

Mountain Wind

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023

SONOMA MOUNTAIN ZEN CENTER ~ GENJO~JI

VITAL TRANSITIONS, MOVING FORWARD



On Friday, September 2, and Saturday, Sept. 3, sangha members and friends of the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center gathered to take part in a series of historic temple ceremonies.

This issue of Mountain Wind commemorates those moments and is filled with images and stories from the ceremonies, celebrations and special events surrounding it. Please enjoy the content and join us in a bow to this historic and auspicious moment for our temple on the mountain.

continues next page



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR SHINSAN SHIKI AT SMZC

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

- 2:00 pm** Shuso Entering Ceremony
- 2:45 pm** Current Abbot Stepping-down Ceremony for Jakusho Kwong-roshi
- 3:30 pm** Casting and Shuso Head Seat Root Case Tea & Dharma Talk by Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi
- 7:30 pm** Celebratory Dinner

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

- 9:00 am** Mountain Seat Ceremony (Shinsan Shiki), Procession & New Abbot Takes Seat
- 11:30 am** Head Seat Takes Dharma Seat (Shuso Hossen Shiki with Ango Shuso)
- 12:30 pm** Dai Hannyo Prayer Ceremony Celebrating 50th Anniversary of the Founding of the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center

KWONG-ROSHI'S REMARKS AT ABBOT'S STEPPING DOWN CEREMONY

This is really moving. I didn't know this ceremony would be this big until everybody started coming. It's amazing what happened, and this morning we were already greeted by the fog. In the Tibetan tradition, the fog is a covering. Covering the whole mountain before the ceremony. That's how it happens here on Sonoma Mountain. And then the wind, Suzuki-roshi's wind, not making it comfortable for us. Not quite comfortable. We're just on the edge. And this ceremony, people prepared for this for weeks, for years. "Why make waves?" Why stir up waves when there is no wind? What's the saying? "Why make waves when there is no wind?" You've got it. That's the point. Everybody has all this tedious stuff. Why do we do this? So we don't forget it. Like raising a banner. We need ceremony these days; ceremony is raising us to stand up. This is a very dark time. It's about standing up now.

Actually, when we came here (I am speaking for Shinko and myself), I had no idea that we would be here for fifty years. That's a long time, eh? Half a century. If I had known that, I would not have come! I'd never been anywhere for fifty years; it just happened that way. And if you were to ask me again for another 50 years, I would do it without hesitation. It is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me, my wife, our sangha. It's the greatest thing we could ever do. I am realizing it more and more. It's just a shame that not more people are open to it. But maybe it's only for a small group that has an edge, that can see that conventional life does not make it and never can, because subject and object are separated. People cannot experience the true, real world.

So thank you everyone for being here. Look what we have created! For Shinko and I, when we came we were not prepared. We assumed that people would practice with us, but nobody would practice with us. And it was hard to say no, hard to tell people what to do. So we grew up here. I got cancer here because I couldn't say no. I tried to sit really hard, to be a good example. I had to have a knee replacement because I didn't move. That was a little bit stupid. But we endured and we stayed, and look what happened! So Shinko and I are not stepping down. How can a Zen teacher retire? That's my point. I just continue doing the same thing I've been doing, to share the knowledge and experience that we have gained. That's all. I'm doing the same thing I have been doing for the past few years. Nyoze is not taking my place; he is taking his place. No one can take your place. He is taking his place as the new abbot. Some will follow him, some will follow me. But the important thing is to keep on training and practice. That's the most important thing. And especially for the old people, they have to keep on training and practicing. They cannot follow the monastic schedule. But it is urgent; they need this. In fact, everyone needs this. Because no one can undo your karma and all the stuff that you've done in your life except you, yourself. No one can turn it around. This is a very happy day for us. So thank you.



*top: Kwong-roshi speaks during
Abbot Stepping Down Ceremony
bottom: Sangha members chant during the
Shuso Hossen Shiki Ceremony*

CASTING & SHUSO HEAD SEAT ROOT CASE TEA



*top: Polish abbot Uji Markiewicz (left),
Nyoze Kwong & Hoitsu Suzuki-rosbi drink tea during Shuso Head Seat Root Case Tea Ceremony
bottom left – Icelandic abbot Zenki Traustason assists during Root Case Tea Ceremony
bottom right: Rev. Koshi Kurotaki, abbot of Sokoji, enjoys tea during the Root Case Tea Ceremony*

HOITSU-ROSHI'S DHARMA TALK

This talk was given at SMZC on Friday, Sept. 1, to close the Winter Ango.

I've heard that the case for tomorrow's Shuso Hossen is to be the second in the Book of Serenity of Bodhidharma. I think you all know Bodhidharma and his famous stories. If you'd like a detailed account and to study more deeply, perhaps you will have to listen for that at another time or read it in the Book of Serenity. We use the name Dharma, but you know that his full name is Bodhidharma, the Dharma of Awakening. If you think of Bodhidharma as simply human, your understanding becomes narrow. To receive Bodhidharma as pure truth itself will help you to awaken to this story directly.

When asked what is the most important thing in the world, Bodhidharma said it was impossible to point out. So I ask you now, in this world, what is the most important thing? You must think about this deeply, receive the question deeply. You all sit zazen. As you sit zazen, what is most important? I believe you will come to understand this directly and naturally.

These days my hearing has become hard. From the time I turned 65, all of a sudden I couldn't hear well. Yesterday morning I tried to enter the Sodo but the door wasn't open yet. I was an hour early. Finally I was let in, and I was sitting by myself. It was quiet. Outside the moon was bright. As I sat, a sound emerged in my ears. I could hear the beating of my own heart. Since my hearing has become bad, I can hear the beating of my own heart. As I began not to be able to hear one thing, I could begin to hear another. This is my life. When my ears were good, the thing that I couldn't hear—the sound of my own life—now I can hear. At first it was an obstacle in the way. But as I sat zazen I began to be grateful for the sound of my life. I could hear what I couldn't hear before, the sound of life. And the importance of this life is not just about me. The life that flows and emerges through heaven and earth, all are of utmost importance.

It is not only things that have life. I picked up a rock in front of the Sodo today. I picked up another and I smashed them together. They are hard rock. They sound good. All things in their own way have their own importance. The great ancestor Dharmadaishi said that all things of great importance are empty. Empty. All these things of great importance, everything—and then we must say that there is nothing.

As you sit zazen, even if you can't hear the beating of your heart, you can receive the sound of your own breath. Even without thinking, without trying, the sound of your breath will come.

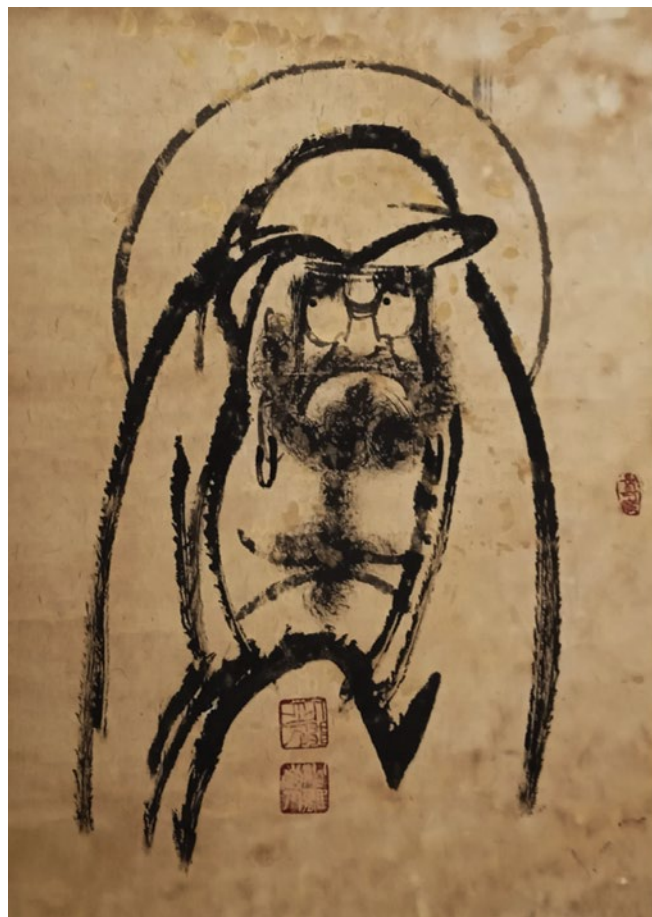
Dogen-zenji said, "Think not-thinking." Our life is someplace beyond thinking. It is where there is not-thinking. That life is right there with us. Ah, there it is. Dhar-

madaishi said, "It is all emptiness." This zazen will continue for a whole life; we should receive with gratitude. It is this teaching of emptiness that in ancient times Bodhidharma traveled from India to bring to us. Bodhidharma is not a person from the past.

Please, everyone, as you sit zazen, as you sit as Dharmadaishi, as you sit as Shakyamuni Buddha, there is Bodhidharma. Today, the abbot Jakuso Kwong-roshi steps aside. He will continue to teach everywhere and at all times, to all of you. Time. Is there time? No time? There is always time. If there isn't time, we're in trouble.

I will finish now. I will finish this dharma talk now. The true dharma talk is not what I say. Anytime you would like to hear the true dharma talk, be present. Be quiet. Settle down. Listen. Let's listen to this full, natural and present dharma.

Thank you very much. ❖



CELEBRATORY DINNER



top left – Sangha members enjoy the Celebratory Dinner

top right – Zenki Traustason offers congratulatory toast to Kwong-roshi and the SMZC sangha

middle: Kwong-roshi and Shuso Shoshin Brynjar Kristinsson

bottom left – Sangha members enjoy congratulatory speeches
bottom right – Congratulatory meal prior to dining



BOILING BLACK RICE

by Jona Ingibjorg Shiko Jonsdottir

Ekai whispered in my ear, “Bat shit looks like tiny black rice.” We were on the cleaning crew together. The night before I had arrived at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center sleep-deprived and jet-lagged. Hopes of getting a good night’s sleep in my hotel room between my two flights, had vanished into thin air, thanks to an air-conditioner malfunctioning in tune with the roaring highway traffic outside.

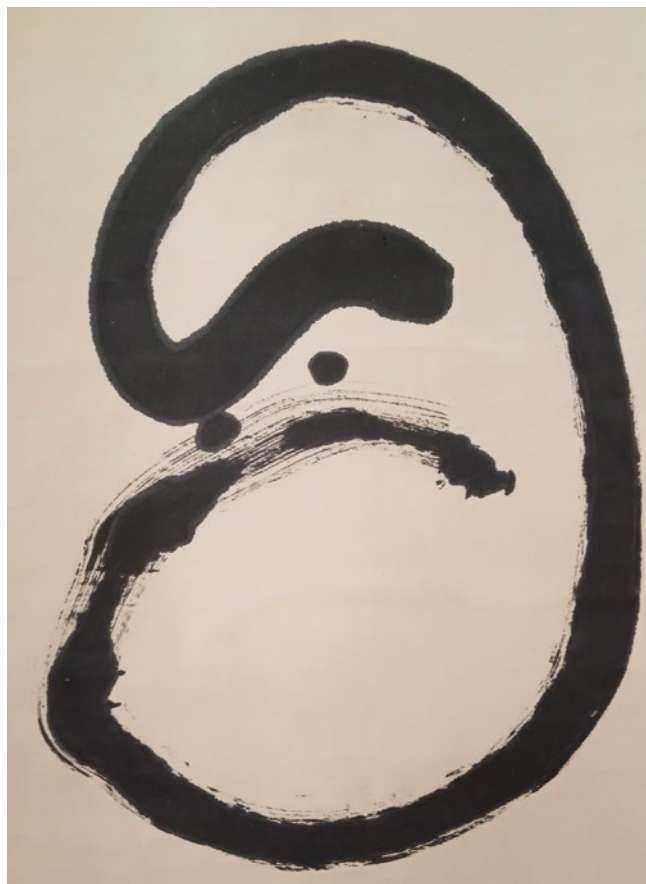
Tall trees and singing cicadas offered a gracious greeting to this foreign woman standing outside the Sangha House in the thick, warm air. I woke up exhausted a few hours later, just in time for day one of sesshin. The next couple of days were challenging, but slowly my biological clock adjusted to a new rhythm. It was now or never, a once-in-a-lifetime experience—a pilgrimage perhaps—and my first visit to Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.

There was so much to take in—too much even. The heat, dryness, tall trees, rustic buildings, practice forms and positions, the people and wildlife, the whole energy of the place. Bewildering at times. On rare occasions I felt a sense of inner calm, while visiting the stupas of Shunryu Suzuki-roshi and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and when a frog joined me in the shower one evening.

During most of my stay, my mind reflected the state of my nervous system, which has been on overdrive for the past eight years, first while pursuing my doctorate, and later, when taking care of my ailing parents. Keeping constant vigil over their well-being while navigating a broken health care system culminated in the passing of both parents, only six weeks apart. The timing was pure coincidence, as they divorced forty years ago. Three days into sesshin, my mother appeared, thanked me for taking care of her, and told me not to worry about her anymore. It was over. I sobbed in my chair—as if I were not wet enough, sweating profusely in my robes.

It feels like I was constantly “boiling black rice” during my stay on Sonoma Mountain: discovering moment by moment that everything I was experiencing was not what I thought. I would like to believe that every moment was instead an open invitation to “turn the light inwards.” By coincidence, I had made a vow to maintain an open mind and heart during my stay, let things be, and not judge. Truthfully, I felt most of the time like this sloppy Zen woman while the other practitioners seemed to hover elegantly above the zendo floor, bowing and chanting with exquisite finesse.

I had read the books the Shuso recommended on the commitment form before I arrived. The common thread seemed to be an endless negation of everything, giving rise to contradictions, confusion, and mountains of pure black rice. Zen is so irritating at times! Perhaps intentionally so. Indeed, one might say I was fortunate to be invited to boil black rice during my stay on Sonoma Mountain. What is the taste of boiled black rice? I don’t know. ❖



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my stay on Sonoma
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was experiencing was not what
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Nov 3–4 'Peacefully Settling Down' 1-Day Sitting

On-site + Online (Zoom)
Nov 3, 7:30 PM PDT – Nov 04, 5:30 PM PDT

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 email you to complete your registration. \$85-160/night.

Nov 6 SMZC Closed

Nov 11 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 Kwong-roshi)

On-site + Online (Zoom)
10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

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

Nov 18 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community)

On-site + Online (Zoom)
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, Nov 11.

Saturday Community (Dharma Talk by Nyoze Kwong)

On-site + Online (Zoom)
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. 10:30 am–11:00 am Zazen 11:00 am–12:00 pm Dharma Talk.

Nov 23 SMZC Closed for Thanksgiving

Nov 24 November Fusatsu Ceremony

On-site + Online (Zoom)
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.

Nov 25 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community)

On-site + Online (Zoom)
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, Nov 11.

Saturday Community (Dharma Talk by Kaiin Chybicki)

On-site + Online (Zoom)

10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

Dharma talk will be given by Kaiin Chybicki following 10:30-11:00 am zazen. 10:30 am–11:00 am Zazen 11:00 am–12:00 pm Dharma Talk.

Nov 27 Rohatsu 5-Day Sesshin (1 to 5 Overnights)

On-site + Online (Zoom)
Nov 27, 6:00 PM PST – Dec 02, 8:00 AM PST

This retreat is a period of time set aside to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature. RSVP and we will email to confirm accommodation details and complete your registration via online invoice. \$85/night & up. 10-20% discount for members.

Dec 1 Tetsuya: All-Night Sitting & Founder's Sunrise Ceremony

On-site + Online (Zoom)
Dec 01, 7:00 PM PST – Dec 02, 7:30 AM PST

In the spirit of Buddha's enlightenment, on Friday night we will be in tetsuya, which means we will "sit through the whole night," from 12:00 am to 4:00 am. \$50 admission

Dec 4–5 SMZC Closed

Dec 9 Meditation Instruction (Includes Saturday Community)

On-site + Online (Zoom)
9:00 AM–12:00 PM PDT

See description in previous event, Nov 11.

Saturday Community (Dharma Talk by Kwong-roshi)

On-site + Online (Zoom)
10:30 AM–12:00 PM PST

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

Dec 14–30 SMZC Closed

Dec 31 Ringing in the New Year: Welcoming 2024 Year of the Dragon

Dec 31, 2023, 11:30 PM PST –
Jan 01, 2024, 11:30 PM PST
On-site only

A wonderful chance to get together and renew our commitment to practice for the New Year. Onsite only event (not online).

Morning Zazen: Monday–Saturday, 5:15–7:00 am

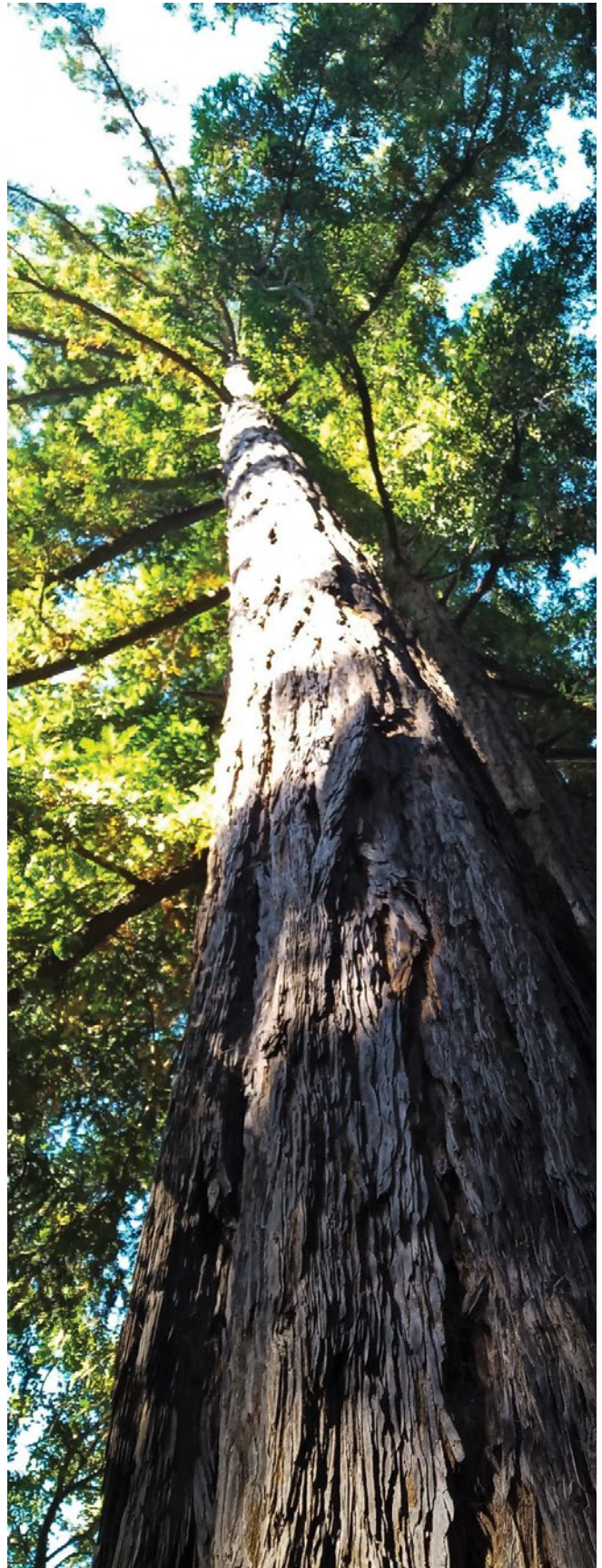
Evening Zazen: Tue–Fri, 7:30–9:00 pm

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

When we practice zazen our mind is
calm and quite simple.

But usually our mind is very busy
and complicated, and it is difficult
to be concentrated on what we
are doing. This is because before
we act we think, and this thinking
leaves some trace. Our activity is
shadowed by some preconceived
idea. The thinking not only leaves
some trace or shadow, but also
gives us many other notions about
other activities and things. These
traces and notions make our
minds very complicated. When we
do something with a quite simple,
clear mind, we have no notion or
shadows, and our activity is strong
and straightforward. But when we
do something with a complicated
mind, in relation to other things
or people, or society, our activity
becomes very complex.

—Suzuki-roshi,
Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind



SHINSAN SHIKI (MOUNTAIN SEAT CEREMONY)







DAI HANNYA PRAYER CEREMONY



Nyoze Kwong, all of Sonoma Mountain is waiting for you to assume your role as the Head Monk and Teacher at the Zen Center. This is your destiny and you have made all the appropriate steps to follow in Jakusho's path. We all bow to the Dharma-the Truth-that has brought you to this station and a Sangha that will follow your lead.

Nine Bows, Phil 'Taiten' Jackson



SHUSO INTERVIEW WITH SHOSHIN BRYNJAR KRISTINSSON

by Genzen Ed Cadman



To begin, what was it like for you to return to Sonoma Mountain from Iceland?

I have very fond memories from when I attended Ango in August 2017, both of the place and the people, so I was excited to return but also worried about what awaited me. I knew I would be going way out of my comfort zone in accepting the role of Shuso. The fact that this would be a very special Ango was both terrifying and magnificent. Knowing my weaknesses but also my strengths, I was determined to arrive at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and just do my best, hoping that it would be enough.

Traveling from Iceland is a long journey. The first days I felt jet-lagged and in the evenings my body just wanted to sleep. Fortunately, I arrived at Genjo-ji a few days before the Ango started so I had time to adapt.

Could you tell us how you decided on your theme for the Ango? What new insights did you receive by focusing on this theme?

The theme I chose was the following passage from Dogen Zenji written in the “Fukan Zazengi”:

“You should therefore cease from practice based on intellectual understanding, pursuing words and following after speech, and learn the backward step that turns your light inwardly to illuminate your self. Body and mind of themselves will drop away, and your original face will be manifest. If you want to attain suchness, you should practice suchness without delay.”

I remembered that when we were reading the “Fukan Zazengi” during my previous Ango in 2017, the sentence about learning to take the backward step and turn the light around to shine within really spoke to me. I related to it because it is something I could easily envision, and

felt was practical for my own practice and life, as it reminded me to stop, let go, and experience what I was doing directly.

In my talks I tried to keep it simple and talk about the parts of Zen practice that have interested me and that I think are important. Beginning with introducing myself, I tried to explain what I felt were some underlying aspects necessary to understand the theme: the gap between mind and reality, and the importance of trust in shikantaza, just sitting in zazen, as a way to narrow/close the gap and experience life directly at the crossroads of the absolute and relative. In some ways I was talking so that a complete beginner could follow along and understand. There was a thread connecting the talks that I hope was conveyed. I really enjoyed the time I got to study and prepare.

Although I arrived with a few ideas on how to structure the talks, they completely changed once I started delving more deeply into the theme. I had thought about *eko hensho* for a long while without really getting it, but it was not until the study and preparation that the meaning came to me. In Japanese the *e* in *eko hensho* is “to turn,” *ko* is “light,” *hen* is “return,” and *sho* is “illumination.” So the phrase means to turn the light and return its illumination. It is illustrated by when the sun has set but still illuminates the sky with beautiful oranges, purples, and reds under the evening clouds. In our practice we can understand this as a metaphor for shikantaza, “just sitting,” when the small mind has settled and awareness illuminates our whole life. As simply as I could, I would explain the theme as urging us to stop searching outside of ourselves and instead just let go, turn the light of awareness inward, and then return the illumination. All concepts will drop off, and we will experience our lives directly. We can train for this in our shikantaza practice and in our everyday lives.

Could you relate some of your memories from receiving priest ordination at the opening of Ango?

Having received ordination just an hour after the Ango opening ceremony, I honestly have to say that the immediate effect was a feeling of burden. When Roshi handed me the robe, he said, “This one is heavy.” And for the first few days and weeks it weighed me down; this robe was heavier than my old one and had much longer sleeves. Now I had not only the jubon under the koromo but also a kimono, a (really!) long obi over the kimono and shukin (robe belt) over the koromo, so it took longer to put on and take off.

Then, of course, the okesa. I had to learn to put it on and take it off properly and fold it in a specific way—right at the end of each service. Often I had to run from the Zendo down to the Sangha House and arrive just in time for the oryoki meal. But by the third week of Ango, when Sesshin started, I had gotten used to this new reality and started to enjoy it all, seeing it as an opportunity to be

more present before and after zazen.

I am still contemplating what being ordained means for my life in the longer term. In the ordination ceremony I received a new rakusu from Roshi on which is written “Clarify mind, help the people.” This sentence has really been guiding my life in these last few weeks as I navigate my way back into everyday life here in Iceland. I truly want to keep finding ways in my life to “Clarify mind, help the people.” abbot; Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi.

Readers also like to see into your day-to-day experiences as Shuso. Could you tell us of a special memory? How do you think your practice and life might change by having been Shuso at Genjo-ji?

I really enjoyed the time when I sat in my room studying to prepare my talks, especially on the colder mornings, as it was the easiest time to stay focused. During the hot afternoons I could get tired, but I was always inspired by others’ diligent work practice. Hearing them work really helped a lot.

I think I will be more confident in practice at Nátthagi, our Zen center in Iceland, especially when it comes to guiding others. That was such a big part of my role as Shuso, and something I have not been comfortable doing before. Maybe I will get more chances to share my understanding with others and develop my practice by expressing it in words. I will definitely continue to express it without words! As with the ordination, I feel that the Shuso experience is still sinking in.

You were actively participating in the preparations and enactment of the Shinsanshiki / Mountain Seat Ceremony installing Nyoze as abbot. Concurrently you were preparing for closing ceremonies honoring you, the Shuso, including the Mondo Q & A, held on the same morning as the Shin-

sanshiki. What can you share with us about your participation in these ceremonies? Do you remember the question you presented to Nyoze as he stood on the mountain platform, and his response?

The whole experience of being the Shuso on this special Ango culminated in the ceremonies on the closing weekend. It is such an honor to have been Shuso in this practice period that marked fifty years of practice at this auspicious place, as well as the change in abbots. At one point in the final week it dawned on me that I would be Kwong-roshi’s last Shuso and Nyoze’s first (and as somebody said, in between I would serve under Hoitsu-roshi!). Just the thought brought tears to my eyes. It truly was a magnificent and joyful experience to be at the core of all the ceremonies.

The question I asked Nyoze was: “What is the nature of the new abbot’s guiding light?” To which he answered: “Today it is red.” ❖



Brett Myoshin Pyle, Salida, CO

My first experience with Zen and Buddhism was *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*, which I read around 1994 (at age 31) while living in Houston. It led me to start sitting at home on my own. I moved to the Sierra Nevada in 1997 and began looking for a Zen center to visit to see if it was a practice that was as interesting and meaningful as what I had been reading. I first visited SMZC in the fall of 1998 and immediately felt a deep connection to Kwong-roshi and everyone here. I visited regularly from 1998 to 2004 and received Jukai at SMZC in November 2002. In 2008 I moved from California to Salida, Colorado, with my family (wife Shannon Nelson and two young children, Sabine and Casey). I practiced irregularly from then on while focusing on raising children and earning a living. In July 2023 my daughter Sabine relocated to Arcata to start college, so I went along to help her move. We came back to SMZC for the first time in 20 years. I still felt a deep connection to everyone there. I am reconnecting to the sangha and want to continue to support this wonderful place and the people who keep it going. I hope to do a residency when I retire in a few years.

Ben Goldberg, Santa Rosa, CA

I am excited to have found Sonoma Mountain Zen Center as a transplanted resident of Santa Rosa, born originally in New Jersey. I am new to Buddhist practice but have been gradually waking up to my conditioning over the past several years through various kinds of readings, audio programs, and intensive personal experience. I live with my partner Rebekah and son Benny about 20 minutes from Sonoma Mountain. I work as a psychiatrist at the jail in Sonoma County. I am hoping to become a wiser, more patient, more compassionate, and quieter partner, parent, friend, and doctor.

Grant Gibbs, Petaluma, CA

I live in Petaluma with my wife and teenage son. Our daughter is in college at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, studying musical theater. I have been teaching English at Montgomery High School in Santa Rosa for 21 years. When not working, I enjoy writing and playing music, walking and hiking, reading, gardening and cooking. I grew up in Santa Barbara and was a committed, practicing Christian for most of my adult life, employed as a youth director at Lakeside Presbyterian Church in SF, and as the Contemporary Worship Band Leader at a Lutheran Church in Petaluma. In my twenties I began meditating and developed an interest in Zen that stayed with me through the eventual evaporation of my Christian faith. My schedule continues to make it a challenge for me to participate in the sangha as much as I would like. But I am

coming to understand that there will never be a perfect time to commit. So I have finally become a member of the sangha. I look forward to practicing the Buddha Way with you all.

Lori Zarr, Petaluma, CA

I live with my husband and teenage daughter in Petaluma, where I have been since 1993 after growing up in Concord, Massachusetts. I practice Japanese acupuncture in a clinic shared with my husband, who practices Chinese herbal medicine. My root teacher was Liu Ming of Da Yuan Circle, who taught both Zuo Wang (nonconceptual meditation) and a conceptual ngondro practice in the lineage of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. After my teacher's death in 2015, I continued to practice on my own, but more recently have been finding myself called to practice with the sangha here at the Zen Center and to the land itself. I enjoy knitting, weaving, tea, and spending time in nature. ❖

Theme for Summer Ango 2023

Shuso – Shoshin (Beginner's Mind)
Brynjar Shoshin Kristinsson



“You should therefore cease from practice based on intellectual understanding, pursuing words and following after speech, and learn the backward step that turns your light inward to illuminate your self. Body and mind will drop away of themselves, and your original face will manifest itself. If you want to attain suchness, you should practice suchness without delay.”

*by Dogen Zenji
excerpt from Fukanzazengi*

FROM YOUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES — OCTOBER 2023

Tensan Chuck Ramey, President | Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin, Secretary

Your Board of Trustees would like to express our deep appreciation for the Sangha's support during the planning and execution of the Shinsanshiki Mountain Seat on September 2. The two-day ceremony installing Nyoze Kwong as abbot of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center was a great success, thanks to the tremendous effort and generosity of our residents, staff, and volunteers. For many months, the board and staff have been focused almost entirely on the logistics for the ceremony, and having accomplished this with such success, are now able to move forward with gratitude and optimism.

At the October 14 board meeting we began to look at and take action on our next steps forward. We are grateful to have received a healthy third-quarter financial report for our operating fund, thanks to the Sangha's continued support and commitment through the challenging last three years. The board is now turning its attention to renewed fundraising efforts to complete the Mandala Project, and we look forward to beginning construction on the Sanman (Mountain Gate) in the spring as beautifully symbolic of completing Kwong-roshi's vision on Sonoma Mountain for centuries to come.

We are pleased to welcome Shindo Kevin Souza to the Board as our new Membership and Community representative to fill the vacancy of Zenjin Erik Shearer. Zenjin has generously offered to continue helping with the Mandala Project going forward.

Finally, the board has decided to renew our call for resident and volunteer opportunities. In the next month or so you will see new efforts to reach out to the Sangha and beyond. We have seen strong, renewed interest in practice on Sonoma Mountain in the wake of the Mountain Seat Ceremony, for which we'd like to again express our heartfelt gratitude to the Sangha that we serve.

In Gassho,
Tensan and Myoko



*top: Tensan Chuck Ramey and Carol Adams
at Shinsan Shiki Reception*

*middle: Richard Sparks rings bonsbo bell
during Shinsan Shiki Ceremony*

*bottom: Charcoal incense is lit for
Shinsan Shiki Ceremony Procession*

ZEN DUST NEWS

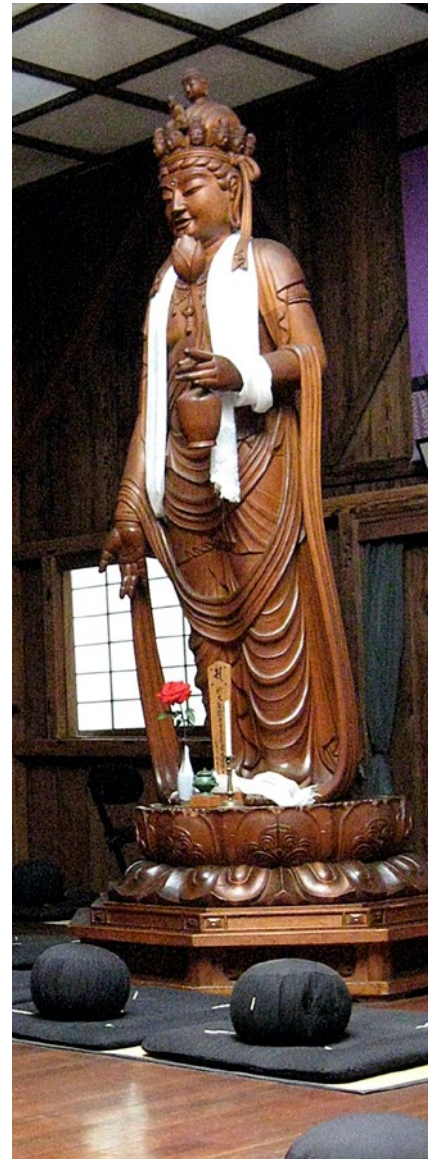
by Carol Adams

As the days grow shorter and the fall brings relief from long hot summer days, Zen Dust store is preparing for all your holiday shopping needs. Janet diligently continues to sew zafus, zabutons, chair cushions and oryoki cloths, so we will be fully stocked with meditation supplies moving into this holiday season. We also received a new supply of beautiful incense bowls that make lovely gifts to grace a friend or loved one's home altar... maybe even yours! Incense and mala supplies will also be restocked very soon.

We still have quite a few 50th Anniversary Celebration T-shirts for sale featuring Roshi's distinctive design and calligraphy, so if you missed the chance to get one at the Shinsanshiki event, please consider picking one up at the store before they disappear in a flash. We have quite a few large and XL sizes available in white, a few in black and also a handful of medium sizes left. For \$27, this commemorative T-shirt makes a great gift for that special someone.

In the last newsletter, we called for volunteers to come help maintain various functions within the Zen Dust store dynamic. Gratitude goes out to Brion Baer for coming forward to manage and maintain the store's book inventory and display. Thank you Brion! And now we are looking for help to make the greeting cards sold in the store. This opportunity to help support your temple involves attaching/pasting photos to card blanks, packaging and pricing them for sale and managing card inventory. Zen Dust will provide all materials needed. It should take about 1-2 hours per month. Please call or email the office if you feel called to participate: (707) 545-8105 or carol@smzc.org.

Zen Dust store is located beneath the Sangha House and open from noon to 1:30 p.m. following the Saturday Community program. Mail order is still on hold, so please join us on site for all your practice and gifting needs! We continue to offer a wide range of incense, lovely malas, books galore, T-shirts, statues for your altar and garden, as well as a vast array of meditation supplies. ❖



Please, everyone, as you sit zazen, as you sit as Dharmadaishi, as you sit as Shakyamuni Buddha, there is Bodhidharma. Today, the abbot Jakuso Kwong-roshi steps aside. He will continue to teach everywhere and at all times, to all of you.

Time. Is there time? No time? There is always time.

If there isn't time, we're in trouble.

—Hoitsu Suzuki-Roshi

All Contributions
Help Maintain
the Buddhadharma!

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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.

Talks by Kwong-roshi and senior students are now available on the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center **YouTube** channel (search by **@sonoma-mountainzencenter**). Talks will be posted one month after the live talk.



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MOUNTAIN WIND STAFF

Editor-in-Chief: Katsuzen King

Copy Editor: Keiko Ohnuma

Layout: Kurt Morella

Mailing & Postage: Jo Morohashi

Contributing Writers:

Carol Adams, Genzen Cadman,
Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin,
Jona Ingibjorg Shiko Jonsdottir,
Shoshin Brynjar Kristinsson,
Tensan Ramey

Contributing Photographers:

Alan Schwartz, Angus Choan Atwell,
Russel Bradley, Erik Castro, Kaian Jaroslaw
Chibicki, Bankyo Jacob Jankowski, Gail Payne,
Kent Rossiter, Shannon Rossiter, Evan Shears,
Chang Qi Shi, Chang Xing Shi

CONTACT US

Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
6367 Sonoma Mountain Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
(707) 545-8105
Fax (707) 545-9508
Email: office@smzc.org
Website: www.smzc.org

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This newsletter is available to all members of the SMZC sangha. If you are not a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and would like to receive the newsletter, the cost for a one-year subscription is \$25. Please call the office to request a subscription, or visit online at www.smzc.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.



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“For the Beneficial Protection
and Awakening of All Beings”



SONOMA MOUNTAIN ZEN CENTER
GENJO-JI
6367 SONOMA MOUNTAIN ROAD
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95404