



JULY - DECEMBER 2019

## THE ELDER SHARIPUTRA AND THE GODDESS

*The following Dharma talk was given by Kwong-roshi on July 13, 2019 at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.*

The opening of the sutra that we just chanted always moves me and I hope you don't think you will get something from me as the object or that you're the subject receiving something from me because it all comes from you. This is Yogacara and in ancient times, when people recited the sutra dakinis would throw flowers into the crowd. They were blessing the crowd because the truth was spoken. Not that I'm going to say the truth, (laughs) but the dharma is true. And even in the days of ancient history the sutras weren't taken for granted. Our ancestors were out on the road proclaiming the truth like in the Heart Sutra. In the old translations, the Heart Sutra is referred to as the Perfection of Wisdom. I'm guilty of this myself; we tend to make words and phrases shorter. When they get shorter they lose some of the meaning of the tradition. And so it's called the PERFECTION of the HEART SUTRA. We must understand that the Heart Sutra is us, individually, you and me. Although strictly speaking, there is no you and me.

The wonderful thing about the dharma is that Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are saving people. Their vow is to save all sentient beings. But there's no one to be saved. That is perfection. It's beyond duality. If I do this, then that will happen. It's beyond that paradigm which always traps us. Not only does it trap us, but it makes us suffer.

When we chant these sutras, dakinis will come and spread flowers and repeat a mantra (Roshi repeats a seed syllable mantra). And as they continue throwing their flowers they repeat, "Be good" or "Everything is clean and pure." And when that mantra is voiced, it becomes sacred. It reminds me of the Japanese professor years ago who proved the purity and sacredness of water. Maybe some of you read the article.

When we say a mantra we should recognize it as primordial sound. Maybe it doesn't make any sense but there's a deep sound to it. And the water has ears and can understand any language because the water is open and sacred. And similarly, murky water can become pure. The professor froze water and investigated it in a scientific manner. He found that water can be transformed and can become pure. And not only water, but since we're two thirds water, we can be transformed as well. And for us, when we chant our chants the sound reverberates in the two thirds of us that is water. In this way, we can become pure as well.

And the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are joyous, not just because they're saving people but because of the realization of bright illumination, the true joy of that realization. They're not just trying to commiserate with people. They're not even trying but they're naturally sharing their joy with humanity.

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Many years ago Suzuki-roshi said to make Zen American, and I tried. But because I didn't understand Zen, it became psychological in a similar way that mindfulness has become a sort of psychology. People do benefit from it. I'm not saying that no one benefits from it. Mindfulness comes from shamatha and the other side of shamatha is vipassanā. It's insight. But what's this all for? It's for the cessation of suffering; that's what it's all about. Buddha stated that 2,585 years ago in his Four Noble Truths. The Third Truth proclaims that there is a cessation to suffering. So wow! Suffering is optional. No one pays attention to it. Everyone wants the fake diamond, they don't want the jewel. Even when they've seen the jewel and heard about the jewel, they will acquiesce and take the fake jewel.

I've been reading a book on the teachings of Vimalakirti written by Robert Thurmond. It's now in its 19th or 20th reprint so it was published quite some time ago. And Professor Thurmond is actually an eminent scholar and well-versed in the Tibetan language. I was very happy to receive this book. Vimalakirti was like a second Buddha and his name means 'spotless'. He was spotless (laughs).

He was one of the few people who when he met the Buddha, said to the him, "I don't acknowledge you because you're not real." And the Buddha said, "Yes, you're right." (laughs) On the relative level, you're right. But on the absolute level, there's nothing. And that nothingness sounds pretty negative but within that nothingness, everything can happen. Nothingness or emptiness is dependent on somethingness.

When I was in the Benedictine monastery in Lubin, Poland they asked me about emptiness and I told them that emptiness gets lonely sometimes so it needs something. (laughter) We can't describe it but it can be actualized and that's where we can make it the truth in our life. And Nāgārjuna said that one who has experienced emptiness can do anything, whatever you put your mind or heart to. Does emptiness or void or shunyata sound negative to you or do you all know something about the Dharma? (woman replies "I think of the word 'boundless'") Well, whatever you want to call it. The important thing is to have some pivotal moment with this boundlessness.

I've mentioned before about the relationship between subject and object and the duality or polarity, if we don't understand this it will cause us to suffer. I mean this is just a fact. Every time you suffer, study it. WHY? Why are you suffering? You have to study your life or otherwise due to human habit and our conditioning we'll just repeat our same habitual patterns. There was a Tibetan story about a man walking down the street and he sees a large hole. He says to himself, "I better be careful" and at that moment, bang! He falls into the hole. He not only falls in once or twice but he actually falls in three times! And the fourth time he says to himself, "This time I'm not going to fall in the hole." So, when he saw the hole again, he made the decision to walk to a different street and he didn't fall in. We have to make a clear decision in our lives to establish our true direction.

We have a special schedule today so I have to end early. (laughs) Saved by the bell. (laughter) The reconciliation of dichotomies. This is the traditional spirit of the Middle Way. When you think of 'middle' you may think it's in between. But to understand the Middle Way, we can say in a very small understanding that it's in between, but when it's in between, it means it's beyond dichotomy. Can you imagine that with consistent practice in zazen that you will come to a point where there will be no object. I mean it's amazing what Buddha discovered, because objects cause grasping and attachment which is suffering. There's no objective world. The Perfection of the Heart Sutra repeats that truth over and over again. There's no objective world. (Roshi laughs) But we're living the relative truth and the absolute truth. There's no Buddha, there's no objective world, then there are flowers on the altar. That's the conventional world, our regular world. But first it's no, then it's yes. Ordinary people have it the other way. It's that, over there – it's that object. But it's not with the same understanding.

There's an old poem about mountains and rivers which I believe is Chinese. 'Before you study zen, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers. And then, after you've studied for some time, mountains are no longer mountains and rivers are no longer rivers.' So, for instance, fire; fire is a word and just a name. And there's another meaning – when you touch fire it will burn you. That's the objective world. But at first we don't see the objective world because there's nothing to see in meditation. We're not looking at something. We don't need to look for something in twenty-four hours. In zazen we're just sitting. Non-perception. Non-thinking. And at that point you're not creating karma because there's non-perception. Perception and consciousness are creating karma. And it's when you have that karmic consciousness or karmic condition, it creates suffering. It not only creates suffering, but disaster.

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Jeez, this stuff is heavy but it's freedom and liberation. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are joyously throwing all these flowers. And Shariputra, who appears in the Heart Sutra, wasn't a bodhisattva but was a sravaka, a direct disciple of the Buddha. So he actually represents a lower enlightenment. The Goddess comes to him and she joyfully showers him with flower petals of all kinds. And they stuck to his body while all the flowers on the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas fell off. Shariputra was going like this. (Roshi brushes imaginary flowers off his arms) "I can't get these flowers off my body!" And she said, "Well, it's because of your discriminating mind." (Roshi laughs) "It's because your mind is caught in grasping and attaching."

This year one of my dharma brothers died and he was the one who painted the many Bodhiarmas we have. He did the one you see here in the zendo. I was shocked to hear of his death and wrote to Korea about it. Bum Su Sa Nim wrote back: 'BUM JU'S DEATH COMES FROM YOU!' And it stunned me when I read that. So it means there is Bum Ju's death and there is not Bum Ju's death. When we hear that someone has died, we're out there grasping and attached and fixated to that object, but actually it comes from you. Right here. It's even more than 'I feel it in my heart'. It's a sutra. It's the universe. It's not just your heart, emotional or intellectual. It's the universe! It comes from you! And when he said that I was very puzzled for a long time. You don't figure it out. You keep sitting. Non-perception. It's like it's in there cooking and some conclusion comes out. It's not that we don't cry or feel sorrow or grief. But we see that object out there and know it's not all out there.

There's a teaching in the book about the Goddess and Shariputra. And this is worth noting because it's about female and male. It reminded me of the first Western Buddhist Teacher Meeting we had with the Dalai Lama, I think it was March of 1993. It was at that meeting when I first met Jetsuma Tenzin Palmo. She's the first recognized female Tibetan teacher and she spent a long time doing solo retreat in a cave. And during the meeting with His Holiness, since we were the little Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, we were each given a turn to ask him a question. In his tradition the lamas can't ask him but because we're baby buddhas and bodhisattvas, we can ask him a question. The baby can ask anything. (Roshi laughs) We're teenagers. We can ask anything (laughs). And she said to him, "In your palace imagine that all the portraits and figures on the thankas were turned into females. What's the problem?" The 6th ancestor, Dogen, Suzuki-roshi, they're all women. But His Holiness said, "There's no problem. There's no dichotomy – no male, no female."

So, I'll end with this story about Shariputra. You can see Shariputra in the ceremony trying to get the flowers off of himself. (Roshi laughs). He was the wise disciple but not quite truly wise. Here's the dialogue I'll read in closing: So this is Shariputra's view and the common view of many males.

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“He said, 'Goddess, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state? (Why are you female?)' The Goddess replied, 'Although I have sought my female state for these twelve years, I have not found it.' (Roshi laughs). That's great. She's really a Goddess. “Reverend Shariputra, if a magician were to incarnate a woman by magic, would you ask her, 'What prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?' Shariputra: 'No! Such a woman would not really exist so what would there be to transform?' Goddess: 'Just so, Reverend Shariputra, all things do not really exist. Now, would you think, 'What prevents one whose nature is that of a magical incarnation from transforming herself out of her female state?'"

“Thereupon the Goddess employed her magical powers to cause the elder Shariputra to appear in her form and to cause herself to appear in his form.” She became a male and she turned him into a female. “Then the Goddess, who was transformed into Shariputra said, 'Reverend Shariputra, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?' And Shariputra, in the form of the Goddess, replied, 'I no longer appear in the form of a male.' (Roshi laughs) I have breasts! (laughs) Shariputra was shocked. 'My body is changed into the body of a woman. I don't know what to transform.' The goddess continued, 'If the elder could gain change-out-of-the-female state, then all women could change out of their female state. All women appear in the form of women in just the same way as the elder appears in the form of a woman. While they are not women in reality, they appear in the form of a woman.'” This is the absolute and the relative. Over and over again. The ultimate and the conventional. “With this in mind, the Buddha said, 'In all things there is neither male or female.'

“Then the Goddess released her magical powers and each returned to his ordinary form. She then said to him, 'Reverend Shariputra, what have you done with your female form?' Shariputra said, 'I neither made it nor did I change it.' The Goddess replied, 'Just so.'” It's like recognizing the truth – it's just right. Just so.

“All things are neither made nor changed. And that they are not made and not changed, this is the Buddha's teaching.” So then we all returned to our original forms.

This talk and all the talks are an invitation for you to practice. In zen you have to practice or else you won't understand anything. You must practice, not only by yourself but with a sangha in a place like this.

I also want to mention our Dharma Drum visitors from Taiwan and Fremont. We're very honored by having your presence here today.

Thank you. ❖



*Visiting Dharma Drum Monks; see mention on page 8*



# CONNECTIONS TO JAPAN



*Rev. Kenshu Sugawara-sensei and Nyoze Kwong at Zenshuji*

On August 4, 2019 Gengo Akiba-roshi (Bishop of North America Soto Zen) certified Nyoze Kwong as a Kokusaifukyoshi (International Zen Teacher) recognized by the Soto Zen Headquarters in Japan.

Reverend Sugawara-sensei is a lecturer from Aichi Gakuin University and was requested by Soto Shu Research Center in Japan to lead workshop on Jukai-e. Jukai-e is the ceremony of people taking/receiving Buddhist precepts. Rev. Sugawara met and studied Jukai-e/Shiho (transmission ceremony) under Hakusan Kojin Noiri. In 1979 Kwong-roshi received Shiho (transmission) from Hoitsu Suzuki at Rinso-in under the supervision of Hakusan Noiri. It was Shunryu Suzuki's wish that Noiri transmit the traditional form of Shiho to the West. This never happened. When Nyoze was with Rev. Sugawara-sensei, Nyoze showed him the picture of the time he and his family was with Noiri-roshi in Japan and explained his connection to Hakusan Noiri. During the conference Nyoze told everyone this story. He also told Rev. Sugawara-sensei that they were honored to have him at the conference. Nyoze requested that "he correctly transmit the forms of Jukai-e to us and that we should correctly receive the instructions to make Shunryu Suzuki's wish come true."



*Nyoze Kwong attends 2019 North America Soto Zen Conference & Workshop at Zenshuji (North America Soto Zen Office) in Los Angeles. Topics of discussion - The Road Map for Soto Zen in North America and creating new standards for Soto Zen training.*



*Closing ceremony at Zenshuji*



*Rinso-in (Suzuki Family Temple) Yaizu Japan 1979. Jakusho Kwong-roshi transmission ceremony. Left to right: Kwong-roshi, Nyoze (8yrs), Hakusan Kojin Noiri-roshi, Shinko Kwong and Ryokan Kwong*

# SANGHA NEWS & NEW MEMBERS

by Erik Zenjin Shearer

## SANGHA NEWS

As summer moves towards fall on Sonoma Mountain, there are many opportunities for the Sangha to gather for practice and fellowship. The summer practice period began on Monday, July 29 and continued through Saturday, August 24. Jesse “Shogen” Brunette served as the shuso – head student – for this practice period. (see Shuso Interview pg. 17)

The fall study group begins on October 1 and will meet every Tuesday evening through November 12 to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and our practice through a book study. The fall Sangha Potluck will be held on Saturday, October 26. All sangha members, as well as members of the public, are invited to the Zen Center for a day of sharing the Dharma and food. The day will include a short period of zazen, communication of current Center news, and an opportunity to renew our vows by offering incense in the Zendo.

In addition to the many opportunities for sitting practice this fall, including the Rohatsu sesshin in December, members of the Sangha are invited to participate in community events including a Thanksgiving potluck on November 21 and the annual ringing in of the new year on December 31.

## NEW MEMBERS

Sheryl Hamilton –

Sheryl was first introduced to Zazen when a friend loaned her “Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind” back in the early 90s. She joined a zen center in Toronto around 1993 and later participated in a Vipassana training. She has been sitting Vipassana since her 20s, very off-and-on and without a formal teacher. She began practicing Christian contemplative prayer fairly seriously starting in 2012, but eventually hit a wall with that practice and started to feel the need for a teacher.

Sheryl came across Roshi’s audible book “Breath Sweeps Mind” on Audible in 2016. She bought the book and felt strongly compelled to study with Roshi. Around the same time, she was doing bi-annual solo retreats in the woods in Canada but was feeling nervous about the logistics necessary for long solo retreats. She sought out SMZC to explore the possibility of longer retreats and joined our sangha for the summer practice period in August of 2016.

Sheryl became a member in early 2019 and lives in Armstrong, BC with her husband and 2 teenage sons, plus a standard poodle and a tortoise, and an anticipated miniature schnauzer.

Megan Backus –

Megan Backus is a long-time resident of Sonoma County, currently living in Santa Rosa. She is an event specialist and plans the children’s and teen programs for the Sonoma County Library. In her free time Megan enjoys spending time with her family, Jeremy, Ali, Peanut (dog), and Murray (cat), going to concerts and comedy shows, cooking, and learning new things. Megan first became interested in SMZC after hearing about the practice from her good friend (Brion Baer). She appreciates the serenity in surrender and finds Zen an inspiring way of life. She became a member of the SMZC sangha this summer.

Binji Mukherjee –

Binji (given name Anondo), grew up in Ithaca, NY, the son of immigrants from China and India. The Dharma was a part of his life growing up, as his mother became a Buddhist in the Kagyu Tibetan tradition. Over the years, the Dharma and sitting practice became an integral part of his life. While living in Boulder, Colorado, he discovered how important community practice is and how invaluable the opportunity is to learn from teachers and peers. Binji moved to Sonoma County, California in December 2018. He was searching for a Sangha in order to find a sense of community and deepen his practice. He is drawn to SMZC because of the natural simplicity of life here. Since joining as a member, he has found the community to be earnest, supportive and authentic in their practice – and feels much gratitude to be a part of SMZC.

We also welcome new members Joshua Dei and Betsy and Nathan Railla. Betsy and Nathan are former residents of Sonoma County who join us in practice from Vermont. They are students of Sakyong Mipham, Rinpoche of the Shambhala Buddhist lineage. They have joined our sangha to support the Soto lineage and honor the connection between Soto Zen and Shambhala. Josh is a resident of Sonoma County that comes to our Sangha having previously practiced in the Rinza tradition.

A warm welcome to all of our new members. We look forward to practicing with you at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.





# KASHIN'S HOSSENSHIKI CEREMONY



*Please see article on page 15*





# RESIDENT REPORT

by Susan Gesshin Frey

Residents at SMZC and Sangha

Join Together in Daily Life

## NEW RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPMENT AT SMZC

Do you wish you could live full time at the Zen center but cannot commit to a long term stay or participate in the full schedule? There are now more flexible ways to be involved in residential daily life at SMZC, such as working a regular job outside of SMZC while participating in our schedule on a part-time basis, or giving your work and time to SMZC as a volunteer/work exchange with the option to join in our zazen practice and programs. These new, more flexible programs are in addition to our short-term Guest Practice and the longer-term training and study program. For more information, contact the office or see the website under Residency.

Participants so far in these new programs have included Coco Mellinger, John Buzan, Benja Peterson and Binji Mukherjee.

Miles Atchison, a carpenter friend of SMZC – known to most as the “snow cone man” from our September bazaar – commutes in almost daily since the beginning of June to head the construction of the new agricultural/shop building. The project has attracted many volunteers, including John Buzan and Peter Pocock, who both stayed here several weeks for “construction practice” as well as members Jason Nichols, Craig Stepanek, Josh Dei, Alex Pirotti and Jesse Brunette.

## JAPANESE MONKS VISIT SMZC

Reverend Bunsu Ono, who is 24 years old and trained at Eihei-ji head temple, practiced with us for 3 months this June. His family temple, Hoko-ji, is located in Saitama prefecture, Japan. Bishop Gengo Akiba-roshi recommended SMZC to Bunsu as a good place to explore Zen in America.

## VISITING MONKS FROM DHARMA DRUM

This July we were honored to have 5 monks from Chinese Chan lineage of Sheng Yen (Dharma Drum) come to visit. They had met Kwong-roshi and Nyoze Kwong last year in Taiwan when Roshi was invited to give the keynote speech for the Dharma Drum’s “Buddhism in Times of Radical Changes” seminar. The monks wished to see our temple and came specifically to make an in-person donation to our Mandala building project.

## ZEN INFLUENCED POETRY OF MITSUO AIDA TRAVELS TO AMERICA

In September, Reverend Koki Takei from the Education and Dissemination Division of the Center for Soto Zen in Tokyo gave a presentation to residents and sangha members on the poems of Japanese poet and Zen student Mitsuo Aida. Reverend Takei is researching about Zen dissemination work using Aida’s poems that touch people due to their simplicity. Koki’s grandfather was a Zen mentor for Aida.

Coincidentally, Rev. Takei’s brother, Rev. Shunno Takei, lived and practiced at SMZC for three months in 2015 after attending Eihei-ji monastery. Shunno gave SMZC a cloth calligraphy made by his grandfather which hangs in the doorway of the library. The work honors a famous question by Ungan Donjo, our 37th ancestor, “Which Moon is This?” featured in the koan called “Sweeping the Ground.”

Three poems by Aida were presented. Here is one of them:

*Tsumazuite iijanaika*

*Ningin damono*

*It's ok to stumble, isn't it*

*We are humans, after all*

## SUMMER ANGO HAPPENINGS

This summer Ango was packed with dharma action. There was a Hossenshiki ceremony for Kashin Kwong at the end of the first week (see article on page 15), which was officiated by North America Sotoshu Bishop Gengo Akiba. Also attending from Soto International were Rev. Taiga Ito, Rev. Dokan Kojima, and Rev. Koyu Osawa (who participated in the ceremony as Benji). At the end of Kashin’s ceremony, we were all surprised (including Nyoze) when Rev. Ito stepped forward to present Nyoze Kwong with a certificate authorizing him as an official Kokusaifukyo-shi Zen teacher (meaning a Soto priest who carries out teaching activities outside of Japan). Congratulations to both Kashin and Nyoze!

Kuun Jurek Dmuchowski, a more than 30-year student of Kwong-roshi and a Hosshi (dharma holder), came from Poland for the last week of Ango to complete his Shiho transmission ceremony with Kwong-roshi.

We also hosted a photographer for Sonoma Magazine, who came to take pictures for an article on the Zen Center which was published in their September-October issue.

Our summer Shuso, Jesse “Shogen” Brunette, dealt with all the various activities in a calm and guiding manner.

The silent 7-day Sesshin was attended by Peter Pocock, Nancy Reder, Damon Howard, Nick Gonzales (new to SMZC), Micheal McCulloch and Alex Perotti.

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*Nyoze Kwong with visiting Dharma Drum Monks*

Also new to SMZC this year was Shilu Weber, a practitioner who splits her time between the USA and India, where she lives and works at a retreat center. Shilu attended the entire Ango, as did Ed “Daiki” Cadman. Sheryl Hamilton came for the first two weeks and Sheryl’s son, Max Hamilton, came for several days.

## RESIDENT UPDATE

### NEW OFFICE MANAGER

We have hired a new Office Manager, Greta Canton. She is also now part of our daily life at SMZC while living in Rohnert Park with her family. She has a Zen training background that began with the Zen Peacemakers of Bernie Glassman. Besides managing and streamlining the office, she navigates the many inquiries about SMZC from new people with great warmth and skill. Welcome Greta!

Milla Gems, from London, England, again joined our resident team from June to September this year. She answered the phones and email in the office as well as practicing as our Shika guest person.

Tenzo Jundo Farrand expands horizons

Jundo Farrand, who has been a resident here since 2004 and has been our Tenzo since 2016, is leaving his head cook position and the resident training program to work outside. He has found a job in Petaluma as a machinist, having had prior experience in this trade. Prior to serving as Tenzo he was our Work Leader (Shissui) for many years and has also served as Office Administrator. He will continue his priest practice and will still live here in residence here for the near future and commute to Petaluma. Please wish him all the best in his new job!

Koten Price, Susan Gesshin Frey and Angus Choan Atwell continue on as training residents and, along with Nyoze and Kashin Kwong, Jakusho Kwong-roshi, and Shinko Kwong, form the core of daily practice at SMZC.



# NYOZE VISITS SOUTH SOUND ZEN IN TACOMA

by Justin Myozan Wadland



During the first weekend of June 2019, Nyoze Kwong came to Tacoma and offered the budding sangha here a public talk on Friday night, followed by a one-day sitting on Saturday. Chuck Tenzan Ramey, who received tokudo ordination from Jakusho Kwong-roshi, leads the South Sound Zen group, planned and organized the visit, continuing his efforts to hold a space for ever deepening Zen practice in Tacoma.

About twenty-five people attended the Friday night public talk at Tacoma Aikikai, a local Aikido dojo. Owner and Aikido instructor Ea Murphy generously provided the use of this space, and Seattle Soto Zen loaned zafus to accommodate the large group. Nyoze spoke on his own spiritual development, recounting his experiences growing up at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and then finding his way to the serious study and practice of Zen. I was struck by how often he paused, as if seeking the right words to express something of great importance. He left a strong impression of the ongoing search each of us must take to cultivate a path of practice. Many friends and acquaintances new to Zen told me how much they appreciated his talk.

Then, on Saturday, a smaller group of thirteen gathered for a one-day sitting in the practice space of South Sound Zen. During the retreat, Nyoze continued the theme of his talk from the day before, describing how practice evolves over time and using the still waters of Puget Sound as an image to convey the deep calm that always remains present throughout the ups and downs of ordinary life. Shortly afterward, he held dokusan, and when I met with him I found this to be a welcome opportunity to explore one-on-one with Nyoze my own practice. “What we do on the cushion is only one percent of what we do,” he told me. “Our lives are the field of practice.”

During his visit, Nyoze demonstrated this teaching not just through his words but by his presence. One of the first lessons I received from him, as we prepared for the public talk, was how to plump the zafu into a big round ball by pressing and continually turning them. The following day, prior to the sitting on Saturday, he also instructed the group in how to thoroughly clean the zendo and prepare it for our collective effort. Each of these activities seemed as much a part of the practice as sitting zazen.

South Sound Zen is a small but devoted group who sits together a few times a week. Many of us have had previous experiences with other Zen or Buddhist meditation practices, and we appreciate Tenzan’s gentle, encouraging guidance in the Soto Zen tradition of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. He did a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes to organize and arrange Nyoze’s visit, and we are all grateful to him for his efforts. Nyoze offered us many lessons that we will continue to draw from in the future. ❖



# SUMMER RINSO-IN VISIT

By Coco Mellinger

Before going back to Japan for my yearly vacation this summer, Roshi and Nyoze suggested that I visit Suzuki-roshi's family temple, Rinso-in. I also remembered that Katsuzen stayed at Rinso-in last summer and shared his slides with the Windsor Zen Group and at SMZC. On August 30, 2019, my sister and I visited Rinso-in in Shizuoka, Japan.

Rinso-in was much bigger and more beautiful than I had imagined. Sitting in the room overlooking the beautiful Zen garden with yellow waterlilies, I spoke to Kumi over cold green tea and cookies. She was very hospitable and welcoming and shared stories about Roshi's family visit one cold winter when Nyoze was only eight years old. She also talked about the old times when they used to have resident monks training at Rinso-in who slept in the same room where we sat and had tea together.

It was a great reminder for me to realize the important lineage and this practice crossing over the Pacific Ocean. I felt honored to have a chance to speak to Kumi at length about differences and similarities between Japanese and American Zen practices. Visiting Rinso-in and staying at Sojiji for three days were the highlights of my visit back to Japan this year. Next year, I'm planning to stay at Eihei-ji for a few days. ❖





## July 6 "Moment to Moment" One-Day Sitting

An introductory retreat for both beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice.

## July 13 Saturday Dharma Talk Jakusho Kwong-roshi

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

## July 13 Board of Trustee Meeting

1:00 - 4:00pm

## July 20 Summer Community Workfest

8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

## July 27 Saturday Community Student Talk Tim Metzger

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

## July 29 Summer Ango Practice Period

SMZC's Summer Practice Period begins. Jesse 'Shogen' Brunette (Illuminating Source) will take the position as Shuso (head student). He is a student of Kwong-roshi. Opening ceremony begins Monday evening at 7:30 p.m.. (More schedule details to follow...)

## August 24 Ango Closing Ceremony - Revealing the Self

10:30 a.m. zazen; 11:00 a.m. ceremony

Participants will ask Jesse 'Shogen' Brunette (Illuminating Source) dharma questions to reveal the truth of practice. A Shuso celebration dinner will follow at 6:00 p.m. We encourage all members to close the practice period with us. Open to the public.

## August 3 Practice Period Shuso Talk

Jesse 'Shogen' Brunette

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

## August 10 Practice Period Shuso Talk

Jesse 'Shogen' Brunette

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

## August 11 "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.

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## August 31 Saturday Community Student Talk

Michael 'Genrei' Persinger

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

## September 7 Saturday Dharma Talk Jakusho Kwong-roshi

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

## September 10 Dinner and Zen Poems with Reverend Koki Takei:

Reverend Koki Takei, a Sojiji priest, is visiting Sonoma Mountain Zen Center from Japan. Wednesday evening he will read the poetry of Mitsuo Aida (1924-1991), Japan's "Poet of Zen," over a simple vegetarian dinner. We invite our sangha to attend. 7:30 pm \$20 donation suggested.

## September 14 Manifesting the Heart - Benefit For Sonoma Mountain Zen Center's New Temple Buildings

During the month of September 2019 we will be focusing on our 2nd phase of our Mandala Temple building project. Saturday, September 14th from 11a.m. - 2:30p.m.

## September 21 Saturday Community Student Talk David 'Kize' Hirsch

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

## September 28 Kids Community

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

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

## September 28 Saturday Student Talk Julie 'Kashin' Kwong

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

## October 1 Fall Study Group

Tuesdays 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

An opportunity to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on a book. October 1 - November 12. (Details to follow...)

## October 5 Spirit of Tea - Purifying the Mind

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

## October 11 Temple Stay: Rest in a Restorative Environment and Experience Soto Zen Buddhism at SMZC

Temple stay is an opportunity to experience the rituals and spiritual practice of authentic Soto Zen Buddhism. Take the backward step and illuminate the jewel within yourself. Friday October 11 - Saturday March 17.

## October 17 "Bodhidharma" Three-Day Sesshin

Sesshin, literally "to touch the Mind," is an intensive meditation retreat to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature. This three-day practice period will allow us to still the mind from moment to moment and manifest realization of the Way. Begins Thursday October 17 and ends Sunday October 20.

## October 23 Hosting SSU Student field trip for a course on "Science and Religion."

30 Students from the SSU, Hutchins School of Liberal Studies, class on "Science and Religion" will be visiting from 10:00 am- 12:00 pm. The visit to SMZC is said to be the highlight of the course. This is the first of two groups from the larger class.

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





## October 25 **Hosting SSU Student field trip for a course on "Science and Religion."**

30 Students from the SSU, Hutchins School of Liberal Studies, class on "Science and Religion" will be visiting from 10:00 am- 12:00 pm. The visit to SMZC is said to be the highlight of the course. This is the second group from the same course

## October 26 **Sangha Potluck: Gathering Practitioners and Community**

Members as well as the public are invited to the Zen Center for a day of sharing Dharma and food together as a Sangha. Please bring your favorite dish to share. There will be a short period of zazen followed by a brief update on current news and the Mandala project. Also an opportunity for new members and anyone wishing to renew their vows to offer incense in the Zendo.  
10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

## October 1 **Fall Study Group**

Tuesdays 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.  
An opportunity to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on a book. October 1 - November 12. This Fall, we will be studying "Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom. Three Fascicles from Shobogenzo with Commentaries", by Kosho Uchiyama. FLYER

## November 2 **Introduction to Zen Workshop: Returning to Forms and Rituals of Everyday Life**

An introduction to the basics of Zen with instructor Koten David Price.

## November 2 **Saturday Dharma Talk Jakusho Kwong-roshi**

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

## November 09 **Late Fall Community Volunteer Day**

Come and put your hands to good works. Help us button up our new buildings before the rainy season.  
We have siding that needs to be oiled  
We have board and batten to put up and widows to install.  
All are welcome. A Delicious Lunch and snacks will be served!  
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

## November 16 **Saturday Community Student Talk Susan 'Gesshin' Frey**

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

## November 23 **Saturday Community Student Talk Jason Nichols**

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

## November 23 **Jukai Ceremony: Receiving the Precepts**

Jukai literally means "to receive the precepts." Jakusho Kwong-roshi will offer the precepts to the following students; Brion Baer, Michael McCulloch, Jason Nichols, Sheryl Hamilton, Margaret Tighe, Annie Hammang and Kristin Merz Nichols in the traditional Buddhist Refuge Ceremony.  
Jukai is the ceremony of formally becoming a Buddhist and of taking the 16 Bodhisattva precepts as guidelines for life. 2:00 p.m. Reception 2:45p.m. 2:00 pm - 4:00pm

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

## November 28 **Celebrate Thanksgiving on the Mountain**

A Sangha-wide celebration of the traditional holiday in potluck fashion. Members invited to bring their families, friends, and a savory dish to join the feast and give thanks together.  
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

## December 2-7 **Shakyamuni Buddha's Enlightenment Sesshin**

A special sesshin to commemorate the anniversary of Shakyamuni Buddha's Enlightenment. The last night of the retreat we will sit from midnight to 4:00 a.m. and conclude with a memorial procession to Shunryu Suzuki-roshi's stupa. For those who cannot make Rohatsu during the week, join us Friday, Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m. for tetsuya, "the all night sitting." Following the all night sit, at 6 a.m., we will walk in procession down to Suzuki-roshi's stupa for the founder's ceremony. We will close Rohatsu with breakfast in the Sangha House. All members are encouraged to attend tetsuya and/or the founder's ceremony.

## December 7 **Sunrise Ceremony - Memorial for Shunryu Suzuki-roshi**

On Saturday December 7th at 6:00 a.m. we will begin a memorial procession to Suzuki-roshi's Memorial Stupa from the zendo. We express our gratitude, offer incense, ladle water, and recite the Great Compassionate Dharani as we witness the sunrise over the Valley of the Moon. Open to the public. Informal breakfast follows at 7:30 a.m. \$10 donation appreciated.

## December 14 **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.  
10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

## December 14 **Saturday Dharma Talk Jakusho Kwong-roshi**

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

## December 15 – January 2 **SMZC Closed for Winter Break**

## December 31 **Ring in the New Year**

*Welcoming 2020 Year of the Rat*

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 Rat. Bring a small piece of paper inscribed with any Karmic hindrances you wish to burn away during the ceremony. Refreshments offered following the ceremony. Tuesday, December 31, 10:30 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.

# DAILY PRACTICE & SATURDAY COMMUNITY

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## JOIN US FOR DAILY PRACTICE

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### **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

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### **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, Godo

*Best to check website or call in case of changes*

## 2019 KIDS COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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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 joyful, safe, and nurturing environment. Children can join their parents for an informal vegetarian lunch following the activities. Parents are also welcome to join in the fun along with their children or participate in Saturday community practice.

### **Upcoming Kids Community 2019 Dates**

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

**Saturday Sept 28 – Susan Leslie will guide us in Kids Yoga.**

**Co-Hosted by Mike Persinger**

**Saturday Dec 14 – Hosted by Kashin Kwong**

## ZEN DUST NEWS

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*by Janet Buckendahl*

We saw many people visiting Zen Dust during the summer and we hope you will return to check our inventory for your holiday shopping.

The Zen Mind Calendars for 2020 are now available, price \$14.99. These are a perennial favorite with inspiring quotes from Suzuki-roshi.

Unfortunately, we are currently unable to source our Mango Wood Oryoki bowls, but we were able to obtain some three bowl bakelite sets, which are a good size. The three bowls retail for \$30.00 and the set with bowls, utensils and cloths is \$75.00. Our remaining mango wood bowls sell for \$92.00 or \$140.00 for the complete set.

We have a couple of delightful new books in the Children's section by Thich Nhat Hahn and Jon Muth, with attractive illustrations and there is a close-out sale now on our ¼ zip sweatshirts with SMZC logo, so take advantage!

Size Large and XLarge - \$30.00

Size 2XLarge - \$35.00

Do remember that all your purchases go to supporting the Zen Center and the Dharma here on Sonoma Mountain.





# REFLECTIONS ON HOSSENSHIKI CEREMONY FOR KASHIN KWONG

by Sheryl Hamilton

Zendos are time machines. Few people know this.

Sitting at Kashin Kwong's Hossenshiki Ceremony this past August 4, one could sense that one was concurrently participating in the ordination of Mahapajati while standing barefoot in Sujata's kitchen, smelling the sweet scent of cardamom while she stirs things up in her ancient pot.

I haven't known Kashin for very long. I believe we met at the end of Summer Ango 2016. I was wiping down outdoor tables for a picnic lunch and she walked by and we gasshoed. The smile she gave me in that moment has lingered with me in a resonant way and been built upon, relentlessly, by many subsequent ones as well.

I wrote a poem for Kashin. It is a haiku, for which I apologize...I am really terrible at them. Hopefully I counted the syllables correctly. Here it is:

*Under the cool light  
Of her warm  
Refreshing  
Smile  
disasters  
vanish*

There is something unforgettable about being face-to-face with Kashin Kwong. I am sure all who have met her know what I am getting at here. Menju, face-to-face, is all she does all day long. And, of course, she isn't only transmitting with her face. Her whole body, her whole being, radiates from some other place and spreads life around to everything she touches or spends time with. The people who attended the ceremony are a testament to this quality that Kashin has. There were people from the tea-world, people from the Zen world, people from her own personal world that came together to celebrate this truly momentous occasion. All of us have been touched in some way or other by Kashin's pervasive and penetrating presence and grace which spring forth directly from Dharma.

Later, on that same day, the day that I first met Kashin, we were setting up for a ceremony for the oak tree in front of the sangha house. At the time we had been told that the oak tree was dead and dying, so it was a funeral of sorts. We were pinning a cloth around a table together. I managed to get one pin in...she probably placed 10 or 12. Which mystified me at the time. But now I know. Nobody does menmitsu-nokafu like Kashin. Those pins absolutely loved being worked with by her, I can tell you. As do all the flowers and symbols and emblems and water that she works with every day in her capacity as Gedo on the mountain.

And now, boys and girls, I am going to play the gender card. It's a cheap shot, I realize. But as a woman, I can't help myself. Sorry.

One of the greatest atrocities committed against women during the past 10,000-ish years of oppression is the consistent and constant abnegation, denial, and devaluation of our internal lives. All beings suffer the burden of this trauma and loss. It is now time for us all to come at life from the common ground of our interdependent co-origination. Without regard to gender lines, or racial lines, or religious lines, or any lines at all in fact. There is only apparent opposition.



As Dogen says in the Raihai-Tokuzui fascicle of the Shobogenzo:

"As regards attainment of the truth, both [men and women] attain the truth, and we should just profoundly revere every single person who has attained the Dharma. Do not discuss man and woman. This is one of Buddhism's finest Dharma-standards." (1)

The Hossenshiki Ceremony that occurred at Sonoma Mountain recently went a long way towards rebalancing this male/female disparity in my own heart and mind. I feel truly grateful and relieved to be part of a community that recognizes, acknowledges, and nurtures the realization and expression of emptiness for all beings, including women and men.

And finally, I would like to say to Kashin, congratulations on your very serious non-attainment. May the merit of your life and being continue to shine out to inspire and help all beings, as you have consistently inspired and helped me. Thank you.



(1) Master Dogen's Shobogenzo, Book 1, Translated by Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, © 1994 by Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, reprinted 2006, page 62

# SUMMER ANGO THEME – AUGUST, 2019

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SHUSO – JESSE 'SHOGEN' BRUNETTE

"When we find our place & way at this moment,  
then practice follows, and this is the realization of truth"

*Dogen Zenji – Genjo Koan*



*See Shuso Interview with Jesse Shogen Brunette on next page*



# SHUSO INTERVIEW WITH JESSE SHOGEN BRUNETTE

by Chris Katsuzen King

*In one of your first talks during the Summer Practice Period you spoke about your upbringing and the influence of your parents' spiritual pursuits. Can you tell our readers a little about your background and how you eventually found your way to practicing Zen at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center?*

When I was born my parents belonged to the religious community of Bubba Free John. He was an American teacher who had received transmission from Swami Muktananda in India. I spent long stretches of time in my early childhood at their communal property in the mountains above Clear Lake.

Even as a child I was deeply impressed by the Guru's powerful presence and the apparent knowledge he seemed to possess.

We were taught meditation and devotional practice in the private school run by the community. Our daily schedule started with an hour of meditation in our private and beautifully adorned meditation hall, even in Kindergarten!

Unfortunately in the 80's the scene that developed around the Guru became ungrounded and out of control. The unfortunate scandals that took out so many religious communities at that time popped up and gutted our community as well. My parents marriage did not survive the upheaval. Ultimately my father and I moved back to his home state of Wisconsin. This all left a deep impression on my young mind. While the power and beauty of the spiritual process were undeniable, the Free-Wheeling Free-Love approach of my Hippie parents seemed, well, dangerous.

In Wisconsin my relatives insisted I get baptized and attend Catholic school where we would go to church every other day. I wound up being an Altar Boy for several years, assisting the priest and tending the altar and ceremonial items. I loved the elegance and the ceremony of the Catholic service. But it felt spiritually hollow compared to the intensity of Bubba Free John's community.

By the time I was in high-school I left the church and began studying Buddhism. Then in my early twenties, I moved back to California looking for a place to practice Bhuddadharma. Thanks to Chogyam Trungpa's book "Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism" I ended up deeply involved with Shambhala for about five years. Then one fateful weekend I attended a Shambhala hosted at Genjo-ji and fell in love with the place, plus Roshi's gentle but powerful talk. Pretty soon I was attending my first sesshin at Genjo-ji. Before long it became my sole place of practice.

In retrospect, the Zen practice here at Genjo-ji is the perfect fusion of the two spiritual influences of my young life. The forms we do in Zen mirror the aspects of Catholic Ceremony that so resonated with me. While the pure wholehearted practice and Roshi's guiding presence maintain the vibrant living spirituality I glimpsed in my early years.

*As Shuso, your role is to guide the Sangha during the month-long retreat. This involves working closely with Roshi, sitting alongside him in the Zendo and giving some of the talks with him during sesshin. Can you tell us how that went and what kind of direction or instruction Roshi offered you during the Practice Period?*

In the first week it mainly consisted on of notes on my form in oryoki, prostrations, chanting etc..

As Ango progressed he helped me work with the challenges that came up. Then with a bit of instruction he would firmly urge me to go deeper with the practice.

Sitting next to him I became aware that much of the teaching he does is very subtle. He is so steeped in the practice it seems that he is always teaching. The biggest teaching was just watching how he manifests while doing each thing, offering incense at the altar, sitting in zazen, even just eating lunch.

He can be warm and gentle when the situation calls for it or alternatively unyielding as Bodhidharma himself, but always fully present with what is happening in the moment.

*Your theme for Ango was taken from a famous work by Dogen-zenji. What were some insights you had about that writing by Dogen and that quote in particular? Did you come to view it differently at times during Ango?*

The theme was "When we find our place and our way in the present moment then practice follows, and this is the realization of truth."

The passage is very profound - suppose a whole book could be written about about what Dogen is relating there. What I wanted to convey was that practice is just being what you are at each moment and nothing additional. No ideas, no judgments, no roles, no past, no future. Just this. I wanted to encourage everyone to practice with the spirit of pure presence. Without any additional ideas or imagery to complicate the matter. Simply that when you are fully present in this moment the only thing left is the truth and the delusion naturally shakes itself loose.

Of course during the course of Ango what I experienced was constantly shifting and there was plenty that shook loose. As my mind settled and clarified, different aspects of the truth came to light. Even now over a month after Ango ended I'm still integrating what revealed itself through this simple practice.

*continues next page*

*The Shuso generally offers short readings and commentaries after the formal oryoki meals in the Sangha House. Can you talk about the nature of some of your comments and what writings you chose to read?*

Primarily I read passages from “Not Always So” by Shunryu Suzuki and “Opening the Hand of Thought” by Kosho Uchiyama. At times Ango can feel a bit grim and I wanted to do my best to keep everybody's spirit up. So at times I would throw in a lighthearted story or dharma related observation, even a quote from a Coen brothers' movie.

As Shuso I wanted to help everyone get the most out of every sitting period by helping clarify what it is we do when we practice. In “*Opening the Hand of Thought*” Kosho Uchiyama beautifully explains the overall view of practice and how to relate to the things that present themselves in our mind. One of the most memorable readings being where he says the thoughts and feelings that come up in our practice are just “Mental Secretions.” Meaning the thoughts & feelings that trouble us in practice or daily life are just like a runny nose or a bowel movement. Though perfectly natural, certainly not something to cling to.

The readings from “*Not Always So*” were also great for clarifying the appropriate attitude to practice.

I felt that Suzuki-roshi's sense of humor really came through in those passages, more so than any other of his books. But at the same time the depth of his understanding is clear. In keeping with the book's title he navigates the apparent dichotomy of practicing wholeheartedly with compassion. In one chapter he explains that you have to practice with the intensity of a person trying to save themselves from drowning. Then in the next he explains you have to treat yourself with tender lightheartedness, like a mother caring for her infant.

*What, if any, were the major challenges for you during the Practice Period?*

Well the hundred degree plus weather during the sesshin portion of Ango was pretty challenging. Particularly in the heavy polyester robe. There was one memorable evening sitting period in the middle of the heat wave. I was so exhausted from sitting in the heat all day my mind was utterly shut down. The entire universe was nothing but the breath coming in and flowing out into space. Like the last moments of a dying person. However the next day a great spaciousness had opened in my practice.

But really the most consistently challenging thing was preparing the talks. I had only a vague outline for the talks going into Ango. I wanted my talks to reflect what was unfolding for me week by week. Unfortunately I underestimated just how much time it would take to prepare each talk. For the first two weeks I found myself spending every moment of every break working on my talks. Eventually a previous Shuso told me he did the bulk of his writing by waking up a couple hours early every morning. Following that example worked well for me, especially during the rigorous sesshin schedule. But still the writing took most of my attention.

In retrospect I could have put in a bit more work on the talks before Ango. But I feel the constant pressure of writing the next talk gave me no choice but to be fully present with what I was doing in every free moment.

*How about anything else that you learned or may have surprised you during the Practice Period?*

Throughout Ango I was deeply moved by the how all the forms and responsibilities of being Shuso work together to deepen one's experience. I was often humbled by the process unfolding within myself.

Witnessing the beauty of the process and the forms intricately coming together. All passed down and refined through the compassionate efforts our ancestors. Tears often welled up even as I bowed in front of the altar.

Holding the Shuso position is a deeply transformative experience. It is nothing less than the Right of Passage into adulthood that our culture desperately lacks. My gratitude to Roshi and all the ancestors for this opportunity.

*The final day feels like it builds to a crescendo, ending with the final Dharma Encounter. You seemed to take it all in stride with an air of calmness. Can you tell us how it went for you? Were you really as calm as you appeared to be?*

I enjoyed the final Dharma Encounter quite a bit. The spontaneous one on one format was so easy compared to writing all those talks. Really the most challenging part was the physicality of all the prostrations! Though when Shinko walked up right up to my seat and said “Shuso show me the truth”. (A reference to the Ango Theme) I got scared for a moment.

Didn't think I would end up coming across as so relaxed but guess so, pretty much everyone in the Zendo ended up asking a question. It was a lot of fun. It seems the spirit of Zen is to do something even though you may feel afraid or uncertain. With the elaborate sequence of prostrations and movements followed by a series of unknown questions, it felt like the perfect distillation of the practice. Something about the final Dharma Encounter seemed to crystallize all the effort and practice of Ango in my mind. Stamping the experience into my nervous system. The final seal on an amazingly intricate process.



*See photos on next page*





*See Shuso Interview with Jesse Shogen Brunette on page 17*

# DEL RAY ZEN'S SUMMER INTENSIVE

by Peter Shodo Pocock



In late June the Del Ray Zen Community hosted its third annual Summer Intensive, attended by 11 members. The theme of the three-day event was "Everyday Zen," focused on how we can take the habits developed in zazen into our lives in the world beyond the zendo. Student leaders Nancy Reder and Peter Pocock presented two 45-minute sessions of readings excerpted from teachers ranging from Vimalakirti and Dogen Zenji to Shunryu Suzuki-roshi, Charlotte Joko Beck, and Kwong-roshi.

The otherwise silent gathering again took place at the Akasha Retreat Center in the hills of west-central Virginia. The former Episcopal mission school includes a chapel that's an excellent space for zazen, a dormitory with six double rooms, and an institutional kitchen. Work practice included working in the kitchen with tenzo Jocelyn Lofstrom, cleaning the living spaces, and learning and practicing the preparation of incense and candles for the altar.

The schedule and practice at Del Ray Zen retreats follow those of a sesshin at Genjo-ji, with a total of 18 periods of zazen (interspersed with kinhin) between Friday evening and Sunday afternoon. All meals are served oryoki-style, with most participants receiving instruction before the retreat. Some members had gained experience by taking part in our bi-monthly oryoki dinners.

Practice throughout the retreat was strong. Remarks from participants reflected gratitude for the opportunity to deepen their individual practice and to experience the quiet power of sitting for extended periods with the sangha. Several reported a growing interest in intensive practice and study; some members found the experience still resonating two weeks later. All said they look forward to taking part in Del Ray Zen's next intensive retreat.

Nancy Reder and Peter Pocock are co-founders of the Del Ray Zen Community, an affiliated sitting group of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Located in Alexandria, Virginia, the group has been practicing continuously since 2011. More information is available at [delrayzen.org](http://delrayzen.org). ❖





# SONOMA MANDALA – SUMMER CONSTRUCTION

by Cam Shunryu Kwong



*Ag-Maintenance Building Framing*

Despite the late spring rains work on the retaining wall began in June. After drilling forty-five 9' deep lower wall piers, Berger Concrete efficiently constructed the rebar and poured the 250' long by 6' high concrete wall. The Manjusri Hall retaining walls are 75% complete. Backfill and drainage work around the retaining walls are in progress. The upper concrete wall and stairs will be completed in August.

It was a big setback for the Zen Center when it became clear last fall that the retaining wall couldn't be built when it was originally planned to be completed. Because of this our use of the residential buildings would be delayed 9 months. Further aggravating the delay was the unusually wet winter. There's a sequence of projects that need to be completed before the 2 residential buildings, Ando Quarters and Genjo Building, can be used. The projects are the retaining wall, grading, underground utilities and pathways. We'll have the retaining wall project done soon and we're aiming to complete the next 3 projects in October.

A new Ag/Maintenance Building is being built below the garden, tucked into the trees west of the new parking area. This structure replaces the old Maintenance Building, that was taken down to make way for the new Manjusri Hall (Zendo) foundation pad. The Ag/Maintenance Building's foundation has now been poured and exterior plywood has been installed on the walls and roof. In September a roofing contractor will come to install the metal roof and cedar siding will arrive from Oregon for installation.

The water system construction is 90% complete. In July water tests were conducted and it was determined that the water quality is good and that there's plenty of water available. A small water pump house is being built by the water tanks thanks to the efforts of Angus Atwell and Brian Watson. We're also working with Huffman Engineers (civil engineers) to submit water system application documents to the State. Pending review of these documents, approval for the new Zen Center water system should be granted in November.

In addition to the forementioned projects, we're working toward completing a number of items before the end of the year and coming rain. There's ongoing carpentry work as well as cabin demolition work to do in October, so please volunteer by contacting the office.

For trade work like; grading, septic systems, water systems, asphalt and metal fabrication it's been difficult to find responsible sub-contractors. Due to the fires, there's an incredible amount of construction going on, so everyone is busy. If you have any contacts in these trades let us know.

There are a number of people who are working behind the scenes on various projects that I would especially like to thank: Angus, Susan, Koten, Jundo, Mark Peterson, Kashin, Miles Atchison, Brian, Craig, Jesse, John B., John M., Peter, Jason, Milla and Shinko. All your efforts have been invaluable in moving us closer to the completion of our Mandala Project! ❖

## WE NEED YOUR HELP - CONSTRUCTING OUR NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDING

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**Monday - Saturdays 8-12 noon and 1-5pm**

Miles Atchison has been leading us with the construction of our agricultural building. We have finished rough framing, plywood sheathing interior/exterior walls. Roof will be installed later in September. We need everyone's help in installing the cedar siding before the rains come.

Most days Miles is on site working and we still need help! We are looking for carpenters, builders and anyone with building experience. Join us for a few hours, one day or a few weeks!

Please Spread the word with Sangha, Family and Friends! Contact us if you know of someone that's interested in helping us. Meals and accommodations are provided for volunteers. For more information and project details contact [office@smzc.org](mailto:office@smzc.org), or SMZC's Work-leader Koten Price at [koten@smzc.org](mailto:koten@smzc.org).

Please feel free to ask about the various ways you can help us with volunteering and construction.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

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Due to unforeseen circumstances, we were unable to put out the July-Sept issue of Mountain Wind. This current issue covers the months from July - December. Thank you for your patience and understanding for the missed issue. Our next one will be the January-March issue of 2020. Please email any contributions you may have for that issue to me at [flacoking@aol.com](mailto:flacoking@aol.com).

Wishing all sangha members and friends, a very auspicious New Year!!

Katsuzen King  
*Mtn. Wind editor*



All Contributions Help  
Maintain  
The Buddhadharma!

**Donate Now!**  
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# MEMBERSHIP

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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

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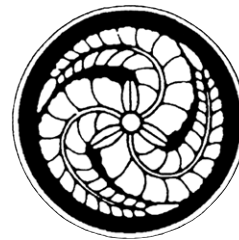
**SMZC's website** conveys the essence of our practice to others and invites their participation at the Zen Center. It is found at **smzc.org**.

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](http://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](http://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](http://smzc.podbean.com) beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



### SMZC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

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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](http://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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