House. There's one little window and there's a big sheet of paper with a huge X over the door, which would be torn if he opened the door to leave. So picture him looking out as he was shut in for six years - you can imagine what it does to a person. People I have met who have done such long solo retreats...without a doubt, they illuminate their true beings.

Sheng Yen read the same things many, many times over a period of two years. Study is important and you have to read, even if you don't understand what you're reading, so that it really soaks in - not just into your thinking mind, but into your bones, your flesh, your marrow. So you really begin to understand it. You have to read [BAM- Roshi strikes lectern]. You have to study [BAM]. And I don't mean just a little bit; it takes time. You have to make time [BAM] - or time makes you; that's what happens. That kind of time is called karmic consciousness. It's cause and effect; it's your conditioning imprisoning you. Your world becomes very small and you become a prisoner of your conditioning.

You know, today's talk was very difficult for me to prepare. You think that I just get up and give a talk. It's not like that at all. I was very bothered by the word 'delusion.' We should begin to really know what that word means. I struggled with that during this talk. I think what saved me were Dogen's words.

I'll start out with this... One of the monks in Taipei gave us a scroll as a present. Someday I'll put it in a frame, so that everyone can see it. It looks like it's a circle on rice paper. It's a Chinese poem which I'll read in English.

It starts out in the *Shobogenzo*, Book 2 of Nishijima's translation, in the fascicle called *Kai-in Zanmai*. Ocean imprint samadhi. *Kai-in* meaning ocean seal, or imprint, like a stamp; *Zanmai* meaning samadhi. *Kai* is sea or ocean. It's translated as *Samadhi, State Like the Sea*.

I'm skipping a bit, but you'll get the gist of it from this: "Because of not speaking of the appearance of self..." (In other words leaving out the conditioned self)

"Because of not speaking of the appearance of self 'myself is in the middle of the sea.'

"The surface before me is eternal preaching as ten thousand ripples following one single slight wave, and the surface behind me is the Sutra of the Flower of the Wonderful [Lotus] [Dharma] as a single wave following ten thousand slight ripples."

So Dogen added the second phrase, he just switched it around: ten thousand waves *following* one single ripple and vice versa. One single wave following ten thousand ripples. This is physics. This is actually happening right now. This is the poem:

For a thousand feet my line hangs straight down
The slightest wave is followed by ten thousand ripples.
The night is quiet, the water cold, the fish not biting.
My boat filled with a vacant cargo of moonlight, I return.

And this footnote: "ZENMEN-KOMEN - meaning surface before, surface behind [or you could say, front and back] mirrors the expressions of the original verse under discussion: ZENNEN-KONEN - instant before, instant after." That's pretty precise. This is Zen: the instant *before* the moment of the present. "ZENPO-KOHO - Dharma before, Dharma after. These expressions all suggest the momentary occurrence of reality" as it's happening - like this *this this this* [BAM BAM BAM].

OK. When you feel bad, how long do you stay feeling bad, or how long are you imprisoned in feeling bad? When you feel good, how long do you stay attached to that feeling of goodness? This is the big mistake. This is a conditioned habit. And this is what I experienced preparing this talk. You know, usually you sit down and you start reading and you really get inspired. But all of a sudden you find you have difficulty in what you've been doing, even if you've been doing it for thirty or forty years. Now that difficulty is really important - whether good or bad. "These expressions all suggest the *momentary* occurrence of reality" - of ultimate reality, not conditioned reality, but ultimate reality, beyond good and bad. But we get stuck. I got caught on Friday preparing this talk. It just didn't feel right. I didn't feel inspired. But when I came across that footnote it broke through for me. I can be here for you.

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Kwon-roshi and Shinko, Sunrise Ceremony

Now this is very important. It's not just my own discovery. You also do the same thing, I know you. Every human being does the same thing, because we've been conditioned the same way, to see in terms of bad and good. 'I don't feel good.' 'I don't feel inspired.' 'I feel very inspired.' 'I feel very good.' We are caught with these dualities. But this broke through it for me. It's beyond good and bad. It's your choice. You want to say it's bad? Then it *will* be bad, and it will stay with you for a long time. And you will not feel good.

The instant before the moment of the present: zennen. The instant before the moment of the present. We could even say the instant before or after the present moment of good or bad or worst.

What's great about Dogen is that any point, any instant, is liberation. Delusion itself is not permanent. Neither is enlightenment. Nothing is permanent. There's a phrase that says something about enlightenment - and I was guilty of this a long time ago - that "we are in the world but we are not of the world." In other words, when we go out in the world, we're something different. But that's a big mistake. It has caught all of you. Or - "If I'm enlightened I'm never going to be deluded." That's another mistake. You can see it happening in the world right now. Enlightenment is dependent on delusion. That's how we become enlightened: it's through our delusions. And then we're deluded again. And then we're enlightened again. It's not all permanent as we might think.

There's another poem called *Great Enlightenment: Daigo*.

The expression *Daigo* means Great Enlightenment. As it's written in calligraphy, it reads from right to left, and then it goes down and up.

[Here Roshi begins reading from scroll - and translating]

Daigo: Great Enlightenment. Mutan: no origin, no beginning, no end. Elusive. Nevertheless deluded. Also 'nevertheless deluded' refers to that.

So they both have no beginning and no end. Delusion as well as enlightenment: both have no beginning and no end. And when you don't know this truth, you break the precepts, you kill, you steal, you lie.

Let's look at some lines in this fascicle.

So a monk asked the teacher, Master Kegon, "*What is it like at the time when a person in the state of great realization returns to delusion?*" Therefore he's calling into question the very moment itself of returning to delusion. The Master answers, "*A broken mirror does not again reflect. Fallen blossoms cannot climb back onto the tree.*" This is not a negative statement. It means something. 'At the time' - we are talking about the time something like this happens, at the very moment. These are Kegon's words. Kegon was Tozan Ryokai's successor.

Dogen goes on to discuss what happens when a person in a state of great enlightenment "returns to delusion... calling into question the very moment itself of returning to delusion..." "We should not study Kegon's words as if they discussed such things as *turning back into an ordinary being, or traces depending on an origin.* Others talk about breaking the great state of enlightenment and becoming just an ordinary being. Here, we do not say that great realization is broken, we do not say that great realization is lost, and we do not say that delusion comes. We should never let ourselves be like those others."

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This is very common. We think this way. Our conditioned selves think in this way, but Kegon says that we shouldn't say or think that great realization is broken. We cannot say that great realization is *lost*. We cannot say that delusion *comes*. To say 'delusion comes' describes a process. But Dogen saw delusion as momentary. If you want to give it life, that's what you give it. We have to apply our Zen practice. [BAM.] Practice application. [BAM.] We have to apply it to our life, our everyday life. [BAM.] You have to have a foundation for Zen practice. Zen practice is based on sitting zazen. [BAM.] You have to sit to understand. You have to free yourself from samsara. Dogen even says that samsara itself is also nirvana.

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that really grace? [chuckles] You're in hell, but you can be liberated. There is liberation in hell, but you have to do it yourself.

"There is no delusion that hinders great realization, but having brought forth these three instances of great realization, we create half an instance of small delusion." What does he mean by 'half an instance of small delusion'? A footnote says that's like making something to eat, and then having an alcoholic drink with it [chuckles]. "In this situation there are snow mountains realizing great realization for the sake of snow mountains; trees and stones are realizing great realization relying on trees and stones; the great realization of buddhas is realizing great realization for the sake of living beings; and the great realization of living beings is greatly realizing the great realization of buddhas: it cannot be related to before and behind." (Great realization is not related to past and future.)

"Great realization now is beyond self and beyond others. It does not come; at the same time, *it fills in ditches and fills up valleys*. It does not go; at the same time, *we keenly hate pursuit that follows an external object*. Why so? Because we *follow objects perfectly*."

So, coming back to the conference [in Taiwan]. At the forum, as I mentioned, I was supposed to talk about "The Buddhist approach to calming the mind in changing world."

First of all, we should know that our mind is already calm. Most people, including myself, learned to sit meditation to make our minds calm. This is the first mistake, because your mind is already calm. The Buddhist approach to calming the mind in a changing world. We say the changing world but we must realize there is something which does not change.

So the example I spoke about deals with these two monks doing samu.

It's Case 21 in the *Book of Serenity*, talking about "someone who is not busy."

You know, when we do samu we have to know the significance of sweeping. Or of anything we are doing. This is samu. You know, when you hold your hammer, do you feel yourself holding the hammer? Or are you just like a robot? Any position, any job, any samu that we do here - we should know it is practice.

So regarding these two monks... One monk was sweeping. The head monk passed by and said, "Oh, too busy, too busy, too busy." And the monk who was sweeping said, "There is someone who is not busy."

You could say that to yourself, when you're in a hurry in your daily life: I'm not in a hurry, I'm not hurrying... Or [chuckles], maybe you *should* hurry - a hundred percent.

The head monk asked, "Did you know there are two moons?" Well, that's interesting. Did you know there are two moons? One moon is the absolute or ultimate truth, and the other moon is the conventional truth. That's why there are two moons.

Then the other monk, simply raised up the broom he was holding.

And he said, "Which moon is this?" That was his response.

I used this dialogue at the beginning of my talk at the symposium. There is something that does not change - and you know what that is? Impermanence. [Chuckles.] No one can deny it.

I've said this before: the First Noble Truth that the Buddha proclaimed was that life is suffering.

And when I first read that I thought, this sounds pretty negative; I don't know if I want to accept this, but at that time I didn't really understand it. Another word we could use instead of suffering is 'impermanent.' Life is impermanent. When we don't know the truth of impermanence, we suffer. Very simple.

There's another thing I want to say about the Buddha Hall in Taiwan. In one of the buildings there's the Heart Sutra carved in a wooden frieze. On another side of the Buddha Hall, there is a huge beautifully-carved image of Amitaba Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, resting on giant slabs of stone. You must remember it's not about all these Bodhisattvas and Buddhas: it's actually about us. It's the light that we already have. It's not their light. Each one of us is infinite light. The Diamond Sutra is carved on the opposite side of the hall and when the sunlight comes in the window at a certain angle, it casts all these forms and shapes of light on people there.

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I'll read this from the Diamond Sutra. It's a very short sutra. This is the first line.

"All appearances are delusion." When I began to study Zen, I read that everything is delusion. How could that be? This is a table [BAM]. Those are mountains and those are rivers. But as I started studying I began to realize that it's true, what is said. You know that simple poem about zen practice.

At first the mountains look like mountains and the rivers look like rivers, but as you start studying you realize that they are not mountains and they are not rivers. And after you study Zen for a very long time, an average of twenty or thirty years, you begin seeing that once again they are mountains and rivers. But in that order, or sequence: first, it is. Second, it is not. Then - it is, again, but differently.

"All appearances are delusion." Everything you see is delusion. Does that make sense?

If you perceive all appearances as non-appearances then that perceiving is itself our true nature.

"Do not become attached to any thoughts that arise in the mind." Don't become attached to the objective world, to what you see, as separate from yourself; because this objective world, what you see, is you yourself. It's beyond ecology. It is beyond DNA. It is you.

"If you see forms - tangible forms - as the absolute, if you search out the absolute with your voice (you could call the absolute a soul) ... "If you see tangible forms as the soul, if you search out the soul with your voice, you are practicing the wrong path." (The soul is immortal. It lasts forever.) *"You are practicing the wrong path, and you cannot see your true self."*

"All compounded things are like a dream, a phantom, a bubble, or a reflection. They are like dew or lightning. Thus you should view them." This is from the *Diamond Sutra*.

Thirty years ago a student asked me, "How can we save all sentient beings? Isn't that a few too many people?" I mentioned this in my talk. In the great Tsung there was no one to be found who was not saved. This is what is expressed when we chant the Heart Sutra. Saving all sentient beings is done in this spirit. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's not done in the spirit of our thinking mind, in our conditioned spirit. Because everyone is already saved. Everyone is enlightened. The point is we have to realize it, we have to actualize it: that's the practice.

Sheng Yen said that he wants to promote the Pure Land on a worldwide scale - but the Pure Land is already here. He wants to promote it, but he knows these are just words made by *upaya*, skillful means, to get us to promote the Pure Land.

Chogyam Trungpa brought the Kami over from Japan, and they built a Kami shrine at the Shambhala Mountain Center in Colorado. And every year, for six or seven years, a priest would come over from his Temple in Japan and have a ceremony for the Kami. And then finally he didn't need to come any more, because the Kami was already there and the Kami is here. And likewise, so is the Dharma.

If it weren't already here, how could it appear?

We should know that our root of delusion is already cut, but if we don't realize this we become prisoners of karmic consciousness - the I, me, and mine, our ego, which maintains us in ignorance. "Sentient beings live and are lived by their ignorance through greed and aggression, the relentless workings of karma." Cause and effect. Samsara. And Dogen adds to this, "We realize that this delusion is also our actual possession, this very delusion of samsara."

Again, we are enlightened by our delusions.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. ❖



RESIDENT REPORT

by Susan Gesshin Frey

WHAT IS RESIDENT TRAINING?

Maybe there are some of you who have that question. If so, here are some points:

To practice zazen over and over so that it becomes the basis for your life.

To live and study with a teacher.

To jump in completely – To know what is the most important thing and to do it, to overcome procrastination, to not be distracted.

To come to realize that our true nature is always with us, has never left us even for a moment – that life includes good and bad and we can go through all circumstances.

To try again and again to APPLY the teaching to our everyday activities.

To let go of the idea of gain, which may be more difficult that we can imagine.

And, maybe most importantly, to practice *with others*.

When we practice closely with others we have this precious opportunity to meet our own self. This is something you cannot find if you think only by yourself, acting by yourself. Kwong-roshi tells us: “You have to forget *this* self, the one who you think you are. Then you have the opportunity to discover *who this person is*.”

Lately we are right in the midst of dynamic change. A new well is being dug, the excavation work for the new buildings is nearly finished and a retaining wall needs to be constructed. The sangha cabin roof needs to be finished before the rain. We need a new shop building. Roshi’s studio needs to be remodeled. Physically, the old water system is on its way out and the new one on its way in. As residents we are right in the middle of it all and at the same time practicing and hosting many groups and guests. How can best face this challenge?

HOW is to forget the self. When we can forget our self, we work more harmoniously with others. This is a pretty good way to face change. Rev. Kosho Shiraishi, a senior monk from Eihei-ji (see *interview on page 14*), visited here for three months when Kashin was freshly back from her monastery practice in Japan, and because of the presence of these two we could feel the very strong spirit of the monastic container. Our new motto became “*Otsukaresama desu!*,” a Japanese greeting hard to translate but affirming that *we work hard together as one*.



Refraining from our preconceptions and delusions is needed so that we act in reality. We are open to receive this reality because we don’t have a fabrication in place that we are simply trying to confirm all the time. This means being open to “I don’t know”, which can often be really, really hard. “If you can *maintain* this Big mind in all activities,” Roshi says, “you are Roshi” (meaning Suzuki-roshi-because it takes *a lot* of practice). There is a lot of down and some up. We have to go through the up and the down to understand how it works. It is not until we bump up against our own delusions that we even notice that they are there! Roshi would say, “It’s the sand rubbing on the pearl that makes it bright.”

So, we have to practice with others...and sit lots of zazen. Zazen practice gives us a strong ability to REFRAIN from getting carried away and allows us to respond accurately in the moment, with kindness. Then the situation is resolved. Dogen says, “When the Way is entrusted to the Way, we attain the Way. When we attain the Way, the Way is always entrusted to the Way.”

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RECENT VISITORS

Reverend Bunryu Yanai, a monk from Sojiji monastery, stayed with us for a week in November. When leaving he gave each resident a calligraphy with the characters “我逢人” which mean “I encounter a person.” It was a reminder that when we truly encounter someone they are part of us. I am a member of a world that is bigger than myself, one that includes everything I meet. We are fortunate as residents to have the opportunity for so many dharma encounters.

Jocelyn Lofstrom, from our affiliated sitting group in Virginia, came for the Bodhidharma sesshin in October. Brady Baer, brother of member Brion Baer, also attended.

New member Zachary Sobree came for Rohatsu sesshin; it was his first sesshin experience! Sheryl Hamilton, Ed Cadman, Michael Lyons and Dobek Paleczka were able to join again. The early morning memorial for Suzuki-roshi seemed very special this year, and we lingered for quite a while at the stupa in the very chilly air.

RESIDENT AND GUEST UPDATE

Now we are just four residents, Koten, Jundo, Angus and myself. Trami Ton has left this mountain to take time to decide her life priorities. Dobek Paleczka visited for Rohatsu and is now in Poland attending a sesshin led by Father Max at the Lubin Monastery. Annie Hammang came for Rohatsu and is staying with us through mid-January.

John McCaslin recently moved to Sonoma from Laguna Beach and is becoming a regular for morning zazen. His dog “Monte” is becoming a favorite guest. Luke Sullivan also has moved to Santa Rosa from U.C. Davis and is now joining us fairly regularly for zazen practice. Along with our other 3-5 regulars we have quite a large group this new year!

It was very good to see James King on his recent visit over New Year’s and we hope he can return for a much longer stay.

We look forward to seeing everyone this New Year - *Otsukaresama desu!* ❖



Sunrise Ceremony - Memorial for Shunryu Suzuki-roshi

On Saturday, December 8th, we held a procession from the zendo to Suzuki-roshi’s Stupa. We expressed our gratitude, offered incense, ladled water, and recited the Great Compassionate Dharani as we witnessed the sunrise over the Valley of the Moon.

CULTIVATING ZEN SEEDS ~ KASHIN'S TRAINING AT AICHI SENMON NISODO

by *Kashin Kwong*



I was asked to make a meal on my last day at Muryoji. (lft to rt) Joko-sensei, Zuiko(tenzo), Kashin Kwong, Syubou(anja), Aoyama-roshi and Daisen-sensei.

When I came back to my daily life at Genjoji – Sonoma Mountain Zen Center – from my five month training in Japan, I thought, “here is the authentic place,” since I realized that wherever one is is always the true place of practice. This helped me digest the experience I’d just been through, under the guidance of Shundo Aoyama-roshi at Aichi Senmon Nisodo, one of the last Soto Zen training temples for female priests in Japan – founded in 1903 by Jorin Mizuno-roshi, a renowned nun-educator, who was also instrumental in women practitioners achieving equal rights in 1949.

My visit to Japan came about through various auspicious connections with Aichi Senmon Nisodo. In 2009, while attending Taiken Yokoyama-roshi’s Mountain Seat Ceremony in Hiroshima, Nyoze had been fortunate to meet privately with both Aoyama-roshi and Yusho Sasaki, her senior student, now bishop of the Sotoshu Europe. Nyoze and Yusho Sasaki crossed paths a second time in 2011, at Eihei-ji. Then, through the Soto Zen Education Center in San Francisco in 2014, she became a translator at the Sewing Sesshin here at Genjoji, and I was able to speak directly with her.

In 2015 Nyoze returned to Japan for his Zuisse Ceremony. Kwong-roshi, his successors in Iceland and Poland, and my son Ejo all accompanied him on this special pilgrimage. On our way from Eihei-ji to Sojiji we made an impulsive visit to Aichi Senmon Nisodo in Nagoya. We were fortunate that Aoyama-roshi was there, despite her usual busy schedule. Luckily Taiken Yokoyama also met us there, to introduce and translate for us. At Nisodo I was deeply impressed by the resourceful way things, though used and old, were cared for. Such respect and appreciation created an unassuming beauty. When I left, I thought how great it would be if I could train there some day.

Two years later, almost without intentionally planning for it, things naturally unfolded, and it became a reality. In April 2018, I left for Rinsoin – Suzuki-roshi’s home temple – to prepare, and study the forms that I’d need to know while training at Nisodo. Upon my arrival a week later with five other entering nuns, we were given rapid instructions on basic temple forms, including how to wear traditional formal monks’ robes. Continuing into late night, we prepared our traditional “garb” for entering a training temple. The next day, one by one, each of us passed through the main gate (sanmon), where we struck the wooden block (han) in the spirit of “Way-seeking Mind” (michi wo motomete). The instant we entered we were scolded and admonished. One head teacher yelled at me, “What are you doing here! Why don’t you speak Japanese!” This ritual took a couple of hours: afterwards we had a formal kaiseki lunch with Aoyama-roshi in the guest receiving quarters – a meal I enjoyed visually, but which I was far too nervous to eat!

Needless to say, the first month was intense, especially in memorizing the temple forms and phrases in Japanese to be said at various positions: at the shinrei (wake-up bell) starting at 4:00 am, the bonsho (great bell) with chanting and full prostrations while wearing robes with bessu (white ceremonial socks), the dairai (meal drum), the kaichin rite of locking up the temple at the end of day, and the sunset (konsho) and bedtime rituals (evening kaichin). These were daily rotating positions, but there were other ceremonies to absorb, including the hour-long morning service with its many chants, and the intensive retreats (sesshin).

Whenever I looked at Aoyama-roshi or heard her voice, however, I was struck by her deep calm. Though getting older and walking with difficulty, she would do absolutely everything. Tirelessly, she gave numerous lectures, created massive flower arrangements for visiting teachers, and gave full attention to the many visiting guests. I would often hear her warm unique laughter breaking out. The many intimate moments I was able eventually to share with her made a deep impression. For example, I remember vividly the moment when just the two of us were quietly standing next to each other, over the sink, simply brushing our teeth.

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Besides all the different classes we had to attend such as Sado (tea ceremony), Chinese poetry, Baika (Buddhist hymns), Okesa sewing, Hosshiki/Shomyo chanting and sutra soundings, Sankyu (study of Soto Zen texts), Shakyo (sutra copying), calligraphy, Buddhist history, we also had to host many events involving up to a hundred people staying overnight for three to five days, when we helped cook three meals a day. Often there was no time to do evening zazen. I was struck by how extremely hard the nuns at Nisodo work. That is essentially their zazen.

I learned that, when she was five years old, Reverend Shundo Aoyama-roshi had been brought to the temple of her aunt, Muryoji, whose strictness provided her with excellent training. Many times Aoyama-roshi expressed to us the gratitude she felt for her aunt's guidance. Her aunt's name, meaning empty and immeasurable, is also the title of her home temple in Nagano prefecture, about three hours by train north of Nisodo. I had the good fortune to go there and help during the busy Obon season (returning of ancestors). It was a very special and intimate experience, to live briefly at Aoyama-roshi's temple, and share meals as a dharma family. There I again met Reverend Yusho Sasaki, who was very kind to me. Joko-sensei and Daisen-sensei, the two abbesses now at Muryoji, are living examples of truly "living without selfish trace."

No words can describe the very deep part of my internal experience at Aichi Senmon Nisodo. A lot more could be said, but there's no room on this paper. The most important impression with which I was left involved the harmony with which the nuns did everything together. Eating, sleeping, working, brushing teeth together, there was absolutely no private space or time to escape. It seemed that we were polishing each other constantly. We learned so much from each other, just living this life, all of us practicing and training with one body and one mind. ❖



Entering Ceremony, April 2018. Outside the Main Gate. From right, Myoshin, Shindo, Kashin Kwong, Jisbo, Kosbin & Shinsbo.



Aichi Senmon Nisodo, 2015. (frt) - Shundo Aoyama-roshi with Jakusho Kwong-roshi and Taigen Yokoyama-roshi. (bk) - Kimyo Joachimsdottir and Zenki Traustason (Iceland teachers) Nyoze Kwong with Ejo & Kashin Kwong, Uji Markiewicz (head of Poland).



Rinsoin, August 2018. Rev. Hoitsu Susuki-roshi & Kashin Kwong. Back, Chitose-sama (wife) with Kanro & Momoyo (grandchildren) on the way to school.



December 31, 2018

**Ring in the New Year -
Welcoming 2019 Year of the Boar**

10:30 p.m. to 1:00 a.m..

A wonderful chance to get together and renew our commitment to practice for the New Year. Join the community for traditional, informal noodles in the sangha house. After a short zazen to close the year, at exactly midnight, everyone will get a chance will ring SMZC's great bell 108 times to welcome the New Year of the Boar. Bring a small piece of paper inscribed with any Karmic hindrances you wish to burn away during the ceremony. Refreshments offered following the ceremony.

January 5 New Year's One-Day Sitting

Deepen your practice and join us from 5:15 am to 5 pm. 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 mindfulness work practice. Includes Friday 6 pm dinner and overnight stay. Non-Members: \$85.

January 12 Saturday Dharma Talk Jakusho Kwong-roshi

11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

January 19 Saturday Dharma Talk Nyoze Kwong

11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

January 26 Saturday Community Student Talk

Katsuzen Chris King

11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen



January 26 Kids Community

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

An opportunity introduce children to the Zen Center as a fun, safe, nurturing environment. Parents are welcome to join in the fun along with their children or participate in Saturday community practice. DharmaTalk.

Please see calendar of upcoming Kids Community events on page 12.

January 28, 2018 Winter Ango Practice Period

Jan. 28 - Feb. 23

SMZC's Winter Practice Period begins. Ed 'Daiki' Cadman (Great Spirit) takes position as Shuso (head student). Opening ceremony begins Monday evening at 7:30p.m. Ango January 28 - February 23.

February 2 Practice Period ShusoTalk

Ed 'Daiki' Cadman (Great Spirit)

11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

February 9 Practice Period ShusoTalk

Ed 'Daiki' Cadman (Great Spirit)

11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

February 10 "Actualizing the Way" Seven-Day Sesshin

A multi-day retreat for experienced sitters. Manifest zazen mind in an intensive schedule that includes prostrations, ten daily periods of meditation, chanting, mindful work practice, Dharma talks, and private interviews with Kwong-roshi. Days begin at 4:45 a.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. Begins with Sunday 6:00 p.m. oryoki dinner.

**February 23 Ango Closing Ceremony
Revealing the Self**

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

"REVEALING THE SELF" 10:30 a.m. zazen; 11:00 a.m. ceremony. Participants will ask Ed 'Daiki' Cadman (Great Spirit) dharma questions to reveal the truth of practice. A Shuso celebration dinner will follow at 6:30 p.m. We encourage all members to close the practice period with us. Open to the public.

February 25 Closed through Feb. 27

March 2 Saturday Dharma Talk

Jakusho Kwong-roshi

11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

March 2 Introduction to Zen Workshop:

Returning to Forms and Rituals of Everyday Life

An introduction to the basics of Zen.

Please see page 12 for Daily Practice and Saturday Community information, including Zazen and Oryoki Instruction

Best to check website or call in case of changes – smzc.org • 707.545.8105

**March 9 "Just this Moment" One-Day Sitting**

Deepen your practice and join us from 5:15 am to 5 pm. 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 mindfulness work practice. Includes Friday 6 pm dinner and overnight stay. Non-Members: \$85.

March 11 Closed

March 16 Saturday Community Student Talk **Koten David Price**
11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

March 23 Workfest
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

March 23 Liping Qigong Private Group Retreat
We are closed to the public March 23 to the 31st.

March 30 Saturday Community Student Talk **Kevin Souza**
11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

April 4 Buddha's Birthday Three-Day Sesshin
Sesshin, literally "to touch the Mind," is a period of intensive meditation retreat to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature. This special time of practice will allow us to dive into the core of Zen training in the spirit of Shakyamuni's Birth. April 4 - 6.

April 7 Buddha's Birthday Ceremony and Potluck
1:00 p.m.
Bring your entire family to SMZC to commemorate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. We hold a flower festival in the zendo and pour sweet tea over the baby Buddha. An outdoor reception and potluck to follow. Bring a dish to share - \$10 donation appreciated.

April 8 Closed April 8 - 9

April 13 Saturday Dharma Talk **Jakusho Kwong-roshi**
11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

April 13 Spirit of Tea - Purifying the Mind
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Soei Mouri-Sensei and Kashin Julie Kwong will be leading this workshop on the study of tea in the Omote Senke tradition.

April 20 Sangha Potluck
10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Members as well as the public are invited to the Zen Center for a day of sharing Dharma and food together as a Sangha. For this gathering we will introduce new members and also welcome SMZC's new Board. Please bring plenty of delicious food to share with everyone!

April 27 Saturday Community Student Talk **Jesse Brunette**
11:00 a.m. Zendo, following 10:30 a.m. zazen

April 27 SRJC Intro to Zen Class Visits SMZC
Katsuzen King will be leading an introduction to Zen workshop for students from Santa Rosa Junior College's Community Ed. Dept. They will join SMZC for our Saturday Community Program.

DAILY PRACTICE & SATURDAY COMMUNITY

JOIN US FOR DAILY PRACTICE

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 Oryoki Instruction:

6:40 - 7:15 pm with Kashin

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 (except August and February)

Saturday Zazen Instruction

9 - 10 am, Goto

Best to check website or call in case of changes

2019 KIDS COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Please join us for Saturday Kids' Community! 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. Intended for ages 4-11. Younger ones are welcome with parent, older children welcome to assist.

Sat Jan 26 - Mike (Ukelele)

Fri May 24 Campout with Jesse

Sat May 25 - Jesse (Gardening)

Sat Sep 28 - Mike (with Yoga from Susan Leslie)

Sat Dec 14 - Julie

ZEN DUST NEWS

by Janet Buckendahl

We would like to thank all those who have visited the Store this past year – both those who have come to buy and those who have come to browse. We hope you all enjoyed a peaceful holiday season and wish you health and happiness in the year ahead.

We look forward to seeing you in 2019. ❖



SANGHA NEWS & NEW MEMBERS

by Erik Zenshin Shearer



Sangha sitting during the filming project

On Saturday, October 27th, the members of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center gathered for our fall community sangha gathering and potluck. Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin skillfully guided the sangha in sharing experiences and insights with each other through an intimate process designed to stimulate meaningful conversations. Myoko presented sangha members with cards containing an image juxtaposed with a word or phrase. Some of the images were serene and beautiful; others were more challenging, prompting strong emotional responses. Sangha members worked in dyads to share what each card elicited in us. We were encouraged to be spontaneous in our responses, avoiding attempts to find a “correct” interpretation for each image / word pairing. This process, called “Points of You”, is designed to create deliberate confusion, giving our thinking mind a short respite from preconceived ideas on how things “should” or “ought” to be, allowing us to open up new places inside ourselves, shifting our point of view. The responses shared in each dyad and later as a whole group were by turns humorous, thoughtful, and heartfelt. The day ended with a potluck feast provided by members of the sangha.

The first day of December found the sangha members as the subjects of a film project that is part of SMZC's marketing and fundraising efforts for completing the Mandala Project. Jason Nichols and long-time SMZC member and accomplished cameraman, editor, and

filmmaker Tim Metzger volunteered their expertise toward the making of a short, professional-quality film about Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and our sangha. The completed film will give us the opportunity to share an inspiring look at who we are and what we do with potential donors, new members and the general public. Tim and Jason, assisted by sangha member Kristin Nichols, captured scenes of zazen, morning service including chanting and prostrations, and an Oryoki meal inside the Zendo. The final result of this project will be available on the SMZC website as part of ongoing efforts to share our practice with a wider audience.

Finally, remember that the vitality of our sangha and the practice at Genjo-ji depends on the efforts of our members. Please consider how you can be of service in the daily activities and programs at SMZC and take opportunities to volunteer. We welcome and appreciate your sustained effort.

NEW MEMBERS

The latter half of this year has brought us five new members: JOHN BUZAN, JUSTIN SMITH, LUKE SULLIVAN, SHERYL HAMILTON, and WALLACE WITKOWSKI. We are honored to have you as members of our sangha and look forward to practicing together!



INTERVIEW WITH KOSHO SHIRAISHI

by Katsuzen King

Editor's note: Rev. Kosho (Hiroaki) Shiraishi joined us as a resident for three months last fall and has now returned to continue his training at Eihei-ji temple in Japan.

MW: Why did you come to the United States and how did you choose to visit the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center?

KS: I wasn't able to choose the temple or Zen Center which I wanted to visit. But I could choose a region (America, South America, Hawaii or Europe). And, I chose America because my great aunt lives in America, so I feel a lot of connection. Also, my friend who practices with me at Eihei-ji visited Green Gulch Farm last year and he was very impressed by American Zen.

MW: You have been training at the Soto Zen headquarters temple, Eihei-ji, for several years now. Can you say a little about your training at Eihei-ji and what position you currently hold there?

KS: My position is called "Sanji." I am the head assistant of "Sika" and "International Director." I lecture on zazen and guide tours of Eihei-ji. I also manage the schedules for visitors who come for a day and those who stay overnight.

MW: Please tell us your impressions about practicing Zen in America? Was it hard for you to get used to the Zen practice here? What were some of the main differences that you found here?

KS: I felt the spirit of "just practice" in Genjo-ji. It wasn't difficult for me to get used to the practice here. But only listening to English was a big problem for me. The main differences between Genjo-ji and the practice at Eihei-ji were that at Genjo-ji there are residents who are not monks living at the temple. Another difference was that Genjo-ji doesn't have a cemetery like we do at Eihei-ji.

MW: You grew up in a Zen family and your father is the abbot of your family temple. Will you be taking over your family temple at some point in the future? What are your current plans?

KS: Maybe I will take over my home temple in the near future. Now I don't have concrete plans, but I hope that I can create a sangha which will have the spirit of "just practice."



Jun-do and Kosho rebuilding sangha cabin roof

MW: What were some of the biggest challenges for you during your stay at Genjo-ji? Were there any major surprises?

KS: I had two challenges. One was feeling American Zen directly. Another is understanding how they operate the American Zen temple. I was surprised and moved because Genjo-ji follows the spirit of "just practice" and "work together." It is the same at Eihei-ji.

MW: Thank you for this interview. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

KS: This experience was a real treasure for me. I won't forget this trip to Genjo-ji. I realize that at Genjo-ji we sit zazen by ourselves, but on the other hand, we sit together. I sit in Japan and you sit in America, but we all sit together. If I have a chance, I want to go back to Genjo-ji. ❖

NEWS FROM DEL RAY ZEN

by Peter Shodo Pocock

Now entering its eighth year in northern Virginia, Del Ray Zen continues to offer peaceful places for weekly zazen practice and conversation, regular dharma study and discussion, and periodic intensive retreats.

After incorporating in 2017 to allow formal fundraising, the group was able to rent space in a local yoga studio for regular Saturday morning zazen followed by a brief service (then conversation at a nearby café), and for a simple Wednesday evening zazen period concluding in the Four Vows. The space is also used for a three-hour zazenkai on the first Friday of alternate months.

Every other month, the first Friday is the occasion for an oryoki supper at a member's house, where leaders teach oryoki forms for receiving and serving the meal. In addition, an occasional reading discussion program became a monthly event during 2018, including multiple sessions devoted to Dogen's Tenzo Kyokun and Bernie Glassman's Instructions to the Cook.

In July, eight members took part in a 2½-day intensive retreat, focused on oryoki, at a central Virginia retreat center. This was the third retreat of this kind for Del Ray Zen, and has now become a regular annual event. And as the year drew to its end, Del Ray Zen hosted a five-hour Rohatsu zazenkai, ending at midnight, December 7-8. Also a regular annual event, this year it drew nine participants.

Over the course of 2018 Del Ray Zen grew to number more than 20 members, with the expectation that natural growth will persist. With continued growth has come a deeper presence of dharma in the lives of members, and a realization in the larger community that something very different is happening here. ❖

The Del Ray Zen Community is an affiliated sitting group of SMZC, founded in 2011 by Kwong-roshi's students Nancy Seiko Reder and Peter Shodo Pocock.



Participants in the summer retreat



Saturday morning zazen



Preparing for oryoki meal during summer retreat

continues next page

SONOMA MANDALA – THE INVISIBLE WORK

by Cam Shunryu Kwong



The last half of this year has been dedicated to the construction of the Sonoma Mandala's infrastructure. This work, which cannot be seen, is vital to the function and support of the Zen Center's new and existing structures. The infrastructure consists of underground utilities, a water system, a septic system, an improved driveway, parking areas, site drainage and retaining walls. Much of this work was required by the County to support the new structures. This infrastructure is being designed and constructed to support future needs and projects.

Last December Weeks Drilling and Pump Company was able to find a good water source by drilling 550 feet in the field west of Roshi and Shinko's house. In the next month or two Glazier and Glazier Builders will begin construction of three 10K gallon concrete tanks that will be located a hundred feet from the well. As it turns out Glazier and Glazier built the Zen Center's existing 8K gallon concrete tank in the early 80's. When the new water system is in operation the existing artesian well by the Stupas will be used as a back-up system and for future agriculture uses.

With the new septic system operational the Zen Center has 3 functioning septic systems. The new system, located in the south west corner of the Zen Center property, has a "standard" leach field system unlike the adjacent existing "land fill" leach field system. The standard system is easy to maintain and can be easily expanded for future needs. The third and oldest septic system, located by the lower parking area, is also a standard leach field system.

The grading and preparation work for more than 300 linear feet of concrete retaining wall has been completed. The next step is for Richard's Concrete to layout the wall and then drill 50 piers that will support the 6' high wall.

So far we are on track to construct the infrastructure within the budget of \$1.2M. Unfortunately we are well beyond our scheduled completion date of 11/1/18. This is due primarily to the delays from the County in issuing building permits and the fact that the contractors are having job scheduling conflicts with our project. Because of the delays the construction work has been pushed into the winter and wet weather months. Our contractors can only work on days that it is not raining which has slowed the pace of work greatly and could push the completion date out until early spring. The delay in getting the infrastructure work done will unfortunately delay the use of the new residential buildings, Ando Quarters and the Genjo Building.

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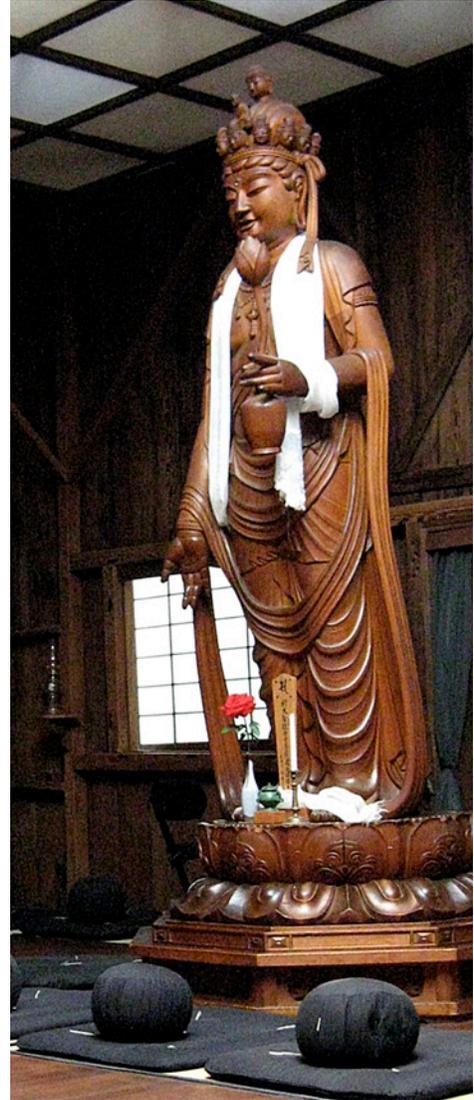
In 2019 our focus will be to finish the County requirements for Phase I of the Sonoma Mandala; Ando Quarters, Genjo Building, Sangha Cabin Remodel, Inryu Studio remodel, Maintenance/ Agriculture Building and infrastructure. We have a handful of volunteers coming to help on the various building projects beginning in the spring.

Please come visit the Zen Center, see the project and help raise the roof!





Jakusho Kwong-roshi, sitting



*Altar at Funeral and Celebration of Life
for Eko Ray Estabrook
on November 9th, 2018*

All Contributions Help
Maintain
The Buddhadharma!

Donate Now!
smzc.org

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 **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 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 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 smzc.podbean.com beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



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Mountain Wind 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 smzc.org and donate via Paypal. When subscribing via Paypal, once you have made your donation please contact us and provide 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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