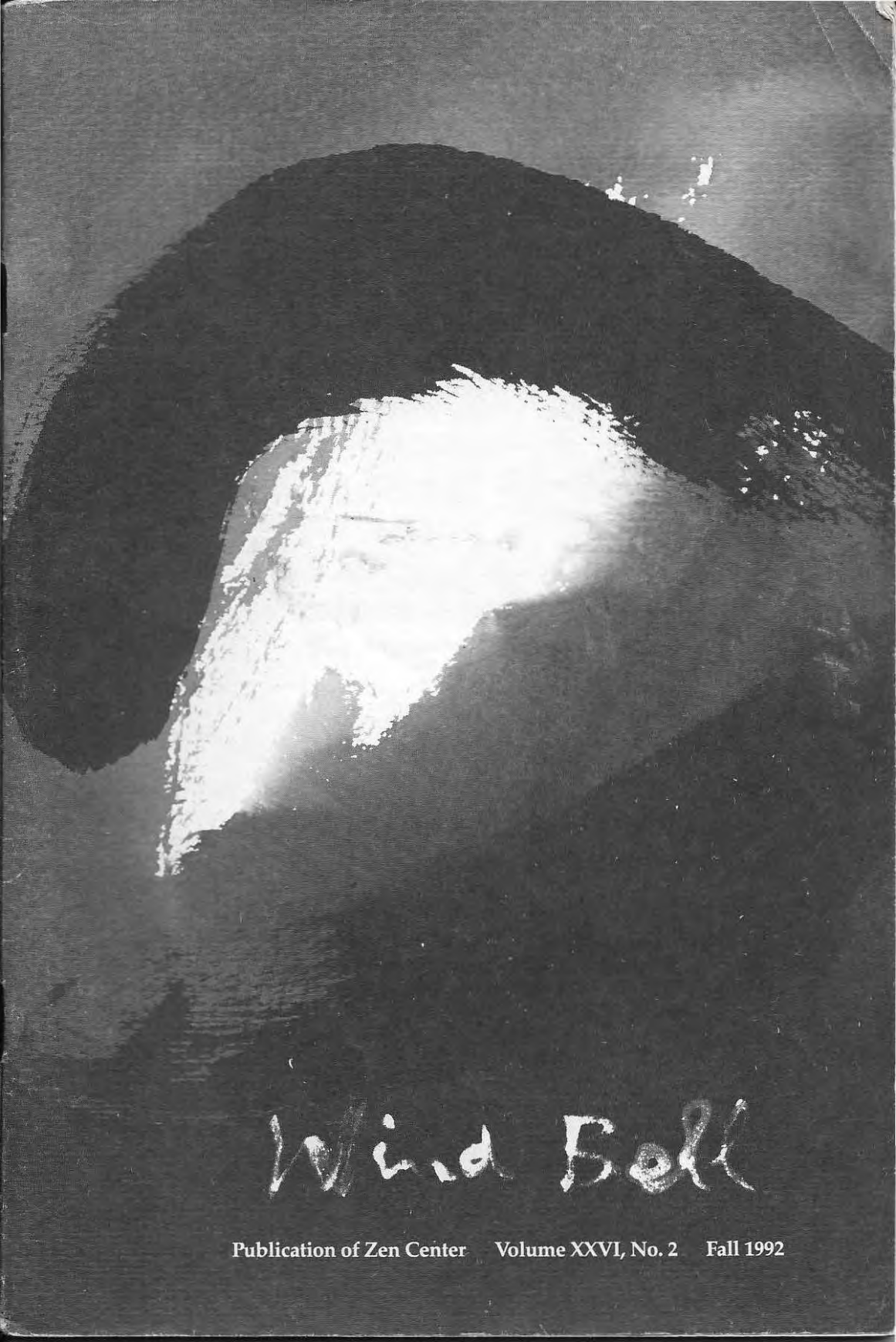

Wind Bell

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Cover: Brushwork by Mariangeles Soto

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"Art as Practice" is the theme for this issue of Wind Bell. *The section begins on page 8, and includes essays, drawings and paintings by members and friends of Zen Center. The works reveal a wide variety of approaches to this fascinating subject. Our thanks to all who submitted graphic work for the issue.*

Drawing by
Frances Thompson

Della Goertz — Learning and Staying Young

by Barbara Lubanski Wenger

This year Della Goertz, one of Suzuki Roshi's first American students, turns 80. We would like to offer congratulations and sing her praises, expressing our deep appreciation of her living example of Buddhism. Thanks to Betty Warren, Pat Phelan, and Bill Kwong for their help in preparing the article.

"Zen as a way of life teaches all the things I wanted to be: genuine, kind and grateful. The most wonderful thing is that it's up to you. There isn't a lot of telling you what to do. At first I thought I must not be worthy, but then I knew there was no inferiority or superiority in Zen. The teaching is in what you do."

So says *Zendotei Jundaishi* Della Goertz, a Zen Center pioneer and practitioner since 1959. Genuine, kind, and grateful are only some of the virtues that Della personifies. Her life has also been one of teaching and learning. She was a primary school teacher for 30 years; during that time she continued to take classes in the evenings and summer months. She became interested in comparative religion and this led her to the Academy of Asian Studies, founded by Alan Watts. It was in one of these classes, on a spring night in 1959, that Della met Suzuki Roshi. He was invited to the class to talk about

Suzuki Roshi watches over his first American Zen students at Sokoji. From left, Jean Ross, Betty Warren, Connie Luick, Della Goertz, Bill Kwong, Grahame Petchey, Paul Alexander, Bob Hense.

Zen meditation. Recently arrived from Japan, he was leading the congregation of Sokoji temple in Japantown. "Suzuki Roshi instructed us in Buddhist meditation that very night. He was such a wonderful person. We all wanted to see him again and practice with him. He told us where his temple was and what time we could come to sit (5:45 A.M.)."

Classmates Betty Warren and Jean Ross joined Della for sitting at Sokoji after that. Ananda Dalenberg was also sitting with Suzuki Roshi, and together they formed a core group of beginning students. "Like everyone else, when we met Suzuki Roshi, we wanted to be his students. We didn't want any other teacher. And he liked us. That was it. He had faith in us and we had faith in him."

Della and Betty would come to Sokoji for meditation and chanting in the morning before going off to work. The meditation took place upstairs in the temple. Church pews were pushed together to form a sitting platform. Sitting on zafus in these pews, it would have been hard for them to escape. At first the men and women sat separately. "Four and nine days" were ob-

served, usually with a Saturday work day and Sunday lecture. Work days would begin with a sitting and a silent breakfast, followed by temple cleaning, sewing zabutons or stuffing zafus, and occasionally painting or re-sanding the floors. On Sundays, Suzuki Roshi would give his lectures in English. Betty Warren recalls, "When you heard Suzuki Roshi speak, you knew he was looking right straight into your eyes. Everyone else in the room had the same impression. What he was saying was meant for you." Della also felt at one with him. "The message in Buddhism seemed to be something I already knew." Betty remembered, "Suzuki Roshi would toss the teaching right back at you. One student who had been sitting for five years told Suzuki Roshi he was still having pain and Suzuki Roshi exclaimed, 'Oh!' He said we should embrace the pain because it is our teacher." Della continued, "He made you think about things. Suzuki Roshi taught us how to understand human life. When we calm our mind, we return to and find strength in our Buddha nature. We straightened up our minds by sitting straight. Sitting is the most powerful help."

Della appreciated this teaching and continued to support Suzuki Roshi, both financially and through her commitment to practice. "There was such a simplicity and directness about Suzuki Roshi, you felt at ease around him; I loved to be with him." Della became Suzuki Roshi's escort, driving him to the Japanese newspaper office or to the airport to pick up dignitaries. She accompanied him to Japanese functions in the community. When Suzuki Okusan arrived Della helped introduce her to life in San Francisco.

After less than a year of sitting and learning about Zen life and rituals, the group held its first three-day sesshin over a President's weekend in February of 1960. By now there were many new faces. Della sat with the group, and also worked in the kitchen during the sesshin. Bill Kwong fondly remembers Della's innocence and purity when she wanted to take aspirin for the pain of sesshin. Betty Warren recalled that she and Della would sit together during sesshin. She recounted how Suzuki Roshi would always keep them in suspense by varying the length of the sitting periods. He would peek in the door and leave again. "He tried to keep us on the edge, not knowing what was happening. One time he said, 'So you think you're sitting zazen? Well, you're not!' He picked up the stick, went around the room, gave everyone two swats on the shoulder and sat down." Della added, "One time he yelled, 'Don't move!' I wondered if he was mad at us. Suzuki Roshi impressed upon us that faith and meditation go together. I loved the sesshin lectures. On the last day of sesshin, Suzuki Roshi told us we were making the vow to keep the enlightened life. It takes a long time to master meditation and then we don't know when. Now we must make our zazen more beautiful. As we practice we will be refined."

The following year Della's husband died after a long struggle with Parkinson's Disease. She was grateful for the support and strength she re-

ceived from zazen. She continued teaching primary grades and taking classes. In 1962, she joined the first group of westerners to be ordained by Suzuki Roshi. Her name, Zendotei Jundaishi, means "Zen way, faith refined naturalness."

As more and more people became interested in Buddhism and joined Zen Center, Della quietly continued to offer support. She hosted many parties and entertainments for the Japanese congregation, as well as giving baby showers and holiday get-togethers for members of the growing Zen sitting group. Many early students have happy memories of her New Year's Eve parties.

In the late sixties, Zen Center became more organized; businesses were developed, Tassajara was founded, and the sitting community moved to 300 Page Street. Della remained close to Suzuki Roshi. When he became ill, she was there with encouragement and inspiration. She felt close to everyone because they were also on the path. For her, "It was the teaching I needed; that was the message. You make the best of every situation by accepting it as Buddha's activity. But also, to try to understand it is to limit the Absolute. Mindfulness meant being in the present instead of the past or future. The teaching is what you do now."

Soon after Suzuki Roshi died, Della was invited by Richard Baker to move to Page Street. Soon after, she retired from teaching, at the highest teaching level thanks to years of outside study. Immediately she volunteered to work in the Zen Center offices, helping with fund-raising letters and working with the accreditation committee. She continued to befriend Okusan, assisting her with transportation and attending special tea ceremonies. For many years, she and Betty Warren have accompanied Okusan on her yearly trips to Tassajara.

Retirement has brought much joy. According to Della, "The nearest thing to the foundation of youth is continuous learning." Retirement has left her free to continue her studies at Zen Center and at the Center for Learning in Retirement (CLIR) at the UC Berkeley Extension. She has wide interests; at CLIR, she has recently taken classes in Dante, The Bible as Literature, Women in the Bible, Current Affairs, Foreign Policy, and Shaw's Play Reading. At Zen Center she is devoted to the study of Abhidharma and the Foundations of Mindfulness. And there is never enough time for the sutras.

With the loss of her mother in 1986, and the loss of her son to cancer three years later, she continues to find strength in the teaching. She is steadfast, devoted, and never complaining. She has a kind word for everyone, and keeps a level head in controversies. Although she keeps a low profile, she enjoys the comings and goings of Zen Center members, their romances and children. Although experiencing arthritic pain in her knees, she continues to

sit zazen with the community almost every day. She maintains a positive and supportive attitude and has deep and total commitment. It seems appropriate to bring these qualities home with a closing story.

One of Della's good friends and admirers is Pat Phelan, a senior student at Zen Center who now leads a Zen group in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Della helped Pat with the move from Page Street to Chapel Hill. As a hectic day with the movers drew to a close, Pat took refuge in Della's apartment by warm invitation. When the movers were finished they came to Della's apartment to give Pat her keys. Della invited them to sit and join her for sherry. They were so impressed by her generous spirit that two weeks later when they arrived in Chapel Hill with the furniture, the same movers asked Pat, "Who was that kind, hospitable person we met? She's been on our minds for two weeks. What religion does she practice? We want to practice the same one."

Continuing to encourage us by living Buddhism and following the teaching of Suzuki Roshi, she is thankful for that privilege and for everyone's practice. Homage to you, Della! Happy Birthday! and thank you for so many years of support. May you have many more.

Okusan, Pat Phelan and Della

Pottery as Interbeing

by Sei En Katharine Cook

Sei En Katharine Cook studied Fine Arts at San Francisco Art Institute and was lay ordained by Suzuki Roshi in the late sixties. She was flower grower at Green Gulch Farm for many years and developed a pottery from local clay there. She has been studying the Japanese and Pueblo traditions for ten years with Janet Lohr at the Fort Mason Art Center and has been teaching pottery at Zen Center for three years.

It is possible to approach the making of ceramics as the making of a beautiful, perhaps useful, object. It is also possible to approach it as an expression of interbeing, or the interconnectedness of myriad worlds. I would like to discuss two very different approaches to pottery, the Japanese/Korean and the Pueblo Indian, as expressions of this interbeing.

The illustrated teapot is from the Shoji Hamada workshop of the 1960s in Japan, probably made by an apprentice or workshop member. It is unsigned. It demonstrates many of the aspects of an "aesthetic of interbeing." The parts of the pot itself were all separately thrown or hand-formed, and yet in the assembly the pot becomes whole, while allowing each part to remain articulate. The handle and thumb rest invite the hand. The belly of the pot invites the tea. The teapot invites you—wouldn't you enjoy making tea in it? Or pouring tea for a friend?

The pin-holed semi-transparent glaze is pleasant to the touch, enhances the pot and still reveals the clay as unadorned. The use of glaze as a translucent skin rather than a decorative cover-up is an important part of this aesthetic, as it allows one to feel the raw clay, which is an interface between the mineral and plant kingdoms—an important origin for human beings' form of life.

Painting on facing page by Michael Sawyer

Air, fire, earth, water and space are all here in the atmosphere created, in the warmth and transformation of the ash to glaze, in the clay, and in the transformation of the clay from wet earth to ceramic. It is not "beautiful," but its warm, quiet, understated presence—its character—offers itself to you as a friend.

What is the mind that creates this kind of ceramics? What does it have to do with meditation? Thich Nhat Hanh says "Let's reflect on *samadhi* and *vipassana*. Samadhi is just stopping, to be there, to be really with yourself and with the world. Vipassana is to see clearly. When you are capable of stopping, you begin to see, and if you can see, you understand."

What I gather from the Japanese and Korean traditions is that this stopping of the discursive mind is achieved by a process of total yet relaxed engagement of the mind and body—and especially the kinesthetic sense—with the object of meditation, the clay itself, or the pot within the clay. A certain productive pace is maintained in a context of group support, usually a family or workshop team. Nature herself has been a major resource to draw from as country potteries have relied on local wood for fuel, local rice straw for ash, as well as local clays and minerals for glaze. Another important, very tangible source of inspiration for the process has been the inherited traditional visual motifs and symbols of the culture.

Moving in this rhythm of support and engagement, one comes to be still within, and sees and liberates the pot within, or "inspirits" the clay to become a vehicle for the expression of understanding.

In the Japanese and Korean traditions accidents, imperfections and asymmetries arising are valued implications of the integrity of the process itself. It is considered more illuminating to express the constant imbalance occurring against a background of total harmony than to express the harmony itself. I believe Japan and Korea are the only cultures in the world that have developed this aesthetic, and it is a uniquely challenging experience to attempt to work within this framework. It takes a great deal more skill to throw a pot allowing the clay a certain off-centered freedom, than to center the clay and throw symmetrically.

In the pre-Colombian tradition which includes the potteries of both Americas, "stopping" is also achieved, but the process is somewhat different. Pueblo potters work slowly in a pre-industrial rhythm; time comes almost to a standstill as one coils, and scrapes, and scrapes and polishes, and polishes again to create a flowing symmetrical pot with a lustrous, mirror-like surface. The supports for the process come from family or tribe, culture, tradition and nature.

What is understood? Pueblo pottery is beautiful by anyone's standard, yet its uniqueness lies in the degree to which it expresses spiritual truths. The traditional patterns are all geometric crystallizations of the patterns of life force at play in the Pueblo cosmos. The development of a black ware in itself can be seen as symbolic of the mind of "not knowing," or a ready and reverential attitude towards all of creation. The human being stands within a field of dynamically moving energy forms, and finds his or her way in life in relationship to and with them. This so-called primitive pottery has an energy that is unmatched by more technologically advanced ceramics because of the sheer amount of focused awareness that goes into its making and the freedom and creative capacity that can occur when the human eye and hand are not limited by the constraints of a mechanical process.

I invite you to make or enjoy the pottery of interbeing. In the process you can discover your own heart/mind and come to understand the earth as medicine.

Self-Portrait by Amber Hoadley

Rainbow Serpent

by Kazuaki Tanahashi

Mayumi Oda called me up in early January and asked me to collaborate in an effort to stop Japan's plutonium energy project. She described her vision of a painting we might create together—I would draw an explosive brush line representing the destruction of the Earth and she would paint an emerging goddess.

About a month before this, both of us had attended a meeting of KAI, a group of socially-concerned Japanese residents in the San Francisco Bay Area, at which film director Kiyoshi Miyata had presented his video on Japan's plutonium utilization program. This video demonstrated the tremendous threat posed by this artificially produced substance: Its half life is 24,000 years and just one millionth of an ounce is lethal to a human being; one accident could affect millions of lives for centuries. We were terrified and questioned: Who can stop this? How can we help? Kiyoshi described a desperate political situation in Japan, where public indifference had stifled all resistance and the government was in the process of starting a huge full-cycle program—producing plutonium, burning it to get electricity, and disposing of and storing the nuclear wastes. While other industrialized nations had been phasing out plutonium energy plans, Japan alone was trying to forge ahead with this technology. By the 2010s Japan would possess more plutonium than was contained in the US and Soviet arsenals combined.

I thanked Mayumi for her suggestion and promised to work with her. Along with several other members of KAI, we formed a group called Plutonium Free Future* in February. We thought the only way to reverse the situation was to raise international awareness, and create pressure to alert the Japanese public. We decided to ask citizens' organizations throughout the world to make this a top-priority issue for the global environment.

A handful of artists getting together and trying to stop a national project, carried on in great secrecy with an enormous budget, seemed like Don Quixote on a donkey challenging a giant windmill. We asked Kiyoshi to draft an appeal; through ongoing questions and discussions, a substantial document was created. We consulted with specialists in nuclear science and nuclear energy in Japan and the USA, enhancing the accuracy of our statement.

Kiyoshi told us about an aboriginal Australian myth according to which a female Rainbow Serpent in the Earth guards the powers that are beyond human control. Any attempt to disturb its sleep will cause rainfalls of doom. Mayumi painted a picture of the serpent and I added a red flame being

belched from her mouth. This image became our group symbol as well as the cover picture of the pamphlet "Japan's Plutonium: A Major Threat to the Planet." Mayumi also created silk-screen prints called "Earth Ship" as gifts to people who give donations at a certain level. These prints and T-shirts of the same design became the major source of support for our activities for the first six months.

One of the unusual things we did was to launch an international campaign of letter-writing to the Emperor of Japan, whose function has been constitutionally outside of the political decision making system since the end of the World War II. We thought that if letters of concern poured in to him from different parts of the world, and if copies of the letters were sent to the media, the Japanese public would notice that a crisis was in the making—something like the approach of war.

Our immediate focus has been to stop Japan's plutonium transport program, a key element of Japan's nuclear energy policy and the international plutonium economy. The plutonium, separated from Japanese nuclear reactor waste at the reprocessing plants in France and England, will be used to fuel Japan's ambitious plutonium energy program. A cargo ship, escorted by a lightly armed civilian cruiser, will be carrying one-ton of plutonium each time. The first of the 30 shipments from Europe to Japan will begin in October of this year. We wrote letters to media and governments of sixty nations along the potential routes of the shipment. For this campaign we have been working with Greenpeace International, a major voice against Japan's plutonium, as well as the Nuclear Control Institute, Washington, D.C., and Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, Tokyo.

Now some nations and many citizen's groups overseas are opposing Japan's globally life-threatening shipment and energy program. Japan is beginning to be isolated from the international community on the plutonium issue. According to the August 3 issue of the *New York Times*, "Facing growing criticism from abroad, Japanese Government officials say they have begun rethinking the nation's ambitious nuclear energy plans, and may delay or derail the building of self-sustaining breeder reactors that would add to the worldwide oversupply of deadly plutonium."

I think we are living in a very strange period of history. Even if no one had the intention to create violence or destruction, we could make a large area of the Earth uninhabitable for centuries through a single stupid mistake. And don't we all make mistakes? In fact, isn't the plutonium energy drive itself a gigantic lack of mindfulness?

Many of our friends have been extremely supportive of the work of Plutonium Free Future. I was fortunate to be sent by our group to Rio de Janeiro

for the Earth Summit and made connections with people who shared the same concern.

This work has strengthened my sense of connectedness to all people and all being. On the other hand the work has led me to believe that we all are challenged to respond to fundamental questions: Do we have the right to risk the future of the entire planet for satisfying our material needs? Can we afford to keep silent when we see other people pursuing a program that could be extremely destructive? Is it possible to leave the future of the Earth to those who are so out of touch? Is it ethical not to try to hold the future in our own hands?

*Plutonium Free Future, 2018 Shattuck Ave., Box 140, Berkeley, CA 94704

"Earth Ship" by Mayumi Oda

The Web of Truth

by Carrie Kutchins

Carrie Kutchins has been a weaver and a student of Buddhism for ten years. Aside from weaving fabric professionally, she has studied natural dyeing, spinning, and various ethnic weaving techniques. She works, weaves, paints and gardens in Marin County, and studies Zen at Green Dragon Temple.

In the first case of the Blue Cliff Record, "The Highest Meaning of the Holy Truths," the commentary says: "Emperor Wu held discussions with Dharma Master Lou Yueh, with Mahasattva Fu, and with Prince Chao Ming about the two truths, the real and the conventional. As it says in the Teachings, by the real truth we understand that it is not existent; by the conventional truth we understand that it is not nonexistent. That the real truth and the conventional truth are not two is the highest meaning of the holy truths."

The idea of a conventional and an ultimate truth or reality is often referred to in Buddhist literature. Sometimes this concept is illustrated using the image of the warp and weft of a loom. In the first case of the *Book of Serenity*, "The World Honored One Ascends the Seat," the verse is as follows:

> The unique breeze of reality—do you see?
> Continuously creation runs her loom and shuttle,
> Weaving the ancient brocade, incorporating the forms of spring,
> But nothing can be done about Manjusri's leaking.

And in the commentary on the verse it says: "As the weft goes through the warp, the weave is dense and fine; a continuous thread comes from the shuttle making every detail—how could this be even spoken of on the same day as false cause or no cause?"

Because I have worked for many years as a weaver, this image is familiar and compelling to me.

For a weaver, the first and most important thing to consider when beginning each weaving is the basic relationship between the warp and the weft. This relationship determines the overall outcome of the weaving—it's appearance and its function or suitability.

The warp is composed of two factors: the 'set' and the type of thread. The set is the number of threads to the inch in the warp. From this it is decided if only the warp will show, only the weft will show or some mix in between. The set determines if it will be a dense or an open weave. The type of thread used and patterns of open or dense areas also control the effect. Once the

warp is made and rolled onto the loom it is impossible to change it. It is the "given," what there is to work with.

The weft has more play and flexibility than the warp. The weft can skip threads, make loops and patterns; there is an endless variety of possibilities that can be adopted at any time. The weft can also combine with a pattern in the warp to form a design, or simply fill in the space to allow only the warp to show. In the actual weaving process, how the shuttle is thrown and the way the weft is beaten into place make all the difference. The right touch is developed only through experience in many different situations.

Then there is the cloth itself. As it is woven it takes on a life of its own that is not under our control. Try as we might there is little we can do to change it. The whole cloth then is like life, it is there to teach us. Sometimes we see the mistakes right away and we can try to fix them. Sometimes we don't and we have to live with them. Later our feeling about these mistakes can change; they can look all right, even interesting or beautiful. Or they can look worse—"how can I have been so stupid?"—great gaps, holes, and broken threads.

How easily we forget what the whole thing looks like! We just see the shed before us opening and closing, opening and closing, each moment, each breath as we lay the weft in place. Only occasionally by the grace of some insightful unraveling or a seeming endpoint can we see the whole piece. Then what a rush of feeling—revelation, amazement, disgust, pride, and despair. We think that we will never forget this, but we do. We can only go back to following creation, the opening and closing of the shed, the running of the weft, breath, mind . . . can you see it?

As I study Zen and work at the weavers' craft, I am deeply moved by this visual, tactile manifestation of the teaching. I have begun to understand how native weavers everywhere were and are expressing their spiritual life in their weavings. It affects the way you see the world to work with your hands in this way.

I once saw a show of Kalim rugs from Afghanistan and Turkey. Their playfully repeated patterns, images from nature and the weavers' shared vision, were so joyous and free. Yet the overall effect was quietly awesome, as though I were in a powerful place of the spirit.

Perhaps all art has some of these elements, but weaving sings this song to me so well: "We are the dreamers and we are the dream, we are the weavers and we are the web."

Old frog
finds his way
into my garden
one
hop
at
a
time.

Everyday Creating

by Daigu Jim Jordan

Daigu Jim Jordan is a Zen Center priest who is currently treasurer for Zen Mountain Center. He has degrees in Painting, Art History, and Human Systems. He taught Art and Psychology at various institutions, among them Harvard, Antioch, The San Francisco Art Institute, and the California School of Professional Psychology.

When I consider the word *create*, I nearly always find myself thinking of proto-human beings. And what I think about first, regarding our earliest ancestors, concerns those qualities that set them apart from their near relatives, the other primates. Given an environment that the proto-human was not as well-equipped to survive in as his/her competition, the survival problem was approached by what we call *thinking*, rather than the normal evolutionary recourse to fur, fang, or swift legs. The ancestors seem to have "thought" their world, that is, they probably noticed that blows from their puny fists did not render certain game ready for the breakfast that they required, so they adopted harder, more lethal sticks and stones as extensions of their natural weapons. Rather than adapting to their milieu, they adapted their surroundings to themselves.

Proto-humans began to manipulate their environment simply as a matter of course. Successful evolution, for them, resembled a strategy of conceptualizing their environment—considering food gathering, weather protection, and so forth—internally, through an "image-ined" version of the world.

What I propose is that this conceptual attempt to control the environment is basic—even a definition of human-ness. We are a species that has both survived and proliferated via our ability to imagine solutions to environmental needs and then to remember and transmit those solutions to our offspring. We attempt to create suitable environments for ourselves and our progeny. But what does all of this have to do with artistic or even individual creativity?

If imagining and controlling the environment is basic to human beings, then we must still be doing it. For example, what decides your choice of clothing for the day when you wake up? If you anticipate going to the zendo in a few minutes, your choice will be different than your selection for a scheduled job interview. Dressing for work at Macy's suggests a different mode of dress than what might be selected for the beach. In every case, however, in making that selection we are creating a public image for ourselves. Clothes *do*, in

Calligraphy and frog by Jenny Groat

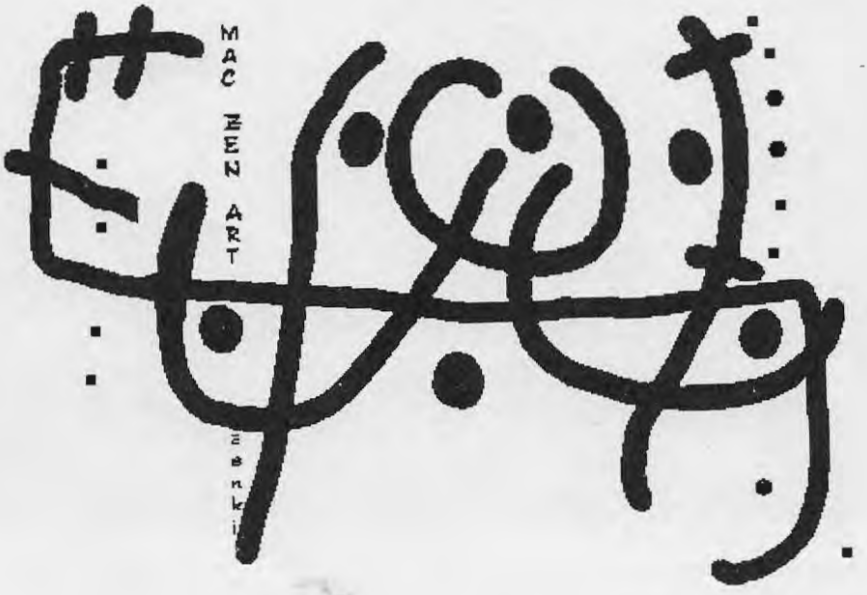
a visual sense, make the man/woman; no matter how much we may denigrate "fashion," we all select ourselves when we accumulate articles of clothing, and define our personas still further when we put the clothing on. All the world *is* a stage. I call this activity *creating*: manipulating, or attempting to control the social or physical environment through tools which are themselves manipulated through imagining the effects of that action.

"Nonsense! Everything you have written has to do with culturally learned behavior. True *creativity* is the product of genius, of artistic abilities that transcend the mundane."

In response, I would point out that artists are, in fact, recreating their environments. Artistic problem-solving differs from the mundane only in degree. Whereas our selection of a dress shirt or tie as opposed to a T-shirt is based upon the anticipation of certain later events, the artist's decisions are based upon his/her total apprehension of the world, both internal-emotional and physical. In addition, the artist's tools for manipulating that world are highly symbolic; they are only efficacious in the imagined environment, and they only communicate to those who share the symbolic language that constitutes the tools themselves. If that individual language is unknown to the artist's audience, they must either learn it or reject it as unimportant. The famous slow acceptance of eccentric and avant-garde artists is the time required for their audiences to first decide to learn the language, then begin to accept the world vision which that language posits.

The artist's intent in positing his/her world is another important factor to consider in this process. Artists make their "solutions" for their imagined worlds for many different reasons. "Play" accounts for many of the world's most interesting artistic products. Play is a form of exploration of the limits of an imagined world. In children, of course, the limits of both the imagined and the physical world are equally mysterious, accounting for the wonderful leaps of imagination in their usage of materials and in inventing new forms. Adults often try to imitate that freedom, but to do so effectively adults must unlearn a great deal about both their materials and about acceptable solutions. Joan Miro is a good example of one who spent his life trying to unlearn. Unlearning is terribly difficult work. Certainly most of us do not want to unlearn the everyday sequences of our daily lives, the little rituals of waking in the morning, driving our cars, and so forth.

But creativity does depend upon some degree of unlearning by recreating. And for artists, as for all human beings, creativity is an attempt to gain some control of one's world. Another word for control, or course, is grasping. If artistic or creative acts are grasping tightly to illusion, to an imaginary world in the Buddhist sense, then how is it that we human artists can become enlightened beings? Complete non-grasping, complete freedom obviously entails no representations, no marks, non-illusion. Or does it?



Computer art by Lin Zenki

I implied earlier that by simply enduring, humans were trafficking in illusion—by conceptualizing the world in the first place. Desire for an environment that is other than what really "is" was the basic survival strategy of the species. In this light, the desire not to deal with illusion becomes an illusion. Perhaps, then, the obliteration of boundaries—the recognition of the artificiality of distinction between real and unreal, internal and external, near and far—is what constitutes clarity. Recognition of the mutability of so-called physical reality, as well as that of imagined reality, becomes a necessary characteristic of non-grasping. Still, to alter what is, it must be seen in some way; perhaps not "grasped" so much as seen fiercely, with great concentration. Clearly seeing what is makes the originality of the new possible, the fresh and original world-version that is a necessity for artists. Newness is always uncomfortable, risking a trying-out of another version of the world. For most of us, novelty, newness, can be very frightening. For those who go beyond these dualities, however, who can seek and embrace the novelty of each moment, the arts can become an exemplary symbolic vehicle for exploring the living world, significant of grasping and samsara, of seeing fiercely and letting go, *and* of complete freedom. Art—or deciding what to wear in the morning—becomes becoming; "product" disappears and only manifest is-ness remains, the only is there ever was, really. Children, enlightened beings, rocks, trees and all other energies know the difference; but some refuse to admit it, insisting that it must be something special. Or, that one part is real and another part not real. It's *all* only suchness, we create it all the time.

Deer Park Dharma

Turning the Wheel

by Lorraine Capparell

Lorraine Capparell is an artist living in Palo Alto. She has been working in both clay and watercolor media for over twelve years. Her twelve panel series, "Shakyamuni Buddha: A Story," is available for exhibit and sale.

In 1983, I visited Sri Lanka and was taken to see the great Buddha statues in Polonnaruva. At the time, I was beginning to look at sculpture as a possible way of making my living and I wanted to see what the ancients had done. It was the giant reclining Buddha that affected me most. Over one hundred feet long and carved from a huge cliff of stone, the serene form dwarfed several full grown trees without being cumbersome.

In Burma, I visited one-thousand-year-old temples. At first, pausing in awe before a portal, I was afraid. Perhaps there were unhappy spirits that haunted these places that had been desecrated by the Tartar hordes of Kublai Khan. But inside, I was entranced by the atmosphere of complete peace. Sunlight shone through small windows onto rows of sitting Buddhas, and I followed them to a central meditating figure. Here was one who had conquered the senses and achieved an imperturbable calm without tension or effort. This was the type of art I wanted to create, too.

Back home, I began to study Buddhism and meditation. The idea of Right Livelihood, of work that harmed no one and which could lead to peace, took hold. I began to make sculptures inspired by my Asian experience.

Then Ron Nakasone asked me to do some ink and wash drawings for his book, "Ethics of Enlightenment," and I drew the story of the life of the Buddha. The obvious next step, because of my love of sculpture, was to bring these illustrations into three dimensions. This was work I loved.

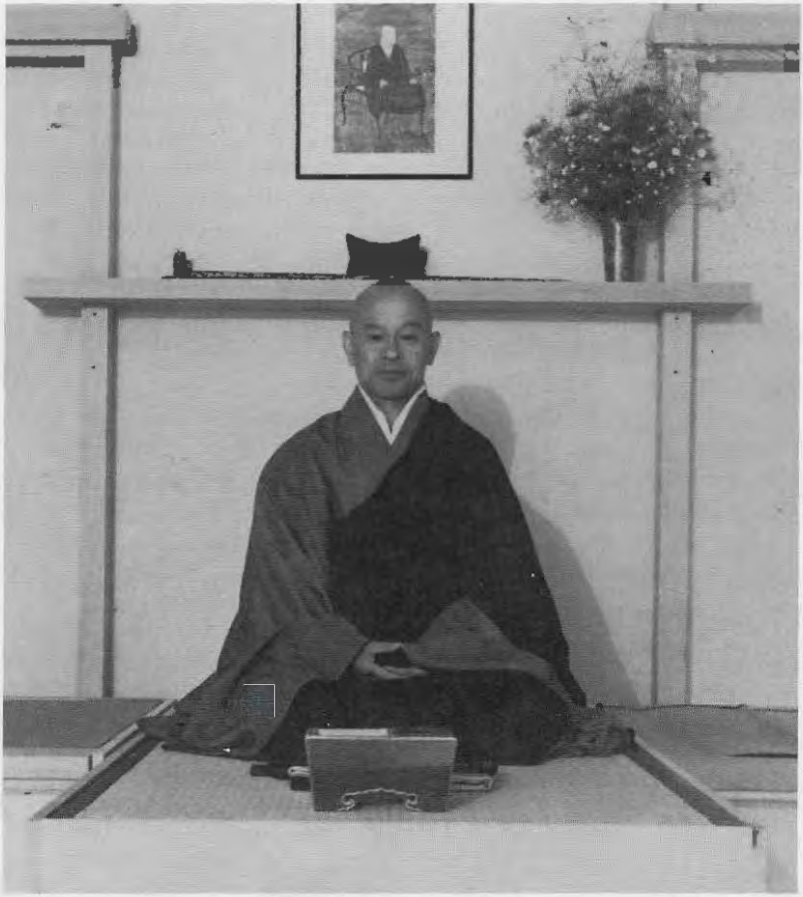
A visitor came to the studio one day when I was working—a childhood friend whom I hadn't seen in twenty-five years. Along the walls on shelves were the bas relief sculptures I'd begun: large panels of white clay with carefully modeled figures. In front of me was a piece in progress. I'd rolled a slab of clay and had sketched a scene in the soft surface. I would cut into the clay to add depth and add layers to bring the form out in dimension. A picture of a young prince saying farewell to his sleeping wife and child was coming into form.

I unwrapped a completed panel from the shelf and showed my friend "Maya's Dream." She laughed with pleasure. A sleeping woman and an elephant! I showed her others: "Buddha's Birth," "His First Steps" and "Encountering Sickness," and I told her the story. Her hand traced the forms as she listened intently. "So this is the story of the Buddha. I've never heard it before," my friend mused.

From a folder I took out a drawing and held it up: "Deer Park Dharma." The Buddha sat discoursing under a tree with two deer looking on. "What's he saying?" she asked.

I did my best to explain the Buddhist concepts of the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way. She kept asking questions. As I put the drawings away and wrapped the ceramic reliefs in plastic, I told my friend of my dream to make a traveling show of these panels. There would be twelve in all and framed in redwood for display. She said, "Yes, more people should see these. Then they could know the story of the Buddha." I hugged her and surveyed the studio. I went back to work.

Drawing by John Lombardi



Sharp Iron, Pure Silk

A lecture by Suzuki Roshi
Tassajara, Summer, 1969

9/14/69

One of the Sunday School children [at Sokoji] saw me sitting in zazen, and she said: "I can do it." She crossed her legs and said, "And what? And what?" I was very much interested in her question because many of you have the same question. You come every day to Zen Center to practice Zen, and you ask me, "And what? And what?"

I want to explain this point a little bit. I don't think I can explain it fully; it is not a question that can be answered. You should know for yourself. We sit in some formal position because we should experience something through

our bodies; not by my teaching, but by your own physical practice. However, to be able to sit in some particular form and to attain some particular state of mind is not perfect study. After you have full experience of mind and body, you should be able to express it in some other way, too. That happens quite naturally. You don't stick to a formal position anymore, but you convey your mind to others in some way. Even though you do not sit in a particular form you will have the same state of mind—sitting in a chair, or in a standing position, or in working, or in speaking. It is the state of mind in which you do not stick to anything. This is the purpose of our practice.

Yesterday a Japanese visitor was speaking about Japanese literature. Japanese people have studied Chinese culture since about 6 or 700 A.D.; they have been studying Chinese characters and Chinese culture. Then Kobo Daishi started Japanese writing, and Japanese people established it in their own culture. That is how it is; the same thing will happen in our practice. One hundred years after the Japanese government stopped sending students to China to study Chinese culture, we had an exquisite Japanese culture. In the Fujiwara period especially, we established a beautiful Japanese literature and calligraphy. After that period, the literature and calligraphy were not so good. He said that the later calligraphy was too formal, and in some we could see the artists' egos in their work.

Through long practice and training, we get rid of our ego. A word in Chinese or Japanese which expresses this training is *nabu*. Nabu means, to refine silk we wash it many times so that the threads can be white and soft enough to weave. We also use the character for iron. We hit the iron when it is hot, not to forge or to shape it, but just to make it strong. We temper it. After it is cold, even though you hit it, it doesn't work. Training is something like this. When you are young, you have a lot of ego, a lot of desires, evil desires, so to speak. If you rub your ego and wash it, you will become quite soft, like pure white silk. Even though you have various strong desires, if you hit and temper them enough, you will have strong sharp iron, like a Japanese sword. This is how we train ourselves.

In comparison to the work of Kobo Daishi or Tochibana Hiaurai, the work that followed the Fujiwara period was not so good. Some of it shows too much ego and some is too formal. We cannot see any personality in their calligraphy. The personality we see in art should be well-trained personality—not much ego in it. I think you can understand the difference between personality and ego. Ego is something that covers your good personality. Everyone has a character, but if you don't train yourself, your character is covered by ego. You cannot appreciate your personality.

In the Fujiwara period there was a lot of freedom. But at the same time, there were various artists and scholars who studied arts and philosophy and religion. They tried various disciplines and they had good teachers. It is

in this spirit that we practice zazen. By ourselves and for ourselves we should practice zazen. We apply more pressure on ourselves. Dogen Zenji says: "We settle ourselves on ourselves."

This kind of thing is not something I should talk about, but something I must show you by my everyday life, which is not so good. I am afraid you will study only my weak points. I think Zen Center is developing pretty well, but we are not yet completely on the track. We should know why we practice zazen, and we should be able to tell the difference between something which is good and something which just looks good. There is a big difference between something which looks good and something which *is* good. Unless you train yourself by hard practice, you have no eyes to see; you have no feeling to appreciate something which is very good. Only when many people have the kind of eyes to see or to feel something good will we have really good teachers and students. This is a mutual practice—Buddha was great because people were great. When people are not ready, there will be no Buddha. I don't expect every one of you to be a great teacher, but we must have eyes to see that which is good and that which is not so good. This kind of mind will be acquired by practice.

Even in the Fujiwara period, Chinese culture and calligraphy were far superior to Japanese. Chinese people always use the brush more than Japanese people do. And Chinese people have various brushes. We Japanese have no material to make brushes. We have lots of bamboo, but we have few sheep or animals from which to make brushes. So our training in calligraphy cannot be so good as Chinese people's. But before Japanese people mastered Chinese calligraphy completely, they had already started a unique Japanese calligraphy. This point is very interesting. Before Japanese people completely studied the Chinese way, they had already started their own way.

But Buddhists have been very sincere about this point. That is why we have transmission. Chinese masters especially put strong emphasis on transmission. It is necessary to master the teacher's way completely, then you should be free from it. That is very hard practice. That is why is takes such a long time to be Zen master. It is not knowledge. It is not some power. The point is whether a person is trained enough to make himself pure white silk and very sharp iron. At that time, without trying to do anything, you will be able to express your personality in its true sense. If we cannot see any true personality in a person's work, it means that he has not yet eliminated his habitual way.

My own habit is absentmindedness. I am naturally very forgetful. I worked on it pretty hard, but I couldn't do anything about it. I started to work on it when I went to my teacher. I was thirteen years old. I was very forgetful even when I was thirteen. It is not because of old age that I am forgetful; it is my tendency. But by working on it more and more, I found I could get rid

Wood sculpture of Suzuki Roshi by Peter Schneider

of my selfish way of doing things. If the purpose of practice and training is just to correct your weak point, I think it is almost impossible to succeed—to renew or correct your way or your habits. But even so, it is necessary to work on it, because as you work on it, your character will be trained and your ego will be gotten rid of.

People say I am very patient, but actually I have a very impatient character. My inborn character is very impatient. I don't try to correct it now, I've given up. But I don't think my effort was in vain, because I studied many things. I have to be very patient in order to correct my habit, and I must be very patient when people criticize me about my forgetfulness. "Oh he is so forgetful, we cannot rely on him at all." "What should we do with him?" My teacher scolded me every day: "This forgetful boy!" But I just wanted to stay with him. I didn't want to leave him. I was very patient with whatever he said. So I think that's why I am very patient with some others' criticism about me. Whatever they say, I don't mind so much. I am not so angry with them. Actually, if you know how important it is to train yourself in this way, I think you will understand what Buddhism is. This is the most important point in our practice.

Green Gulch Farm Zendo Reconstruction

by Zoketsu Norman Fischer

Progress on the meditation hall renewal project at Green Gulch was steady throughout the summer and fall. There were dramatic changes nearly every day: excavation for the new student bathhouse behind the zendo; the huge heavy gluelams that now support the ceiling lowered into the zendo through the roof with a crane; the new covered walkway all around the building going up.

We have always loved the interior of the old zendo; we still have that, though in a more beautiful and uncluttered form, with more windows and no pillars to break up the space. But the tin-sided exterior, which always seemed somehow invisible, is now just as beautiful, with its stucco finish, and the new walkway. Chances are we'll be changing the landscaping around the building to accommodate the beautiful new look. Underneath, the funky barn has been transformed into much more usable storage and meeting space.

It's been wonderful working with old friends on the project: former Zen Center residents Peter van der Sterre and Ken Sawyer headed the construction crew, and it was nice to have them around again. Zen Center Project Manager Frank Kilmer was a key person in putting the project together, and Green Gulch Director Fu Schroeder and Maintenance Head Michael Sawyer

The construction project at full tilt

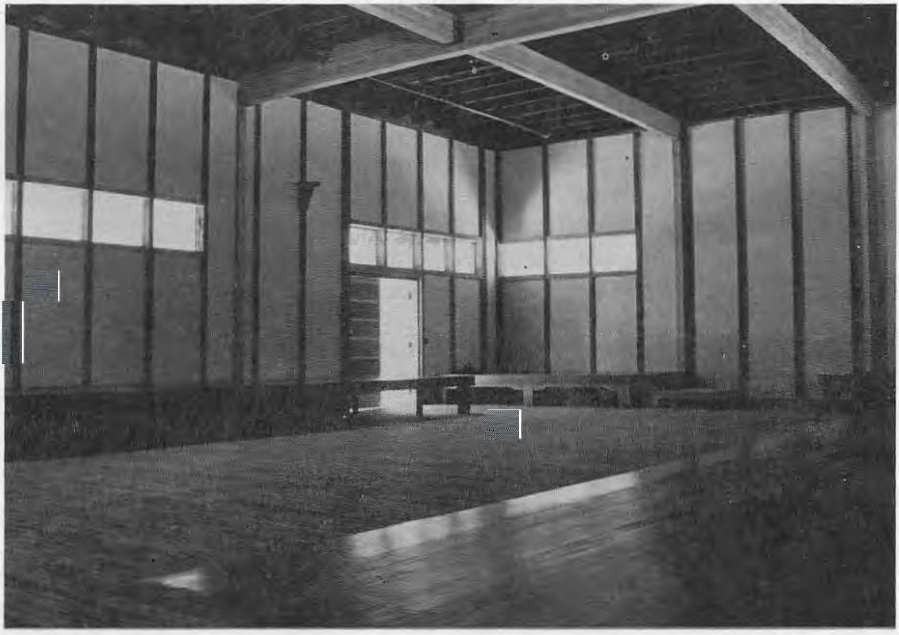
The tent was full to overflowing during Sunday lectures.

were involved in the many decisions and organizational moments that enable projects of this complexity to go forward with a minimum of upset to residents and guests.

As of this writing, the project is on schedule, as it has been all along, for completion at the end of October, just about the time the fall Practice Period starts. Zazen during the summer was held in the huge tent loaned to us by our friends at Spirit Rock. The tent worked very well, even for Sunday lecture, but it has been good to reestablish our practice in the new/old zendo.

If you haven't seen the work, come by and have a look. It changes the feeling and face of Green Gulch.

The new zendo interior



Green Dragon Auction

by Basya Petnick

"Going once, going twice . . . SOLD!"

On May 10, 1992 Zen Center held the Green Dragon Auction at Fort Mason Center, successfully raising approximately $45,000 to help finance the reconstruction of the Meditation Hall at Green Gulch Farm.

When the idea of doing an auction first appeared, it was met with a wave of enthusiasm, as well as the common sense advice, "Don't do it, it's too much work." But work is nothing new to Zen Center or Zen students. Perhaps the fact that a successful auction requires so much effort by so many only served to make the idea more appealing. Or so it seemed to the Green Dragon Auction Working Committee: Gladys Thacher (Chair), Linda Ruth Cutts, Ellen Courtien, Rosalie Curtis, Grace Dammann, Pat Leonetti, Tony Pagan, Basya Petnick and Fu Schroeder, who report that the auction attracted hundreds of members and friends who were willing to help.

As a fund-raising project, an auction seems ideally suited both to Zen Center and to the recession economy. The kind of work and involvement required enables many people "to feel the actual life and energy of the community and meet it with their own." Furthermore, an auction provides everyone involved with a win-win-win situation: the person donating the item or service has an opportunity to practice *dana* (giving) and also receives a tax deduction for the value of the gift; the purchaser can buy items of extraordinary quality and uniqueness (vacations, household goods, antiques, professional services, etc.) that are often either not available on the public market or not available at the price the item sells for at a charity auction; and Zen Center is able to do a fund-raising event that brings together many concentric circles of the Sangha while raising a portion of the much-needed funds to continue taking care of our practice places.

Zen Center Abbots, Officers, Board Members and the Auction Committee offer their most whole-hearted thanks to the hundreds of donors and bidders who made the auction a memorable occasion. The Development Office, headed by Vice President Linda Ruth Cutts is currently planning fund-raising activities to benefit Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. Those interested in contributing ideas and working on the Tassajara fund-raising campaign may contact Linda Ruth at her City Center office.

Tassajara Reunion

Ninety-seven people attended the Tassajara 25th anniversary alumni reunion, this September 11–13 (not counting a number of Tassajara residents who are also alumni from way back when).

We began with a Bodhisattva Ceremony on the lawn beneath the rising moon with Abbot Mel as *kokyo* leading the chants. We sat zazen, worked together, sang and told stories. Suzuki Okusan dazzled the group with a joyous rendition of a Japanese fishing song, and Kobun Chino Roshi guided us in a moving ceremony at the ashes sites of Suzuki Roshi and Katagiri Roshi.

Tassajara residents and staff supervised and joined in with cheerful patience and warm generosity. A fine time was had by all.

Reunion Yearbook

For the reunion Layla Bockhorst put together a yearbook full of pictures, excerpts from the shuso log and 10,000 Year Book, and lists of practice period students from 1967–89. Copies of the yearbook may be purchased in person or by mail for $22 from the City Center office.

The Cole Valley Zen Group

by Gay Reineck

In the late 1980's Zen Center initiated a project to help support small sitting groups around the country. I was enthusiastic when Abbot Mel Weitsman suggested that I look into starting a group in Cole Valley. The Tassajara Bakery manager was open to the idea, and helped think through the logistics of using the bakery space after hours. A sign in the window drew patrons and neighbors, many of whom had had no contact with Zen Center. From the start I found leading the weekly practice a wonderful challenge, responding to the particular needs of a beginning group. It was a real neighborhood zendo, most people walked there, each week we were able to recreate a sacred space together. My thanks to Mick Sopko and the bakery staff, to my husband Steve Weintraub, and to all the members of the group.

—Linda Ruth Cutts

Sometime in the middle eighties there was a series of Sunday evening talks at the Tassajara bakery, given by Zen Center and Green Gulch priests and senior students, for people in the nearby community who might be interested in finding out something about "Zen Buddhism in everyday life."

The talks were fascinating because each speaker brought a personal flavor of what Zen meant to them and how they came to Zen Center. Each person's personal experience was extremely interesting—there were often some very piercing, even embarrassing direct questions posed by neighborhood people, but interesting ideas always emerged.

The evening talks eventually ended and about a year later there was a note in the bakery window describing the formation of the Cole Valley Zen Group, which would meet at the bakery on Sunday nights. This seems to have been a result of Zen Center putting out "feelers" into various neighborhoods in San Francisco, the Bay Area and beyond.

The "Zen Group" was initiated and led by Linda Ruth Cutts, who proved to be a tireless and devoted teacher, with infinite patience for the almost unlimited assortment of individuals who would drop by each Sunday evening. Later, Linda was joined by her husband Steve, who brought to the group his own Zen experience when Linda was absent. Eventually a core group developed of the same 6 to 8 people who almost never missed an evening sitting and the balance of from 10 to 25 newcomers and once-in-awhilers.

The core group of us who came to the Sunday evening meetings became transformed during the four years we participated—it was very meaningful for us mostly because of Linda's and Steve's strong, steady leadership and

gentle encouragement for us to begin a fairly formal practice, in spite of the surroundings, and assume some of the normal Buddhist ceremonial roles.

The evenings would begin at 6:30, after all of the tables and chairs had been moved out and stacked near the door. Tatami-like mats were unrolled over the often crumb-covered carpet and an altar was created in the space normally reserved for knives, forks and napkins. Once the lights were dimmed, curtains drawn, zafus put in place and incense lit, the room became transformed into the Cole Valley Zendo.

As we arrived, we would stack our shoes under the bakery tables and bow to Linda and toward the altar as we entered the zendo to take our places for the 40-minute zazen period. At first zazen was followed by tea and a short lecture. As Linda began to see that the group was solidifying, she introduced the idea of kinhin and a short service, which included bowing and chanting the Heart Sutra, either in English or Japanese, and later other sutras. On the "Japanese" evenings there were sometimes a few newcomers who looked a little lost—unfortunately, they seldom returned.

The service was usually followed by a short tea—the Bakery often left a generous plate of pastries for us to share—and either a lecture, question and answer, or a group reading of a book such as Shunryu Suzuki Roshi's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. One evening each month there were two periods of zazen with no tea or lecture. In spite of this once-a-month break, none of us could imagine how Linda and Steve could continue to prepare wonderful, inspiring, joyous lectures for the other three Sundays! For some months, their lectures were based on the Heart Sutra—a sentence or a word would be discussed each evening.

As time went on, Linda suggested to some of us that there were temple duties which she could train us to do: doan, kokyo, jiko . . . With this experience, service took on a greater dimension and depth. We began to look forward to the tasks of ringing the bells, leading the chanting and clicking the clackers. We remember fondly a Cole Valley Group one-day-sitting at the City Center when we got to hit the han—echoes abounded in the basement corridor as the jiko and Linda walked down the shiny concrete stairs and glided silently into the back of the zendo.

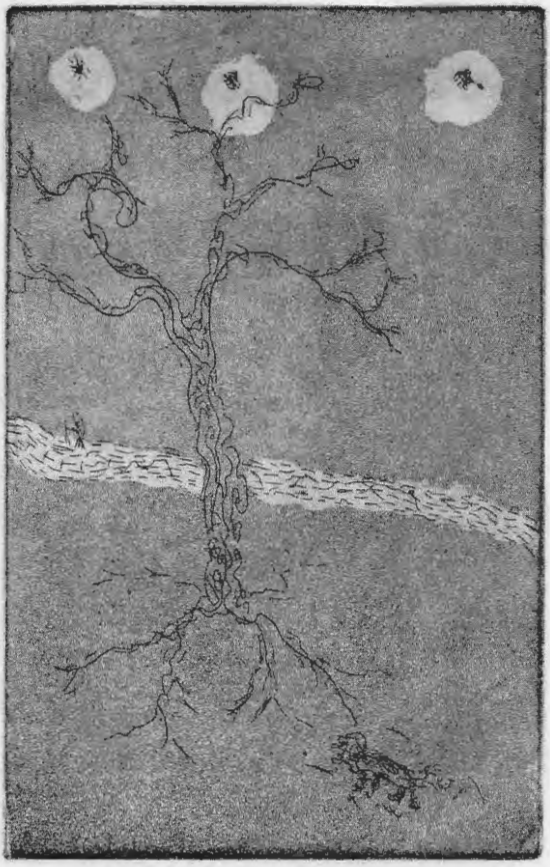
Each Sunday, surrounded by stacked chairs and tables, coffee maker buzzing and groaning, bakery coolers fuming, buses and cars passing the busy intersection and the occasional curious onlooker peering through the curtains and making odd comments, the Bakery became a special place for us to learn to practice Zen in everyday life. Each Sunday night became a starting point for the new week, a time to really stop and stand still within our normally hectic lives in the real world of work and families.

Zazen, kinhin and service took on a meaningfulness and depth unexpected by any of us—they became opportunities for mindfulness amidst the busy and often noisy surroundings. Following the lecture, all of us would participate in a silent re-building of the cafe by stacking and storing the mats and zafus, replacing the tables and chairs and locking up in preparation for the next morning's work shift.

We felt privileged to be a part of this group, and to practice in a setting where all of us made so many mistakes with the forms at one time or another that we eventually lost the fear of doing something wrong and were able to focus on the experience.

In May, the Bakery was sold to the Just Desserts company and we lost our sitting space. Nowadays a few of us are sitting together on Sunday nights at each other's houses. We have learned how to make a zendo and altar in our living rooms and bedrooms and how to keep the idea of a Sangha alive. This fall, we hope to begin the process of taking the precepts and lay ordination.

Etching by Michael Wenger



Drawing by Jack Van Allen and Misha Merrill

Jizo, the Earth Store Bodhisattva

by Jack Van Allen

Jack Van Allen started sitting at Sokoji Temple in 1967; he and his wife were married by Suzuki Roshi at Sokoji in 1968. He began making Buddhist images in 1978, and since then has crafted more than 8500 pieces in bronze, silver, hydrastone and cement—including more than 1500 Jizo images for the Zen Center Hospice and Green Gulch Farm.

Jizo is the Japanese and Korean form of the Indian figure Dhyanibodhisattva Ksitigarbha. He is also known as Earth Store, Earth Womb, and "conductor of souls." He cares for women, children, and travelers; the "traveling" usually refers to entering and departing this life. Jizo is garbed as a monk, and usually adorned with Bodhisattva ornaments and third eye.

Equipped with a flaming wish-granting pearl and six-ringed staff, Jizo patrols the various hells, forcing demons to open the doors to the cells of the damned. He confounds the hag Sho Zuku No Baba, who deceives the spirits of children, saying that they can reach Amida's paradise by building a

tower of loose stones on the bank of the river of the dead. Jizo sometimes exchanges his staff for a Kongo diamond banner, or a vajra arrow which is as tall as he.

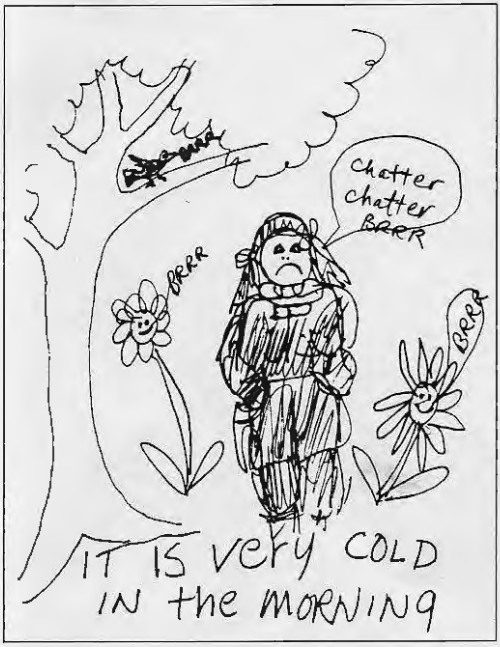
In the Far East, a traveler will find many shrines dedicated to Jizo's image as Mizuko, the children's Jizo. It is a sad fact that in Japan it is easier to obtain the services of an abortionist than to acquire birth control medicines and devices. Many Mizoku shrines—some with hundreds of images, each representing the soul of an aborted fetus—have been built in recent years.

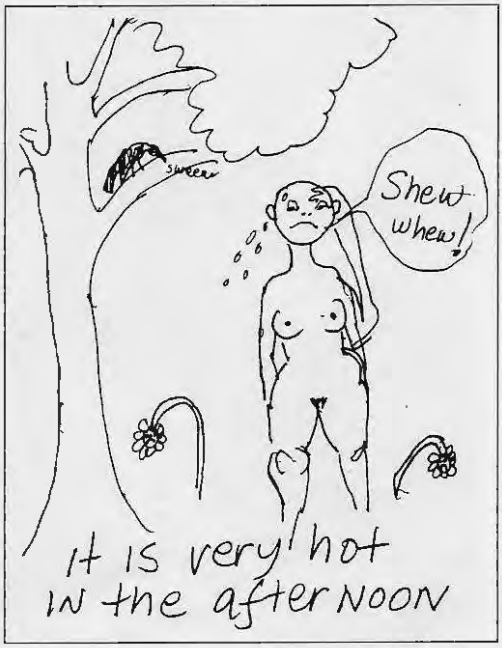
Korean Zen Buddha Halls have separate chapels reserved for memorial services. These are presided over by a Jizo with a cloth wrapping around his head. At "The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas," a Chan temple in Talmadge, California, many crowned images of the Earth Store Bodhisattva can be seen in glass cases with the names of the deceased painted on their bases. Many Jizo statues are "dressed" with bibs and hats, as clothing for deceased children; rice crackers and even Tootsie Rolls are left as offerings. Play is not neglected, as is shown by colorful pinwheels turning in the breeze.

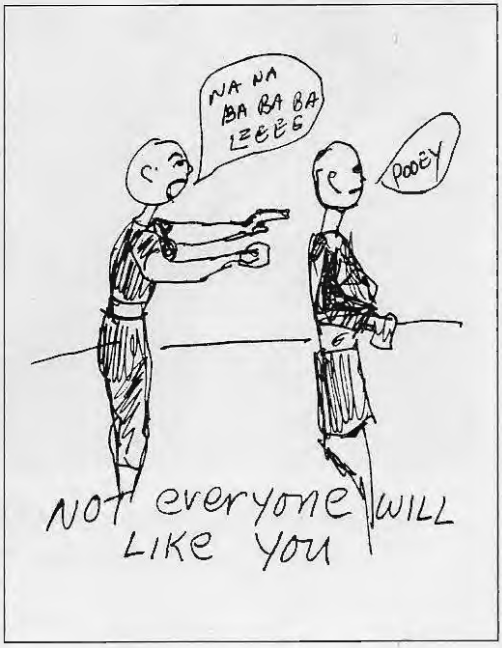
During the 1991 Gulf War, the author made a child's folded soldier hat of red paper for a Jizo image at Green Gulch Farm. Inscribed with a dedication to all the war dead and stamped with gold Dharma wheels and lotus buds, the hat was put on the head of the image with a red cord under the chin. Those who wish to invoke the presence of Jizo chant his dharani twenty-one times a month: OM KA KA KABI SAM MA E SOWA KA.

From the sketchbook of John Lombardi

Four drawings from a series by Berit Branch entitled "Ten simple but important things you should know about Tassajara Zen Center before you shave your head"







Portrait of Abbot Reb Anderson by Charlie Henkel

Speaking of the Unspoken

by Abbot Tenshin Anderson

Shortly before Dogen Zenji died, he was with his close disciple Tetsu Gikai; he was talking to him about the method for transmitting the bodhisattva precepts. He said, "Please come closer." And Gikai came over to the edge of his bed and stood by his right side, and listened. And Dogen Zenji said, "In this present lifetime, there are ten million things that I do not understand concerning the Buddhadharma of the Tathagata. However, concerning the Buddhadharma, I have the joy of not giving rise to evil views. Depending on the correct Dharma, I certainly have correct faith. It is only this fundamental intention that I have taught, nothing else. You should understand this."

What I want to talk about today is my personal journey, my personal search for this fundamental intention which the Buddhas teach. I don't know quite where to start, but I might start when I was about eight years old, sitting in my room by myself, looking out the window, and I heard a ringing in my ears. I didn't know what it was, and I thought, "Perhaps this is my conscience. I think something's bothering me." A couple of years later I decided that I would do whatever gave me the most gain in my social world, and as a twelve-year-old, what gave me the most gain was to be as wild and outrageous as possible. I got lots of attention from my friends for being a wild boy. Whenever I did anything naughty, they got excited and praised me; they looked up to me as the leader at causing trouble. I was a hero in my school for causing trouble. Then I met a man, a big man, a strong man, and he noticed what I was doing. He loved me, and he told me that when he was young, he was just like me. He looked at me, and he said, "You know, it's actually quite easy to be bad. What's really difficult is to be good." I thought, "He knows," and I decided at that time, "I'm going to try to be good."

However, shortly after, I forgot my decision. And then about a year later I was able to realize somehow that I had a lot of problems, that I was suffering—that I was anxious about unimportant things, like how I looked, whether people liked me or not, and how popular I was at school. I realized that if I could just somehow be kind to everyone, all my problems would drop away. And again I decided, as sincerely as I could, to try to be kind to everyone. However, this decision was made in the quiet of my own room at home, and as soon as I got to school I always forgot. I continued to forget for a number of years more, and somewhere along the line I read some stories about Zen monks. I heard about the way they conducted their lives. I read

about Hakuin Zenji, and about Ryokan. When I read their stories, I remembered my childhood vow. When I heard about how these men lived, I said, "This is the way I want to be. This is the way to be free of all my problems and troubles with people."

I wanted to be like these Zen monks, but I had no idea how to become like them. I kept reading, and gradually I found out that all these people shared in a certain practice. I thought, "Perhaps they're not so good just by chance. Perhaps they're not so successful in being kind just by luck. Maybe they all do some kind of exercise that promotes this kind of compassion." And I found out that what they all did was sit. So I started to sit.

The more I sat and the more I studied, the more wonderful I found this sitting. The more I heard teachings about it, the more grateful I felt to have found this sitting—so simple, so all-consuming, so perfect, and so effective.

So I practiced sitting for a number of years, enjoying it very much. But to tell you the truth I forgot, in a way, my original motivation: to be a compassionate person, to be a good person. I forgot about that, and just practiced sitting. And also, to tell you the truth, I didn't hear much teaching about being good and about being compassionate. I didn't hear it at the Zen Center where I practiced, and I didn't hear it from people at other Zen centers either. But it didn't seem to be a problem, because the sitting itself was so all-inclusive and wonderful.

Practicing this sitting, there was a strong emphasis on wisdom, on insight. There was a strong emphasis on the fundamental of sitting with no gaining idea; of a practice that has no sign, no stages, no gain, and fundamentally no thinking. All these instructions and indications as to the core of sitting I found totally adorable. It never crossed my mind that people didn't understand—especially that I didn't understand—what that meant.

Then, after practicing for about sixteen years, I received what we call *shiho*, Dharma Transmission. In the process of Dharma Transmission, I read at the bottom of the document called the Precept-Vein, *kechimyaku* (those of you who have lay ordination or priest ordination in the Soto School may have read where it says),"It was revealed and affirmed to the teacher Myozen that the precept vein of the bodhisattva is the single cause of the Zen gate." Receiving the precepts of the bodhisattva is the single, one, unique cause and condition of the Zen gate.

I felt somewhat surprised; this had not been emphasized during my sixteen years of practice. And I came to understand from that point that the gate to this signless, stageless, objectless, gainless, beautiful practice of sitting—the gate to it is these bodhisattva precepts. And I thought, why haven't I heard this before?

More and more I'm realizing and finding Zen teachings, Dogen's teachings, which confirm that the precepts are essential and fundamental. Just before he died, Dogen Zenji said to Gikai, "In our teaching, the transmission of the precepts is the most important condition."

And I've heard that in other Buddhist traditions, for example the Theravadin tradition, there is a similar pattern. The Theravadin teacher, Achaan Chaa, said that the Buddhadharma is *dana*, giving, *sila*, precepts, and *bhavana*, cultivation or meditation practice. But when the westerners come to practice, they aren't interested in dana and sila. They just want to do the bhavana.

And I think that during the rise of Zen in America, as my life somewhat shows, many of us started sitting right away; we were primarily interested in the essential practice of the Zen school, the sitting. We were not so explicitly or consciously exposed to the teachings of giving and ethics, for example, the first two paramitas. As a result of not being exposed to these fundamental practices, I feel that our understanding—or my understanding—of the fundamental intention of sitting, was perhaps . . . not so correct.

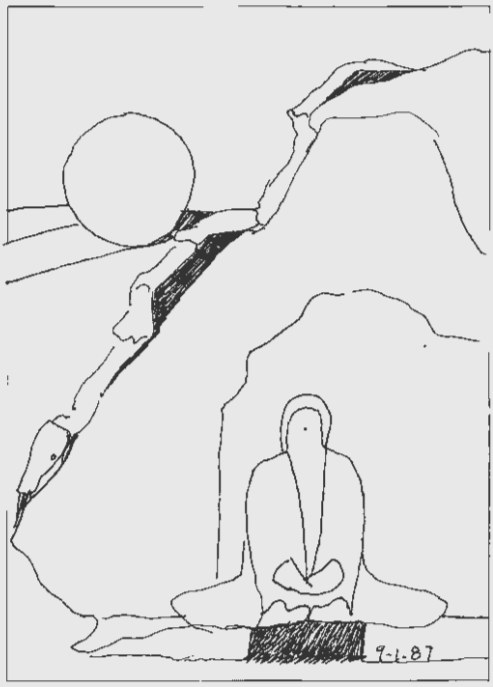
There are numerous statements in Zen which assume that we know that the precept vein is the fundamental. Therefore, when Zen teachers say—like yesterday, Narasaki Roshi quoted Master Rujing—"We don't need to recite scriptures, offer incense, practice repentance, and so on. Only sitting is required." And Dogen Zenji said, "In the true Dharma, zazen is the straight way to correct transmission. Zazen is all the Buddha taught. Zazen includes precept practice." They are not saying we shouldn't practice repentance and precepts. They're just trying to show us what these practices really are.

So one of the characteristics, and, I feel, the beauty of Zen, especially as taught by Dogen Zenji, is that it is so strictly the pure, true, and ultimate teaching. But there is a provisional teaching also. And if people have never been exposed to the provisional teaching, there is a possibility of misunderstanding the ultimate, true teaching. So that some Zen students actually think, "Precepts are not important." Even some Zen scholars say that precepts are the weak sister of the Buddhist practices, that really Buddhist practices are meditation and insight, and precepts are not so important. Why do they feel that? Partly because when they look at the published teachings on Zen, they don't see much on precepts.

A few years ago the Tibetan teacher Tara Tulku came to teach at this Zen Center, and he asked me some questions. He said, "In your meditation, what is the object?" I said (I felt a little embarrassed in a way), "Well, we don't have any object. We practice objectless meditation." And he said, "Oh. We have that objectless meditation, too, in Vajrayana, but it is the most advanced meditation. Usually practitioners work for many years before they

can do objectless meditation." And he also asked me, "What stages are there in your training?" I said, "Well, in a way, we're mostly concerned with not falling into stages. It's part of our tradition." I told him the story of Seigen Gyoshi going to the Sixth Ancestor and asking, "How can I avoid falling into steps and stages?" And the Ancestor said, "What have you been practicing?" Seigen said, "I haven't even been practicing the Noble Truths (that is, I haven't even started the beginning practice)." And the Ancestor said, "Well, what stage have you fallen into?" And Seigen said, "How could I have fallen into any stages if I haven't even practiced the Noble Truths?" Then Tara Tulku said, "Wow! That's very advanced, to be working on not even slipping into or clinging to the various stages of meditation." And again I thought, how subtle, how pure Zen is.

Then he said, "Well, I talked to some of your students and there are certain things about Mahayana Buddhism which they don't seem to know about." And while this teacher was at Zen Center, many people came up to me and said, "Why don't we do this, and why don't we do that?" In fact the things they were asking about we *were* doing, but they hadn't noticed. For example, they said, "Why don't we make offerings to buddhas and



Drawing by Robert "Skip" Melcher

bodhisattvas? Why don't we pay homage to buddhas and bodhisattvas?" I'd say, "We do, every time we have a meal." And then they'd say, "Oh."

These things are part of our tradition, but, in fact, people often don't even know it. So they don't know it; that's fine, in a way—it's so subtle, they don't even know it. Still, I wondered, and I was concerned. So I thought perhaps it would be good to tell people that we do make bodhisattva vows, that we actually are bodhisattvas, that we do pay homage to buddhas and bodhisattvas, that we make offerings, that we take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. It's not that these practices are only for other Buddhists who don't know the subtle teachings of Zen.

For many years at Zen Center I never really noticed that I had taken refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Now I've learned, again from Dogen's mouth, through Dogen's life. As he was dying, what was he doing? The last practice he did was to walk around a pillar upon which he had written, "Buddha, Dharma, Sangha." And he said, "In the beginning, in the middle, and in the end, in your life as you approach death, in death, after death, and as you approach life, always, through all births and deaths, always take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha." This basic practice, this fundamental practice, which all Buddhists do, many Zen students never even heard about. It was said, but we didn't hear it, because it wasn't emphasized strongly enough. In some way our sitting practice is so essential, so profound, that we may feel we can overlook some of these more basic practices.

But then I wondered, do we really understand, and are we really practicing zazen in accord with the fundamental intention which Dogen Zenji taught? Do we have correct faith? Is it possible that as we practice the Buddhadharma, some evil, some upside-down, some perverted kind of thinking is coming up and arising in our mind as we practice? I don't say it is or isn't. I just say, are we wondering about that?

We always say, "Just sit." But it's pretty hard to understand what that means. Suzuki Roshi said, "Receiving the precepts is a way to help us understand what it means to just sit." But then we hear for example the beautiful Zen story yesterday, something like: A monk asked a Zen teacher, "What about precepts, samadhi, and wisdom?" The teacher said, "I have no useless furniture in my house."

This, again, is such a beautiful teaching. And it means, of course, that zazen includes the precepts, the concentration practice, and wisdom. But I think, in my case, when I heard that teaching, it de-emphasized those practices, de-emphasized my concern for the precepts—which I think allowed me to not study the precepts as thoroughly as I might have if I had heard from the beginning that the precepts are the most fundamental cause of the Zen gate. When I hear that teaching and then apply myself to the study of precepts, a

kind of integrity comes into my sitting, I believe, I trust, which helps it be just sitting in its true sense. Without the precepts I don't think I can understand what it means to just sit.

When the Zen teacher refers to precepts, concentration, and wisdom, saying that we don't have any unnecessary furniture in our house, I think he means that the precepts are not anything extra in our lives. You can't be a good meditator or a good meditation teacher if you don't understand the precepts. These precepts are not a side issue; they are at the core of the process of awakening. What has not been emphasized, and what I'm trying to emphasize at Zen Center now, is that although there are no precepts outside Zen, there is also no Zen outside the precepts. Similarly, there are no Bodhisattva vows—no wish to save all beings—outside zazen, but also there is no zazen outside the wish to save all beings.

Again, after I had practiced for several years, I read Tientung Rujing, Dogen's teacher. Every time before he sat, he would think, "Now I sit in order to save all beings." And he encouraged us to practice in this way. Somehow, before that I hadn't really deeply heard this teaching. Maybe this omission was a skillful device of the early transmission of Zen to America. But now I feel that we need to realize that there is no Bodhisattva Vow—no real effective wish to save all beings—outside of zazen, and no real zazen outside of the wish to save all beings. There's no compassion in addition to upright sitting, and no upright sitting in addition to compassion.

Yesterday, Narasaki Roshi talked about the three monkeys. I don't know the origin of these three monkeys; apparently the three monkey teaching has been in Japan for a while. It's also fairly old in the West, isn't it? The way I heard the teaching of the three monkeys was "Speak no evil, see no evil, and hear no evil." Is that the way you heard it? Yesterday, it was translated as "no seeing, no hearing, and no speaking." "No seeing evil, no hearing evil, and no speaking evil," which partly means no seeing other people's faults, no speaking of other people's faults, and no listening to people who are talking about other people's faults. This is a regular Buddhist precept, right?

And on the deeper level of upright sitting itself, it's just straight "no hearing, no seeing, and no speaking." Narasaki Roshi also said that nowadays everybody's quite enthusiastic about hearing about other people's faults, and speaking about other people's faults, seeing if we can find out what's wrong with other people. Many people make a good living trying to find out what's wrong with the way people cook, the way people write, the way people make art, the way people make movies: find out what's wrong with them, tell everybody, and everyone else can tell everybody. This is our way now, right? Intense looking for, hearing about and speaking about the faults of other people.

Vimalakirti, from the life-size puppet show "The Unsurpassable Wisdom of Vimalakirti," created by Patti Sullivan and Alyse Rall and performed at the City Center and Green Gulch Farm

But he also said that we need a fourth monkey on top of these three, a fourth monkey of non-thinking. In other words, if we practice "not seeing, not speaking, and not hearing evil" with some fixed idea of what that means, this still can cause problems. In order to understand the precepts we must practice non-thinking, *hishiryo*. If we engage in these three practices, and think about them and understand them only by our own thinking, we will have a tendency to say, "This is right, and that is wrong. This is ethics. I am ethical; I am helping people." Therefore, we need the fourth monkey which protects us from self-righteousness, by deeply reminding us that even the precepts are empty of inherent existence, that is, we only understand them in dramatic conversation with all living beings.

The fourth monkey is the non-abiding mind of upright sitting, the mind far beyond this world of virtue and non-virtue—the realization of blankety-blank freedom. The precepts must be practiced with this mind of upright sitting in order to be received and lived, and not held to in some limited, fixed way. Receiving the precepts, we must practice upright sitting; we must practice non-thinking. However the tricky part for Zen students is that in practicing non-thinking, sometimes we also forget about the precepts. If we don't receive and practice these precepts, the true meaning of non-thinking will not be transmitted to us. But if we don't practice non-thinking, the true meaning of these precepts will not be alive in us.

Related Zen Centers

Buddhism is often likened to a lotus plant. One of the characteristics of the lotus is that it throws off many seeds from which new plants grow. A number of Zen centers have formed which have a close relationship with San Francisco Zen Center. A partial list of these follows:

Centers with Daily Meditation

Within California

Berkeley Zen Center, 1931 Russell St, Berkeley, CA 94703, (415) 845–2403
Sojun Mel Weitsman, Abbot

Hartford Street Zen Center
57 Hartford St, San Francisco, CA 94114, (415) 863–2507
Philip Whalen, Abbot

Jikoji, in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Saratoga
Contact Doris Griffin (408) 741–0562, Angie Boissevan, Director

Kannon Do Zen Center
292 College Ave, Mountain View, CA 94040, (415) 948–5020
Keido Les Kaye, Abbot

Santa Cruz Zen Center
113 School St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, (408) 457–0206
Wednesday: Zazen 7 P.M., lecture/discussion 8 P.M.
Katherine Thanas, teacher, (408) 426–3847

Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
6367 Sonoma Mountain Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95404, (707) 545–8105
Jakusho Kwong, Abbot

Outside California

Hoko-ji, Taos, NM, (505) 776–8677
Kobun Chino, Abbot

Minnesota Zen Meditation Center
3343 E. Calhoun Pkwy., Minneapolis, MN 55408, (612) 822–5313

Weekly Meditation Groups

Within California

Community Congregation Sitting Group
Community Congregational Church of Belvedere-Tiburon
Friday 6–7:30 P.M. Contact Yvonne Rand (415) 388–5572

Malibu Sitting Group
Zazen Sunday morning, Thursday evening
Contact Peter Levitt (213) 456–0078

Mill Valley Sitting Group, 43 Oxford Ave, Mill Valley, CA 94941
Monday evenings. Contact Steve Stucky (415) 383–8863

Modesto Zen Group
Tuesday 6–8 P.M. Contact Stan Cunningham for location (209) 577–8100.

Monterey Bay Zen Center
Tuesdays 7 P.M., Cherry Foundation, 4th and Guadalupe, Carmel, CA
Katherine Thanas, teacher, Contact Sarah Hunsaker (408) 649–8084

Oakland Sitting Group, 4131H Piedmont Ave, Oakland, CA 94611
Thursday 7 A.M., Contact Vicki Austin (415) 864–2813

Occidental Sitting Group, 3535 Hillcrest, Occidental, CA 95465
Wednesday evenings and last Saturday of month.
Contact Bruce or Chris Fortin (707) 874–2274

Orinda Zazen Circle, 88 El Toyonal, Orinda, CA 94563
1st and 3rd Sundays 9–11 A.M.
Contact Fran or Al Tribe (415) 253–9125 before 9 P.M.

Peninsula Sitting Group, Skyline at Hwy. 84
Wednesday 8:30 P.M., Tuesday and Friday 6 A.M. followed by service.
Contact Kathy Haimson for directions (415) 851–7023.

Thursday Night Sitting Group, Thursdays 7–9 P.M.
Marin Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 240 Channing Way, San Rafael,
Contact Ed Brown (415) 752–3905 or U.U. Fellowship (415) 479–4131

Outside California

Chapel Hill Zen Group, 131 Stateside Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Patricia Phelan, teacher, (919) 967–0861

Eugene Zen Practice Group, 1515 Hayes, Eugene, OR 97402
Wednesday mornings. Contact Gary McNabb (503) 343–2525

Nebraska Zen Center, P.O. Box 31566, Omaha, Neb. 68131–0566,
Phone (402) 551–9035. Teacher, Nonin Chowaney.

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SCHEDULES

SAN FRANCISCO

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY
5:25–7:05 A.M. Zazen & Service
5:40–6:30 P.M. Zazen & Service

SATURDAY MORNING
6:30–7:40 A.M. Zazen & Service
7:40 Temple Cleaning
7:55 Zendo Breakfast
8:45 Zazen Instruction
9:25–10:05 Zazen
10:15 Lecture & Discussion
12:15 Lunch

SUNDAY
No schedule

GREEN GULCH FARM

SATURDAY THROUGH THURSDAY
5:00–7:00 A.M. Two Zazens & Service

FRIDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY*
5:15–6:05 P.M. Zazen & Service

FRIDAY
6:30 A.M. Zazen & Service

SUNDAY MORNING
5:00–7:00 A.M. Two Zazens & Service
8:30 Zazen Instruction
9:25 Zazen
10:15 Lecture
11:30 Discussion
12:45 Lunch

* Schedule may change through the year. Please call (415) 383–3134 to confirm.

ONE DAY SITTINGS: once monthly; SEVEN DAY SITTINGS: twice yearly; THREE AND FIVE DAY SITTINGS: offered periodically. Each year there are residential practice periods of two–three months' duration at Green Gulch, City Center and Zen Mountain Center. For more information, please call or write to Zen Center at 300 Page Street, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 863–3136.

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