

Wind Bell



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FINDING YOUR OWN WAY

Suzuki Roshi

In your zazen perhaps you will have many difficulties or problems. But when you have some problem, it is necessary to try to find out by yourself why you have some problems before you ask anyone. Our usual way of study is to master something as soon as possible. So before you think for yourself, you may ask someone why you have some problem. That way may be good for your usual life, but if you want to study Zen, it doesn't help as much.

Always try to find out for yourself what we really mean by Buddha nature, or practice, or enlightenment. In this way, you will have a more subtle attitude toward everything, until you understand "things as it is." If you are told something by someone, naturally you will stick to something you hear and understand. The moment you think you understand something, you will stick to it, and you will lose the full function of your nature.

So, when you are seeking for something, your true nature is in full activity, like someone in the dark seeking for his pillow. You don't see anything, but you are seeking for the pillow you lost. At that time, your mind is in full function. But if you know where your pillow is, instead of fully functioning, your mind is acting in a limited way.

So if you don't know where the pillow is, but are just seeking for it, and your mind is open to everything, in that way you will see things "as it is." In this sense, it's better not to have any purpose to your study. Because you are not satisfied with, or cannot rely on what you have been told or taught, I think that you will seek for freedom.

Just because you seek for freedom, you try various ways. Of course, you will sometimes find that you wasted your time. If some Zen master drinks a lot of sake, you may think that the best way to attain enlightenment is to drink a lot of sake; then you will attain enlightenment. But even though you take a lot of sake, as he does, you will not attain enlightenment. It (finding the way yourself) may look like a waste of time, but it is not so. That attitude is important. If you continue to try to find out in that way, your understanding will be greater, and you will gain more power to understand things.

So whatever you do, you will not waste your time. But when you do something with some limited idea, or with some definite purpose, what you will gain is some concrete thing which will cover your inner nature. So it is not a matter of what you study, but to develop the faculty to see things "as it is," to accept things "as it is."

Shadow painting
of Suzuki Roshi
by Al Wong



Some of you may try hard to study something if you like it. If you don't like it, you ignore it. That is not only selfish way, but also limiting your power of study. Good or bad, big or small, we should find the true reason why something is so big or why something is so small; why something is so good, and why something is not so good. But if you always try to find something good, you will always lose something. And you are always limiting your faculties. So you always live in a limited world, because you cannot accept things "as it is."

We may have too many students in the zendo, but even if some master had only two or three students, he would never tell them our way in detail. The only way is to eat with him and to talk with him, to do everything with him, and to help him even without being told how to help him. But eventually, because it is difficult to help him, you will try to find out how to help him and how to make him happy. Mostly, he is not so happy. You will always be scolded without any reason. Maybe there is a reason, but because you do not find out why, you are not so happy, and he is not so happy. So if you really want to study with him, you will try hard to please him and make your life happy with him.

You may say that is a very old way. I think that in your own civilization, people have had this kind of difficult time with their teachers. There is no particular way for us, because each one of us is different from another. So each one of us will have our own way, and according to the situation you change your way to find the most appropriate way. So you cannot stick to anything. The only thing to do is find an appropriate way under some new situation.

For instance, in the morning time we clean our room. But we do not have enough rags or brooms, so it is almost impossible to participate in our cleaning. So under these circumstances, you must find something to do. You may think, "There is nothing for me to do." But if you try hard you will find out what to do.

I don't scold you so much, but if I were a strict Zen Master, I would be very angry with you because you give up so easily. "Oh, no. There is not much equipment to clean with. There is not much to do." And if you have to sit in the hallway with people (because it is so crowded) without much help, you may easily give up our practice. You may feel that it is foolish to practice under such bad circumstances, and you may easily give up. But in such a case please try hard to find out how to practice.

For instance, if you are very sleepy: "Oh, maybe better not practice zazen. Maybe better to rest." Yes, sometimes it is better, but at the same time, that may be a good chance to practice. When I was at Eihei-ji Monastery in Japan serving my teacher, helping my teacher, he did not tell us anything, but whenever we made a mistake, he scolded. It is a kind of rule to open a sliding door from the right side. This is the usual way. There is a little round hole to open the screen. So, little bit I opened it this way, and I was scolded: "Don't open that way! Not that side!"

So the next morning I opened it from the other side and got scolded again. I didn't know what to do. But I found out the day I opened the right side that his guest was on the right side. To open the right hand side is the rule, but because that morning his guest was there, I should have opened the other side. Before I open it I should find out which side the guest is on.

On a day when I was appointed to serve my master, I poured him a cup of tea. It is the rule, or almost the rule, to fill no more than eighty percent of the cup. So I filled the cup to seventy or eighty percent. And he said, "Give me hot tea. You should fill the cup with very hot tea." So the next morning when there were guests, I filled all the cups with hot tea almost ninety percent and served them. I was scolded! There is no rule actually. He himself liked very hot bitter tea filling the cup. But most guests don't like so much bitter hot tea. So for him I should give

bitter hot tea filling the cup, and I should give it to the guests in the usual way.

This was his way. He would never tell us anything. If I got up in the morning twenty minutes earlier than the wake-up bell, I was scolded: "Don't get up so early! You will disturb my sleep." Usually if I get up earlier, it is good. But for him it is not good. In this way, if you are trying to understand things better without any rules or prejudice, then that is selflessness. We say rules, but "rules" are already some selfish idea. Actually, there are no rules. And when you say "this is the rule" you are forcing on others.

Rules are only needed when we have not much time, or when we cannot help others more closely, more kindly. So, anyway, it is easy to say "this is the rule, so you should do that." But actually, that is not our way. If possible, we give instruction to people one by one. But because that is difficult, we give some instruction or lecture like this. But do not simply stick to the words. Think more about what I mean, what I really mean. So for the beginner, perhaps instruction is necessary. But for advanced students, we don't give much instruction, and they will try various ways.

In this sesshin, I feel sorry for you that I cannot help you so much. But the way you study true Zen is not through something verbal. You open yourself, give up everything, and make a big effort. Find out whether or not you think it's good or bad. This is the fundamental attitude for study. Like a child who draws something whether it is good or bad. Sometimes you will do things without much reason. If that is difficult, you are not ready to practice zazen. We say, it is "absolute surrender!" But you have nothing to surrender. Usually, you have something to surrender. But we have nothing to surrender. So please find out for yourself. Don't lose yourself. In this way continue your effort.



Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi, left, is the son of Zen Center's founder, Shunryu Suzuki. He came from Japan to help us through the intricacies of the installation ceremony. *Photo by San Francisco Chronicle.*

ZEN CENTER INSTALLS A NEW ABBOT

On February 5th of this year, following the traditional Soto Zen forms (translated somewhat into an American idiom), Zoketsu Rinsho Norman Fischer was installed as abbot of Zen Center. He shares this position with Abbot Sojun Weitsman and succeeds Tenshin Anderson, who completed his tenure as abbot in a ceremony at Green Gulch Farm the evening before.

The day of the ceremony, as well as the ceremony itself, was marked with a noticeable buoyancy, joy, and happiness shared by an audience of several hundred people. Only about 200 people could fit into the Buddha Hall at the City Center, while approximately another 200 watched a closed circuit TV in the dining room. Norman's voice was picked up by a wireless microphone which he carried, but unfortunately other voices were not always heard so well by those not in the Buddha Hall.

Many many people worked very hard to make the ceremony possible: cleaning and preparing the Page Street building, setting up the Buddha Hall and other ceremonial locations, and rehearsing and organizing the event itself. We are especially grateful to Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi (Shunryu Suzuki Roshi's son) for all of his guidance and support. "Next time you can do it without me!" he beamed afterwards.

Probably we had forgotten how much work goes into such an event, or we might make the abbots' terms longer. After the ceremony itself Vicki Austin, the *tenzo* (head cook) at the City Center and her crew, along with many volunteers, provided a wonderful array of vegetables and dips, breads and cheeses, filo pastries, salads, olives, cookies, cakes and beverages to celebrate the occasion. Their inspired efforts brought further enjoyment and well-being to the afternoon. They too are well-deserving of our warm-hearted gratitude and appreciation.

Still and all the ceremony is probably hardest on the new abbot, demanding a focus and concentration to carry out all the required forms, as well as the creation of many statements expressing one's understanding. Norman carried this off with remarkable patience and steadiness, moving deliberately through the proceedings taking care of each step along the way, unhurried and composed. Aside from the demands of actually being abbot, it is a wonder that anyone would want to go through the ceremony itself; but Norman moved ahead, upheld perhaps by the community's whole-hearted support.

The ceremony was the culmination of nearly two years of "preparations," dating back to a meeting of the Elders' Council in the spring of 1993. Created by the Board of Directors of Zen Center to oversee spiritual affairs in the community, the Council met to discuss who would be the next abbot of Zen Center in accordance with the present by-laws, which specify a succession of abbots, serving for designated terms.

After spending one or two meetings discussing the qualities and characteristics the Council looked for in an abbot—well-practiced in the tradition, maintains the precepts, capable of teaching, respected within and outside the community—members seemed reluctant to actually mention any possible names. Finally a straw poll was taken in which Council members could write down the names of three people whom they considered capable of being the new abbot. Although many people were mentioned, Norman's name appeared on nearly every list. The Council was relieved and delighted to have such an obvious decision to make, and turned to Norman for his reaction to the possibility of his being the next abbot.

In its enthusiasm, the Council was not really prepared for Norman's cautious, articulate expression of reservations: he was a poet

and did not wish to have all his time consumed as an administrator, but wanted to continue to have time alone for writing; he wanted to empower others to make decisions in his absence, and not have to be consulted on every decision; he had just spent several years studying to teach high school and wanted to follow through with the momentum of that effort and actually work with young people; he saw himself as a husband and parent and didn't want to have all his time consumed by the demands of being abbot.

Although he was expressing reluctance to accept the position, every reason he mentioned to not take the job was all the more reason the Council wanted him to do it. Here was someone who had a balanced life and wished to go on having a balanced life. Here was someone not particularly eager to wield power, someone with a clear love of family life as well as monastic practice, an interest in "individual" artistic expression as well as group activity, a joy and appreciation for young people as well as adults. We had our man, but Norman didn't seem to know it yet.

The Council responded to each of Norman's "rejections" with a renewed invitation to accept the position, gave him time to consider, reassured him that we wanted him to be abbot in his way, that we were eager to work with him being the person he was and didn't wish to make him conform to some pre-ordained standards of what we expected from our abbot.

While Norman was considering whether or not to accept Zen Center's invitation to be abbot, he went ahead and applied for several high school teaching positions, and accepted a job at Balboa. Finally towards the end of the summer of 1993, Norman arrived at a meeting of the Elders' Council with his decision in hand. He had, he said, sat down that morning to write a letter turning down the invitation, but had written another letter instead, one accepting the position of abbot.

In the following year and a half prior to the ceremony, Norman did indeed teach high school as a member of the English department at Tamalpais High in Mill Valley.

Born in 1946 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and raised in a Conservative Jewish family, Norman attended college in the East, Midwest (receiving a Master's degree in creative writing at the University of Iowa) and on the West Coast. He began practicing Zen in 1970 at the Berkeley Zen Center with Sojun Weitsman and went to Tassajara, with his new wife Kathie, in 1976. Their twin sons, Aron and Noah, were born in 1977, and both Kathie and Norman were ordained as priests by Zentatsu Baker in 1980. After working closely with Zentatsu from 1976 through 1983, Norman studied seriously with several Zen teachers, including Tetsugen Glassman, Maurine Stuart, Thich Nhat Hanh,

Dainin Katagiri, and Robert Aitken. He also includes Tara Tulku Rimpoché among his important influences. He received Dharma transmission from Sojun at Tassajara in 1988.

This year Kathie completes her seventh year as an elementary school teacher at Park school in Mill Valley. Aron and Noah are off to college, Aron to attend Deep Springs College in California, and Noah to the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island.

In addition to his work as a Zen practitioner and teacher, Norman has remained active in the Bay Area poetry scene. He has six books of poetry in print, the latest of which is *Precisely the Point Being Made*, published in 1993. His newest book, published this year, is a work of autobiographical prose, reflections on Judaism and Buddhism, called *Jerusalem Moonlight*. Norman is Board Chair of the Zen Hospice Project, and has done workshops and teachings on death and dying, poetry writing and meditation, and Judaism and Zen, in addition to his traditional teaching at Zen Center.

The community is pleased and grateful that someone of Norman's integrity, clarity and good-heartedness would accept the position of abbot, which bestows both honor and burdens to its holder.

The Fischer family: from left, Aron, Norman, Noah and Kathie



MOUNTAIN SEAT CEREMONY FOR ZOKETSU NORMAN FISCHER

Prior to the ceremony those who were to be in the ceremonial procession gathered in the living room of the Zen Center Guest House (home for several years to the offices and residents' rooms of the Zen Hospice Project). This "resting place near the temple" (*angensho*) is traditionally where the new abbot receives visiting priests from other temples. After drinking tea and sharing greetings, twelve temple officers (*ryoban*), the new abbot, and the abbot's five attendants lined up on the sidewalk and with accompanying hand-held bells (*inkin*) began the procession to Zen Center proper.

Zoketsu carried a traditional staff with metal rings which jingle to inform insects and small creatures of an approaching human. One of his attendants carried for him a *kesagoro*, the traditional baggage of a traveling monk. Two children from the community in the procession scattered flower petals. Casual passers-by seemed to enjoy the spectacle of a long line of black-robed folks walking with ceremonial slowness across the prosaic corner of Page and Laguna.

While the audience waited in the Buddha Hall and Dining Room, the new abbot and his entourage proceeded to make incense offerings and statements at several altars. The first stop was at the "inner gate" (*sanmon*) of the temple (represented in our American version by the front porch of the building). A small altar with a pine bough was set up. Following the incense offering, Zoketsu said:

I walked in the opposite direction
And yet my path has led to this temple gate
It's wide open: people come and go constantly
Even sparrows sometimes fly through

After all the preparations, all the meetings, discussions and rehearsals, the ceremony itself was finally underway. Next the procession went downstairs to the meditation hall where Hekizan Girardot, the priest in charge of the meditation and ceremonial life of the temple, led the new abbot in a formal circuit of the zendo. Zoketsu offered incense and was silently introduced to this, the heart room of our Soto Zen practice.

Returning upstairs to the gathering in the Buddha Hall, Zoketsu was formally invited to assume the position of abbot by Zen Center Board Chair Peter Overton. He then offered incense, bowed to and made the following statements to Shakyamuni Buddha, Daigen (symbol of the guardians of the Dharma) and Bodhidharma, representing the lineage of the ancestors whose line Zoketsu carries on:

For Buddha:

I offer this piece of incense
To our great teacher Shakyamuni Buddha
Whose courage and vision and love
See us through the ocean of suffering.

For Daigen:

This incense is for Daigen, protector of Dharma,
Who scares us almost to death
And keeps us honest.

For Bodhidharma:

This incense is for Bodhidharma's straightforward mind—
No sentimentality, only nerve and honesty.
You passed the Dharma on and brought us here: it is what it is.

The procession then left the Buddha Hall and proceeded to the Founder's Hall upstairs. Here Zoketsu made the following statement to Zen Center's founder, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi:

This incense is for grandfather Shogaku Shunryu Daiosho.
What made you so great? Circumstances—
And you listened to us,
Listened quietly and with a big heart.
You didn't want anything. You tried your best.
You did what you could. You left.

Statements are of course instructive about the person who makes them, and it was noteworthy that of all Suzuki Roshi's virtuous qualities Zoketsu picked out his capacity to listen. Perhaps he wishes to emulate our founder in this regard. The new abbot, the president of Zen Center Michael Wenger, and the board chair then went to the abbots' room and exchanged bows, signed documents and inspected the temple seal. Zoketsu moved deliberately and without haste to complete his tasks.

At this point there was a brief intermission while the Buddha Hall was reorganized for the second part of the ceremony. The main altar was draped with yellow cloth and a platform installed—the "Mountain Seat." The procession then returned to the Buddha Hall for the second part of the ceremony, the presentation of the teachings. Zoketsu was given a new robe by the community and supporting statements were



Zoketsu and his entourage bow together before leaving the Guest House for the ceremony.

made by Jack Kornfield, Michael Wenger, and Rabbi Alan Lew. Jack Kornfield began by chanting the refuges in Pali, and then quoted the Buddha:

“As long as the community of practitioners meets in harmony, follows the training, honors its elders, develops its personal mindfulness, and practices loving-kindness and compassion, so long will that community be expected to prosper and not decline.”

Jack then continued his statement by saying:

I've been asked to speak as the representative of the wider Buddhist community outside of Zen Center. We take inspiration from Zen Center as one of the great dharma centers of America, as a flagship carrying the banner of the dharma into the western world. I wish to say to you as a community that, in choosing Norman Fischer for your new abbot, you have chosen well. Norman is widely admired, deeply loved, known for his humanness, devoted to his own personal mindfulness and to the good of the community, family and society.

Norman leads
the way from the
Guest House to
Zen Center along
a path strewn with
flower petals.



Speaking directly to Norman, Jack continued:

May your term as abbot be filled with the blessings of the dharma, with truthfulness, compassion, calm, joy and wisdom. May you take the one seat in the center of the world and in not moving express all virtue, heal all sorrows, and bring forth the light of the holy dharma which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, so that all with eyes can see.

Offering a gift, Jack said it was from one of the most ancient Thai temples:

A talisman for those who hold power, filled inside with sacred mantras, and on the outside as well, a talisman for using power wisely. May you know how to use it and how not to use it.

Jack ended his statement by chanting a Pali blessing.

Then Michael Wenger spoke for the Zen Center community and Rabbi Lew spoke as a friend of the new abbot.

Zoketsu then ascended the Mountain Seat, the platform built in front of the main altar, and made the following statements:

This mountain is very hard to climb
Once you begin the ascent you can't stop
'Til you reach the peak.

(For world peace):

I am standing on this Mountain Seat because Buddha's teaching stands in the middle of the world to bring beings peace and harmony. May we and all sentient beings ensure that old Shakyamuni's vision of a just and peaceful world will come to pass one day.

(To all the Ancestors in this teaching lineage):

I am standing on this Mountain Seat because Buddha held up a flower and Bodhidharma faced a wall, because Dogen Zenji went to China and Suzuki Roshi came to America, because Zentatsu had a powerful vision and Tenshin sat upright for thirty years and did not move.

(To members, donors, families, deceased members of the temple):

I am standing on this Mountain Seat in gratitude to all bodhi-sattva practitioners, for your work and sincere effort; to all donors for their generous support; to all deceased sangha friends—you are still in our midst; to my parents—I love you very much and only now begin to appreciate fully what you have given me; and to my family, to Kathie my wife and to my sons Aron and Noah. My gratitude and love for you is almost unbearable.

(To his teachers):

I am standing on this Mountain Seat in homage to my teachers, people whose wisdom, generosity, and dedication encourage me still. I have not been worthy of your teaching and of your confidence in me, but I vow to keep trying.

To my teacher Dainin Katagiri, thank you for your simplicity.

To my teacher Maurine Stuart, thank you for your clarity and common sense, and for your love.

To my teacher Robert Aitken, thank you for your wisdom and integrity and for your concern for our world, and especially thanks for including me so generously in your way.

To my teacher Zentatsu, thanks for your determination and power and for your spectacular mistakes, which teach me still.

And to my root teacher Sojun, there is nothing to say. Our hearts are too close for words. You just left me alone and said nothing and that was the best teaching. My practice begins and ends with you.

No one stands on this Mountain Seat.

Former Abbot Tenshin Anderson, taking the role of Manjusri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, announced that the new abbot would now give his teaching, and a group of people, one by one, stood forth to exchange *mondo* (questions and responses on the Dharma) with Zoketsu.



Those who will participate in the ceremony assemble on the sidewalk outside the Guest House.

Continuing his teaching the new abbot made the following statements:

(Fundamental statement):

All of life is here right now; all of death is here right now. Sitting in the midst of birth and death, knowing nothing, then getting up and sweeping the floor. We do this today, we did it yesterday, we'll do it tomorrow. One person, one heart, one suffering, and one joy without end.



The procession approaches Zen Center.

(Appreciatory statement):

I have too many people to thank. First I want to thank the sangha, especially all my old Dharma friends, for entrusting me with this responsibility. I hope you—and I—are not being foolish. We will see. And I want to thank my family for allowing me to do it. I want also to thank my Dharma grandfather Hoitsu Gyuhaku Daiosho for coming all this way to help us, not only once but many times, and for his example of the true spirit of everyday Zen. Next I want to thank Maezumi Roshi for coming and helping and for his wide support for Dharma in America. The line he began is strong. I would especially like to thank my teacher and Dharma brother Tenshin Zenki Roshi for the power and steadfastness of his practice; I take strength from it every day. If it were not for him Zen Center would not have the good spirit it has now, and without his support and encouragement and permission I would not be standing before you today. I am very grateful and I look forward to much support and advice from him in the future.

(Koan statement):

Chao Cho asked Nan Chuan, "What is the way?"

Nan Chuan said, "Everyday mind is the way."

Chao Cho said, "How should one aim for it?"

Nan Chuan said, "If you aim for it you turn away from it."

Chao Cho said, "But if we don't aim for it how will we know it?"

Nan Chuan said, "It's not a matter of knowing or not knowing."

Everyday mind is very clear—just let go of it right now.

Let go of everything, even of letting go. Please all of us here—myself especially—let's forget everything including Zen—and just live!

(Concluding statement):

Entering my 25th year of Dharma study

I see quite clearly

That nothing at all has changed

I'm still a confused Jewish boy from West Pittston

Wondering how we live and die

I am standing here in these robes entirely by accident

Actually it is all of you who have ascended the mountain

Good luck to you. I'll do what I can.

After this Zoketsu descended the Mountain Seat and offered his thanks to the sangha.

Then the community, led by Robert Aitken, Roshi, chanted the *Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo* for protecting life. Aitken Roshi had composed the following dedication for the occasion:

In the purity and clarity of the *Dharmakaya*,

In the fullness and perfection of the *Sambhogakaya*,

In the infinite variety of the *Nirmanakaya*:

We begin again in this temple of beginner's mind

And with each breath there comes a new beginning.

Now from deep within the grotto of primordial power

Comes one to face the brilliance of the day,

Sanctioned by the purity of his ancient heritage,

And the subtle flow of mastery from sage to sage;

We dedicate our reciting of the *Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo*,

The Ten Verse Kuan-yin Sutra of Timeless Life,

To the Ancient Seven Buddhas Dai Osho,

Great Founder Shakyamuni Buddha Dai Osho,

Great Compassion Kanzeon Makasatsu,



Norman made his first statement at an altar set up on the front porch of Zen Center.

In the abbots' room, from left, are Les Kaye, Michael Wenger, Zoketsu, Blanche Hartman and Ed Brown.





The procession enters the Buddha Hall to the accompaniment of the Taiko drum.

We evoke our earnest *Bodhichitta* to perceive, contain and
integrate sounds of joy and sorrow in the world,
To waken to the Dharma birds and trees and animals covey,
To nurture and sustain beings crying out in anguish,
To welcome our newly decreed master to the ancient seat of
wisdom ever unfolding.

And vow to make his way clear, safe and heartening,
To offer with our dedicated work inspiring possibilities
For the Buddha Land beside the Bay, across the continents
and seas.

Let true Dharma continue, Sangha relations become complete.

The end of the ceremony came with congratulatory statements from numerous people. Taizan Maezumi Roshi, abbot of Zen Center of Los Angeles, commented that he was one of Zen Center's biggest

supporters, having attended all nine or ten Mountain Seat Ceremonies going back before Suzuki Roshi's. He also mentioned that Norman had done two things he had never seen before, which he appreciated very much. One was that children had been included in the mondo and also that Norman had thanked his wife and children. He described this as being auspicious and wonderful and in keeping with the spirit of Buddhism in America.

Others offering congratulations included Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi, abbot of Rinso-in and Shunryu Suzuki's son; Zen Center President Michael Wenger; David Chadwick, who read a statement from former Zen Center Abbot Zentatsu Richard Baker; Zenshin Philip Whalen from the Hartford Street Zen Center; Lon Parsons from Minnesota Zen Meditation Center; and Kathie Fischer, the wife of the new abbot.

Kathie's statement was especially unusual, noteworthy and enjoyable:

I recently read an article about Bwana, the silver-back gorilla, who died last October at the San Francisco Zoo. I was very moved by the article, which was a description of Bwana's life according to his human caretakers.

Bwana, his human caretakers report, had two excellent leadership qualities. First, he solved problems calmly. That is, when there was some tension or misunderstanding among the gorillas he would go into the middle of the group and sit down, right next to the gorillas involved, and just sit there until everyone was calm and quiet, and a solution would arise from the group. Then Bwana would get up and go away—take a nap—have a snack—write a poem.

Oh, by the way, the female gorillas stood up to Bwana, to the benefit of the group and to Bwana.

His second excellent leadership quality was his gentleness, his attentiveness, and his care of the young. He raised his son Kubi, who has taken his place as the silver-back at the SF Zoo, by himself because Kubi's mother died. (Kubi is the brother of Koko, Bwana is her father.) Bwana was attentive to and protective of his son, and was able to teach him some of his good leadership qualities, even though Kubi was not blessed with the same even-tempered and gentle nature as his father. Bwana modeled for the whole gorilla group how to care for the young, and is credited with the proliferation of that group of gorillas.

Of course, I was reminded of you, Norman, when I read about Bwana. Because you too are blessed with these same leadership qualities. And my wish for your abbacy at Zen Center is that you are able to contribute these much-needed

gifts to the sangha, the gift of calm and the gift of care and attentiveness to the young.

At the reception following the ceremony many people had a desire to express personally to Norman their heartfelt joy and gratitude that he had become abbot of Zen Center. Norman was seen to be unfailingly polite and generous in his responses, warmly thanking people for attending, for their kindness and goodheartedness.

With Norman's installation Zen Center moves into a new era. The best wishes of the entire sangha accompany him as he begins this difficult, challenging and inspiring work.



The new abbot answers questions during part of the ceremony.

Photo by *San Francisco Chronicle*.

TRIBUTE TO ZOKETSU NORMAN FISCHER

by Kozan Koerner
Tassajara Spring Practice Period 1995

Zoketsu Rinsho, Turning Toward the Light Elephant Cave!
Seems like only yesterday you ascended the mountain, and yet already you've descended it, landing your feet here at Tassajara, rubbing shoulders with us crude mountain monks, vital wayfarers secluded in clouds and waters . . . Welcome Home!

You once said, "Turn left in order to go right." (Or was it the other way around?) And once you said, "I hope that I never grow up." Thus have we heard. Perhaps you've come full circle—not approaching and not not approaching. Wrapped in brown swaddling clothes, new-born Abbot manifesting everyday mind, simple, ordinary, direct, intimate. The ten thousand things come forward and affirm your pure heart.

Great Master Baizhang said, "All paramitas proceed from the *dana paramita*, or giving, and by the practice of giving all the other paramitas are fulfilled." To Baizhang, giving means the relinquishment of any idea of duality. In this past week you've given yourself to us freely, without limit. With a large and down-to-earth view, openly and generously you've shown us what the most important thing really is.

Although many of us may indeed still need our mothers, in you we have a solid and sincere Dharma friend. This week the true person without comparison rolled down the mountain, and is going in and out of our Sangha. He has spoken.

May your presence continue to illuminate the path, and may we all continue to walk hand in hand together, taking delight in the Dharma. Thank you for being here.

TENSHIN ANDERSON'S STEPPING DOWN CEREMONY

Tenshin Anderson's term as abbot came to an official end at a ceremony at Green Gulch Farm the evening of February 4, 1995. About 200 well-wishers were in attendance. During his tenure innumerable people, both residents and those outside the community, were moved by his teaching. Since many people study regularly with Tenshin and because Zen Center wishes to maintain a close and intimate relationship with him, appreciating his many virtues and gifts, the Board decided to invite Tenshin Sensei to be a senior Dharma Teacher and continue in residence at Zen Center. Perhaps being freed from his duties as abbot will allow him even more concentrated time with his students.

During the ceremony Michael Wenger, president of Zen Center; Meiya Wender, director of Green Gulch; and Sojun Weitsman, Tenshin's co-abbot, offered statements. The following piece by Meiya gives a good feeling for the occasion and for her own deep connection with Abbot Tenshin.

STATEMENT HONORING TENSHIN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS STEPPING DOWN

by Meiya Wender

I remember trying to express my—our—deep gratitude to Tenshin Roshi for the years of his abbacy, for his teaching, for his deep faith in us, for his sticking with us. I recalled the cold foggy day last year when he led a group of priests into the ocean at Muir Beach. Terrified of the cold, my willingness to do it arose in order to meet this fear. He held my hand as we went in. Perhaps it was on seeing my total and unexpected delight in the waves that he eventually let go. It is for this uncompromising and reckless quality of his that I am most grateful. He has a willingness and ability to present us with some senseless and useless situation which then calls forth our unknown and best response. The way he lives his life seems to create such opportunities to deepen understanding—in class, in the zendo, anywhere—and he is then patient with our deepest resistance. In these interactions, something is learned, some new understanding is born.

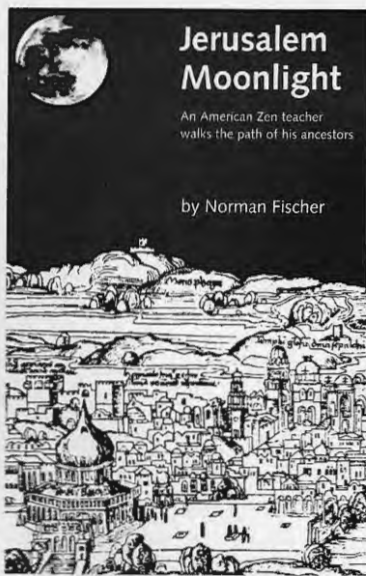
I also wanted to acknowledge the deep pain of his abbacy, to acknowledge his suffering, the suffering of those who see themselves as his students and of those who don't. I think I said that this suffering is in and evident in my body. I can't hide it. I quoted from Case 41 of the *Book of Serenity* where Luopu tells a monk that to say "this is so" is putting a head on top of his head and to say "this is not so" is cutting off his head, seeking life. In the last weeks of Tenshin Roshi's abbacy, we coincidentally and somehow appropriately studied this case, and I had dreamt about it, about how and precisely where the knife would go into the neck. My concern was for a proper box. Where was the proper wooden box in which to put and care for the head? Realizing that it's not possible to stop putting a head on top of my head or to stop cutting it off, I'm still asking this question. Our job is to take care of the inevitable blood, to make a container for the sorrow, to stay alert in the midst of transformation.

The gift from the Green Culch sangha to the abbot on this occasion of his Stepping Down from the Mountain Seat was a bronze dragon, a Japanese paperweight for calligraphy. A fierce dragon, about to take wing. As I presented the box to him, Tenshin Roshi asked if it contained a real dragon. I replied that it was but a dragon shape. He is the real dragon.

NEW BOOKS BY ZEN CENTER TEACHERS

JERUSALEM MOONLIGHT by Norman Fischer

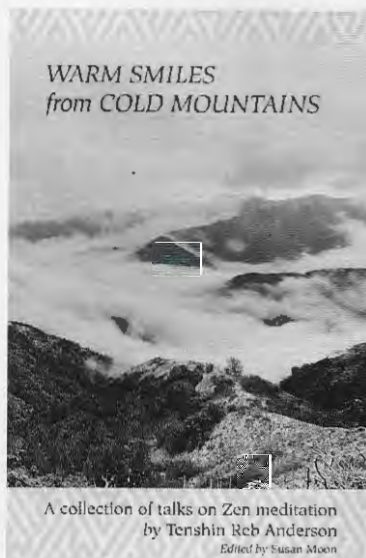
Abbot Fischer's new book, *Jerusalem Moonlight*, published by Clear Light Press, is now available for \$16. Described as a pilgrimage to Israel to encounter his Jewish past, the book is also very much about Norman, the state of the world, life at Green Gulch Farm, Buddhist practice, and what it is to be a human being in this or any age. Aitken Roshi calls it, "meandering good-humoredly through his mind as he wanders through the land of his ancestors."



WARM SMILES FROM COLD MOUNTAINS

by Tenshin Reb Anderson

These Dharma talks on Zen meditation by the former abbot of Zen Center are like finely polished jewels, the distillation of over ten years of teaching at Tassajara and Green Gulch. Most of the talks have appeared in previous issues of *Wind Bell*, but they have been newly edited by Sue Moon. The book is available in soft cover for \$10 at the three Zen Center bookstores: 300 Page St. in San Francisco, Green Gulch Farm, and Tassajara. It may also be ordered by mail from Green Gulch Farm, 1601 Shoreline Hwy., Sausalito, CA 94965. When ordering by mail, please include a check or money order for \$13 to cover the cost of the book plus sales tax, shipping and handling.



IN RUSSIA WITH LOVE

by Therese Fitzgerald

The Windbell would like to present news or articles periodically which describe or articulate the activities in which former students of Zen Center are currently engaged. If any readers would be willing to describe their present lives and interests, we welcome your submissions to Wind Bell. Finding out what is following upon those many years of formal practice at Zen Center could be quite interesting, informative, and inspiring.

Arnie Kotler and Therese Fitzgerald practiced at Zen Center for many years in the '70s and early '80s. Since leaving Zen Center they have become disciples of Thich Nhat Hanh (who is informally greeted as 'Thây' or 'teacher') and begun teaching in his tradition. The following piece, written by Therese, describes their visit to Russia in March, 1993.

In 1985 Arnie started Parallax Press, which publishes many of Thich Nhat Hanh's books, as well as other books on engaged Buddhism. Along with others, Arnie and Therese founded the Community of Mindful Living, which seeks to support mindfulness practice world wide—publishing The Mindfulness Bell, organizing retreats and workshops (some with Thây), and also serving as a resource for those interested in learning about the Order of Interbeing.

Presently the Community of Mindful Living is looking for land to begin a practice center where people could go to be strengthened, refreshed, and renewed.

Those who would like more information about the activities of the CML, are interested in their publication, or would like to contribute to their property fund can get in touch with the Community for Mindful Living at P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707.—Ed.

At the end of the September 1992 retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh in Moscow, Thây told the group, "In six months, Arnie and Therese will come and lead a retreat here." We had been planning to go to France to work with Thây on several manuscripts, and so we only needed to ask friends for the funds to fly from Paris to Russia and back. The necessary financial support came through, mainly from one friend who had just returned from Moscow after several months there, and from

another friend who took very much to the idea that we help maintain the practice in Russia. But then the political instability increased so intensely that we began to reconsider whether or not it was prudent to make the trip.

We decided to go, and during three days of mindfulness in Moscow the practice of conscious breathing was wonderfully enjoyed among the sixty participants. What a pleasure it was to arrive at the elementary school gymnasium and meet many of those who had gathered in the same space for the retreat with *Thây* in September.

Arnie's dharma talks clarified the Four Noble Truths, especially the definition of suffering as "the tendency we have to stick to our ideas and wishes for things to be permanently the way we want them, rather than accepting and fully enjoying 'things as they are'."

Whenever Arnie asked how they were doing in the practices of sitting and walking meditation, the participants responded with very practical comments and questions that showed they were practicing with utmost sincerity and intelligence. Both Arnie and I were deeply touched and encouraged by this, and it brought out the best in us. Arnie felt comfortable to draw on his knowledge of the sutras and the historical development of Buddhism with ease, while simultaneously relating the teachings to contemporary problems, such as political turmoil and economic instability.

The Russians' heartfelt approach to practice gave me great permission to let my deep love and caring for each person be known and felt as we shared intimately in the practices over the days. With the support of *Thây's* introduction to practice in September, the loving sangha's attention to all the details, and the particular openness of the Muscovites to meditation, we were indeed able, as Sister *Phuong* had encouraged us as we parted at Plum Village, to "use our strength, intelligence, and experience to help the Russian people." *Thây* told us that the most important thing was to enjoy what we do together. Sister *Phuong* told us, "Forget all about *Thây's* books."

Doing walking meditation in a nearby birch forest was a special delight each day of the Moscow retreat. The walk through the wide, snow-covered path shared by families with children bundled up pulling sleds and couples walking arm-in-arm was so gorgeous and the air so brisk, we could hardly help but enjoy it all. In a clearing, we practiced singing "Breathing In, Breathing Out" in Russian and English, and we discussed how the simple practice of breathing consciously while walking helps us calm our irritations and be present with the "wondrous, refreshing and healing elements of life"—the joyful faces of rosy cheeked children, the birch and pine trees, a wisp of blue smoke sailing through the woods.

I told the story of Thây's lesson for me on the beautiful King Charles Bridge in Prague when he turned to me, while looking out on the river as the swans glided beneath us, and said, "Look for your brother." I immediately felt great sadness thinking that my brother, just recently out of a coma from a serious brain injury, would never be able to walk in such a gorgeous place. "That is why you must look for your brother," Thây responded. When my brother was lying in the hospital bed, I massaged his right leg, which lay limp for weeks, with a very deep realization of how precious our limbs are; and I prayed for him to be able to walk again.

Now walking with the sangha in the sublime winter forest, I knew how fortunate we are to be able to walk in beauty. Each day we walked past a pitifully furnished hospital, and Thây's lesson—that we look, breathe, and walk for each other—came home very strongly. I sang a song that had come to me while doing walking meditation along the orchard at Plum Village two weeks earlier:

I didn't know
how precious life is
until I saw you lying there.
I couldn't believe
how precious life is
as I watched you lying there.
And then I practiced
taking care
taking care
of you lying there.
And now I know
how precious life is;
how very precious, precious life is.

Arnie's bold support of the Russians' pursuit of happiness even in these terribly hard times was reassuring. And he clearly presented methods of establishing inner peace and calm, so that we actually saw the effects of the practice. The core community—including a Russian woman whose profession is to translate from German, many healers including those who work with children, and a yoga teacher—is a wonderfully authentic sangha, truly exemplary in their warm ways of supporting one another and making the environment conducive for many people to practice. Communal meals were deeply satisfying, although by Western standards the food was sparse and plain. Because of the generous feeling all around and the extraordinary sense of reverence for taking a meal together in quiet contemplation, every day seemed like a festive banquet.

Tea meditations were also remarkably warm and easy-going, thanks to the skillful hands of Olga and Tatiana (who astounded me on the last day, when I turned to them and said with a touch of alarm, "We'll need tea as soon as possible." "It's done," they said with a twinkling smile. In ten years of preparing for tea meditations with people all over the world, this had never happened before!)

A closing tea allowed for many warm exchanges: Boris saying that he will show his gratitude to Arnie for the teachings by doing the practices in full mindfulness; a presentation of a songbook and two albums of Russian music; one shy man taking up a guitar and everyone joining in singing songs rich with Russian culture.

Twelve people received the Five Wonderful Precepts with Arnie the last day of the retreat, and others renewed their practice begun with Thây months earlier.

Our walk in Red Square the next day and our inability to visit the Kremlin—closed because of the special session of Parliament as a result of the very tense relations between the Parliament and President Yeltsin—made the warmth and good-heartedness of the Russian retreatants stand out as all the more impressive. Our friend Boris took us to the old part of town and we walked along his favorite streets while he spoke of his days being despised as a hippie.

We met with the core sangha in Dina's cozy apartment the last evening before we left and discussed how to continue and develop the practices. We began to see that taking the practices into our daily lives—at work, in our families, in relation to politics—can allow a special form of Russian practice to evolve. One young boy at the retreat, named Genia, vividly demonstrated this phenomenon when he sang the lyrics of "Breathing In" in his own Russian-style melody. We met again the following morning in Boris' meditation room to sit together and enjoy a lovely meal before going off to the station for our train to St. Petersburg.

As I stood by the filthy window looking at Dina, Boris, and Viktor, an American song played over the train's sound system, "As the walls come down, love is able to heal the suffering all around." Our wonderful time face-to-face had come to an end. Boris walking mindfully and Dina smiling showed me how we continue together in our mindfulness practice.

The poverty of the people in Moscow weighed on our minds as we walked in the drizzling rain at the station. The eight-hour trip from Moscow to St. Petersburg was a continuation of this contemplation, as we sat in a compartment where a young boy and his *babushka* (grandmother) joined us (without tickets) and several other young men also tried to join us (sometimes unnerving us by entering quickly and



Therese and Arnie with Thich Nhat Hanh (center) in Russia

slamming the door shut behind them). The sangha had packed us a hearty dinner of bread, cheese, and a carton of orange drink (a real treat!), and we shared this with the old woman and boy. Arnie recuperated, sleeping most of the way. I have to admit, I mostly felt discombobulated during this much-needed, potentially fallow time. It was hard for me to leave our dear friends in Moscow and go to the great unknowns of St. Petersburg. We had just learned that, contrary to what our Moscow friends had thought, the St. Petersburg sangha had not received enough information to really do much organizational work for a retreat. And there was giardia to worry about. And I felt beset in my mind by many hungry ghosts in my midst. So it was a great relief to be met immediately upon arrival in St. Petersburg by our hosts, Oleg and Svetlana of the Buddhist House.

St. Petersburg, designed by Italian, French, German, and Russian architects, was built by Peter the Great in the early 1700s to be one of the great European cities. Baroque, Rococo, and Classical buildings have survived three centuries amazingly well, during which time there have been major wars with the French, the Turks, and Germany, not to mention Stalin's campaign to build Russia. Although rather run-down now, it is a gorgeous city of monuments, parks, and buildings, with bridges over the Neva River and its many canals. Our friends in St. Petersburg opened many doors for us to appreciate the difficult and

intricate history of their beautiful city while we were with them.

The first morning, we visited with the publishers at Andrei and Sons who showed us five manuscripts of Thây's books—*The Miracle of Mindfulness*, *Interbeing*, *Being Peace*, *The Sun My Heart*, and *The Heart of Understanding*—in Russian about to be printed as one or two hardcover books. We informed them of Thây's "transmission" to Marina in Moscow of the manuscript of *The Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* and commentary for her to translate into Russian, and they said they would contact her and possibly work together on publishing *Transformation and Healing* as well.

That afternoon, sixty people came to a public lecture to hear Arnie speak about his experience in practicing Thây's approach to Buddhism. Afterwards, people asked questions such as, "What does your school say about sex?" and, "I can't control my thinking. How can this practice help?"

Although there had been only two days' notice for the three afternoons and day of practice in St. Petersburg, between thirty and fifty people of various Buddhist and Christian traditions attended the sessions. Arnie emphasized that it is not necessary to abandon one's own tradition to take up mindfulness practice; but rather, that mindfulness can enhance it. Again, Arnie highlighted Buddhist meditation as a "way of happiness, *sukkayana*," capable of bringing us joy and making us a source of happiness for our friends and family.

As we passed the World War II memorial on the way to the airport (after switching to a taxi when Oleg's car kept stalling), Svetlana told us a story about how during the war, everyone in her father's family almost starved to death. (During the "900 days" from September 1941 to January 1944, between 500,000 and one million people died from shelling, starvation, and disease. People dropped dead in the streets, and no one could bury them.) Only her father, who was six years old at the time, was able to stand up and walk to the place where he could receive the family's daily ration of bread. One time, a man stole his bread out of his hand and devoured it immediately. Svetlana's father was so ashamed for losing his family's food that he wandered the streets until finally someone brought him home. This story was triggered by the war memorial—only one of many, many in the city.

So the "way of happiness" is not so easy to find in Russia with the wounds of war and oppression and the effects of great sacrifice as a result of the unprecedented armament race (with the U.S.) constantly felt in every realm of life. Svetlana summed up the state of things thus: "Under Stalin, you could be imprisoned for speaking frankly and criticizing the government. Then during Brezhnev, we could speak our minds, but not in the media. With Perestroika, public

criticism is possible. But that is all that has changed, along with the street names. The same conditions of poverty and lack of opportunity have always been the case." Arnie could never stray too far away from a recognition of this reality as he proceeded to outline methods of "giving oneself a break," enjoying conscious breathing, gentle walking, mindful eating, and understanding the other person in an effort to develop real compassion and love.

Although the gatherings were not as concentrated as they had been in Moscow, we feel very satisfied and confident that some important seeds were planted in St. Petersburg. As we happened to have contact with several very good Buddhist artists, we were able to encourage them in their practice of art as meditation.

The last evening, Sasha leaned on the table and looked at us, "I cannot go anywhere. It has taken much work just to get permission to move from Kiev to St. Petersburg, and now I have a job in the metro here. But I have waited for teachers like you to come for a long time. It is not so easy for good Zen teachers to come here. So thank you very much for coming."

Del Carlson in his usual spot in the Tassajara summer kitchen



ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY

Norman Fischer

In Buddhism we take refuge in the triple treasure: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The more I think about this taking refuge, and the more I go on in my life path in the Dharma, the deeper this idea of taking refuge in the triple treasure becomes. I am beginning to feel that this taking refuge in the triple treasure is actually the only thing there is in our practice, that our practice is a continuous process of deepening and making more real our taking refuge in the triple treasure.

For today I would like to speak with you about just one part of this big topic, Sangha, the third jewel in the triple treasure. And I want to talk about Sangha not just technically and according to the scriptures, but, inspired by the scriptures, to talk widely and from my own experience, about what community is, and about the nature and function of our particular Zen community.

To look at anything clearly and carefully, we have to begin with a sense of what its true purpose is. The purpose of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the sutras say, is to promote awakening for ourselves and for all sentient beings. We say this automatically, but what does it actually mean? I think it means we are trying to understand our life and our world immediately and accurately, and to live our life fully, so that our lives can be well spent and straightforward and happy.

As we practice with this purpose in mind it is very natural that we feel gratitude and appreciation for our life, whatever it is, and for the Dharma, because Dharma has helped us so much. Feeling this gratitude and appreciation, we then want to practice to further the Dharma and to preserve it so that it can be there for future generations. And then, beyond this, we see that our own happiness and fullness of living depends on our connection to the world around us.

We can't actually have any kind of accuracy in our living or happiness or fullness in our living if we do not take everything around us into consideration, because our life does not actually end with the boundary of our skin or the boundary of our life span. Our real life goes on beyond this, and in this sense the Dharma itself is not a separate school or religion, but includes the wide world. So with practice the vow to save all beings becomes something we really feel, feel personally and viscerally. This then is the true purpose of Sangha, of our Zen community: to live for our own development and happiness, to preserve the Dharma out of gratitude, and to live for and with the wide world. I would say that all communities, all people deep down have this desire.

Many people I know have been in a pretty bad mood since the November election, because the results of the election seem to indicate that people in America are less inclined than ever to want to develop themselves, preserve things for the future, and be concerned for others. I am far from an expert on politics, but it certainly does seem as if the mood of many people in America and around the world is toward being more rather than less selfish. Still I believe that deep down everyone really does want to benefit others.

When the world is difficult, when there are so many confusing and unsettling changes everywhere, so many suffering and dislocated people, then the whole situation seems overwhelming, and we suffer a lot inside. Often we do not think or act as we would fundamentally wish to. We fall into despair or seek some kind of escape, and it seems quite natural that we can be quite frightened and upset, and try to blame someone. We can get very selfish and self-protective, almost in direct resistance to our deepest feelings and wishes, as a kind of defense against them.

Maybe this explains why many people vote the way they have been voting. For those of us who do not feel this way it can seem discouraging, but I think we have to learn to do aikido with this kind of situation, not resist it but move with it, take its own energy, and turn it around. Of course it is necessary to resist some policies and programs, and to resist some politicians who are really confused and are not doing what needs to be done, but generally not to resist but rather to use the energy of the present political moment, this is, I think, better.

Maybe in the past people too often had the idea that the government would take care of everything, or that everything would somehow automatically be taken care of. Maybe it's a good thing to realize that it's up to us, that the world will be taken care of not because we vote or because we pay our taxes, but because each one of us works every day on our lives and on directly helping those around us. So in this situation our Zen community and the wisdom and help it can provide for the world are more important than ever. For a long time we have been supported by the world, and perhaps now is the time for us to support the world and guide the world. So I feel there is a greater sense of urgency and a clearer sense of purpose now, at the very end of the twentieth century, in thinking about Sangha, in thinking about working on our community.

Now that we have considered the purpose of sangha, let's look at the underlying attitude or feeling with which we approach the task of taking care of our sangha.

One thing I do a fair amount of is housecleaning. Usually in the mornings after zazen, after my family has left for school, I spend a little



This winter's storms brought Tassajara Creek to the level of the new sundecks outside the baths.

time puttering around the house picking things up and straightening things out. Some things, like washing dishes and picking up my sons' stuff, I do every day, while other tasks I do less often, like emptying the compost bucket or mopping the floor. I find that I am not really able to get on to other things until I do this bit of housework. When the place is somewhat neat, I can think better. Also taking care of the house in this way is very pleasurable and calms me down. It gives me a sense of well being and security. To inhabit the place where I spend time, to take care of it with some love feels very good.

I know that this process of housekeeping never ends, this maintenance is continuous. It will go on as long as I live, and then after I am gone someone else will have to do it. So there is no goal, no end point: I just keep it up. Knowing this is quite comforting, because it means there is nothing I am pointing toward or needing to do. I am just doing what I am doing, day by day.

And I am not doing this housecleaning just for myself, but for my family, and I am happy knowing that when they come home things will be a little neat and will feel warm and welcoming. Of course I am not the only one who takes care of the house; my wife does certain things and my sons do certain things. Some of these things we plan out and divide up as assignments. Other things someone just does, everyone does a bit here and a bit there, and our house feels like a home and is



Fallen rocks and trees closed Tassajara Road during the worst of this year's storms.

sustained. Of course many times we do not do what we should, and usually we feel there is much more to do, but more or less we keep afloat and can have a good feeling about living together in our home.

I bring this up because taking care of our sangha is pretty much the same thing. We need to see our sangha, our community, our various communities, and our world at large, as our home, as our family. The process of taking care of it is endless, but there is a calmness and a joy in just doing things, little things and big things, for the benefit of those we live and practice and work with. There is no goal, no conclusion, things never quite get done or feel complete, and none of us is doing it alone.

The word "ecology" means earth household. The earth is not a thing or a collection of things but rather a family of closely related and mutually influencing patterns. This idea of interconnection and non-thingness is a fundamental idea in Buddhism, which the Heart Sutra, the Avatamsaka Sutra and many other sutras speak about. Yet our human culture at large has not understood this, and especially over the last several hundred years our lack of understanding has meant we have formed communities which do not live in harmony in this earth household.

We have had short-sighted ideas about the way things are: seeing things as parts instead of wholes, as fixed objects instead of

relationships, as conflictual hierarchies of control and domination instead of interconnecting networks, as means and ends instead of processes and cycles. This kind of disharmonious and inaccurate thinking may be starting to change as science, through very sophisticated analysis, begins to realize that analysis cannot really work, that humans can not be outside the world looking at it, but have to be inside it, participating as an integral and loving part of it.

Not only in science, but also in other aspects of human thought, this essential rediscovery is being made: a revolutionary change is going on in human thinking. Yet from the Buddhist perspective this change is not actually so much a change but rather a return to something quite old. Most of us are transitional people in the sense that we are between these two ways of thinking, and it will take us awhile to understand how to be in our communities in a way that is sustainable. This is true in our Buddhist sanghas as well, certainly in the West, and perhaps in Asia as well.

I have seen many many changes occur in the feeling and structure of our own sangha over the last twenty years, and now I would like to think with you about some of what I have seen.

First of all, I think we are beginning to have a better understanding of what an individual is, and how an individual relates to the community as a whole. Most of the old-timers came to the community in the '60s and '70s with an ideology based on romantic individualism. We were seeking enlightenment, perhaps without realizing it, as the ultimate ego trip. Encountering Japanese Zen and our Japanese Zen teachers, we became attuned to a way of harmonizing within the group, of being self-effacing and quiet, and we tried to get rid of that romantic and unbridled individualism. We wanted to become good Japanese Zen students, letting go of our own wishes and feelings and working hard for the benefit of others, not doing what we felt like doing, which we had come to see as a kind of self-indulgence.

This sounds good in a way, and we learned a lot from it, but we had actually swung too far in the other direction, and too much repression was going on. We were not paying enough attention to our thoughts and desires, so we were doing violence to ourselves. How painful it was for us to realize that we had gone wrong, and how difficult to try to find some sort of balance without going back to the kind of selfishness that is so attractive and natural, so American really, the kind of selfishness we see in our political landscape today.

We are beginning to see that the individual, correctly understood, must be at the center of the sangha. If the community is a mandala, we need to see that it is not a fixed mandala, but a mandala that appears infinitely different from an infinite number of perspectives.

From one perspective the leaders are in the center, and everything constellates around them. From other perspectives each individual is in the center. So the purpose of the community is to enlighten one individual, to enlighten you.

Maybe the purpose of our world is so that one person can live and die, or one fox, one frog, one bacterium. This is true for each and every being in the world: each one is the only one that must be awakened. So we see that each individual is precious, more precious than anything. And I am convinced that if our community operates with this in mind, never placing community over any single individual, then the community will be sustainable, and individuals will be honored. When we see the preciousness of each individual as ultimate, then the individual will be sustained and nurtured, and will be able to surpass himself or herself. That individual will take care of the whole community and do what he or she needs to do to support the community. No one needs to be coerced or pressured or manipulated.

I am convinced that to recognize the ultimate preciousness of each individual, you will have to really look and see one individual, and then you will see that he or she is not separate or estranged from anything else. To really take care of that person you will need to consider the whole community, and vice versa. People are not separate conflictual entities. At the deepest levels we are all in process together. We need each other, each and every one of us.

That is why in our world today we so desperately need diversity: how can I really be fully myself if I am not open to you? If I am not open to Chinese people and African American people and people from the Philippines, if I am not open to young people and old people, straight people and gay people, if I do not include the many species of birds and grasses and trees and bacteria, how could I possibly develop fully and sustain my life on this planet?

Secondly, over the years we have learned the importance of our relationships. To start with we had more the feeling that Zen was a very quiet and reserved tradition: sitting practice and silent work, you mind your own business and do not talk with anyone. You spoke with your teacher, but not really with anyone else. This looked like the way our Japanese teachers saw the practice so we thought we were going along with it and being good Zen students. I remember when I began practicing that I spent a long time just coming to zazen before I said a word to anyone.

Yet once again, we suffered because of this misunderstanding. While we thought we were just taking care of our practice and not really having any relationships, we were actually having a lot of relationships. Yet because we were not conscious in these relationships or putting any

loving energy into them, they were often quite painful relationships full of misunderstandings. So we had to recognize how important relationships are and go through all the resentments which had built up, and then try to establish better ways of taking care of our relationships.

Now we have various means of communicating clearly and truly with one another, and we realize that in whatever we do our relationship with one another is present and is important. So when we do a job, whether organizing a sesshin or putting in a garden bed, we know that at least three things are going on: the task itself, our awareness in doing the task, and thirdly our relationship with each other through the medium of the task. Also we know that doing that task involves paying attention to all three of these things, and probably many more things.

Relationship itself has a multifaceted complexity. Any community is made up of an interlocking network of communities, and any individual in any community is a member of many communities simultaneously. In our sangha I am a member of the sangha at large, and of my individual family within that sangha, and of, say, the brotherhood or sisterhood of those who are ordained as priests. Then within any of those I have individual relationships that are small communities within the small community that is within the larger community.

Emotion and information flow back and forth within and without these various communities, and no one really understands or could possibly chart the multiple relationship networks and how they function. Even so I have found that if we pay attention to our practice, to our firmest and most cherished commitments, to zazen, our tradition, our precepts, all of which sustain and reinforce each other, and which form the energy center of our community, then we will usually come out OK. And if not, we have the resources to right ourselves when we tip over.

The precepts and many other aspects of the Buddhist teachings have much to say about relationships, about speech and heart, about the need for and the skill of developing compassion and loving kindness and so on. More and more we have been paying attention to these teachings as resources for developing our relationships to one another.

The third point I wish to make is about leadership. Here again are two extremes, and our sangha has seen both of them up close. One of these extremes is very natural in any organization, but maybe especially in a Zen Buddhist community. This is thinking that the boss is in charge, is responsible, is in control, is mandating events, is reaping the greatest rewards. In many kinds of communities, especially in our present moral climate, we feel this way. A kind of cynicism becomes prevalent. We feel that as citizens or as workers we have little power, receive little benefit, have almost no responsibility.

The result is a losing situation for everyone. We feel badly about ourselves and our limited roles, abrogate our responsibilities, and, of course, with no responsible action coming from below there is decay and corruption at the top, and no vision or direction for anyone. So everyone is diminished.

In Zen Buddhist communities this may take another form, as it did for us—we are not cynical; we really have confidence in the leader; we even love the leader and are willing to follow him or her no matter what, make great sacrifices and so on. Perhaps this is better because we feel good about what we are doing and much more is possible—we work hard and accomplish many things. Yet the weakness is that we are still not taking responsibility, and so in the end we feel diminished. We lose energy, and our effort is not sustainable. Also the leader who is viewed in this way becomes increasingly powerful and increasingly out of touch, and therefore less accurate in his or her leadership. It is only a matter of time until the leadership becomes unworkable.

The actual reality is that the leader is not in charge. Any community is a set of interlocking networks of relationship, each influencing the other, and being further influenced by other communities outside the immediate community. No one can control or even understand this complex process. Appreciating this, one may draw the conclusion that there is really no such thing as leadership.

This then is the other extreme. The group leads itself. Everyone makes decisions. Everyone is captain of the ship. We tried this too, and in a way it was worse. Within the community people will differ in their personal power, intelligence, experience, commitment, position, and so on, and these capacities will naturally go on functioning, even when we refuse to validate any power hierarchy. So two things are happening. On one hand people are jockeying for position and power, while everyone is denying that this is going on. On the other hand, no one is willing to actually take any power or responsibility, everyone is afraid to do anything, for fear they will be stepping ahead of someone else, and will therefore get shot down by the others. A tremendous amount of talking and meeting and activity takes place, but nothing is happening and everyone feels thwarted, and no one is satisfied.

I think there have to be leaders. Yet the leaders cannot imagine they are going to mandate or control things. Rather the leaders, who need to be people who are known and genuinely respected by the community, must understand the purposes and vision of the community and work to facilitate, develop, and guide change, not control it.

At the risk of going on too long I want to make one final point. Any kind of community is always in a state of change. On one hand change goes round and round, but on the other change goes up and down. In

other words, things always come round to the same point, and at the same time things are always developing one way or another, either getting better or getting worse. This is true of any individual, any system, any community. Everyone naturally wants his or her community to develop upward, to get better, more harmonious, more beautiful, and not worse.

What I want to emphasize is that the key to guiding successful development of a community is to keep the community open. Any community that closes will get worse, and eventually die. Remaining open is difficult, because if you are open you are continually challenged, and you need to adjust. Yet if you are not open you will definitely get worse eventually and die.

So a Zen community needs to remain open, to the world at large, reinterpreting the teaching and restructuring the community constantly to adjust to changes; and to individuals, including new students, who will bring enthusiasm and new ideas to enrich the practice. An open community is a community that gets feedback of all sorts. A closed community may seem as if it is going deeper for a while, but in the end it will not get feedback and will decay.

For us to think together about our community is very important. Maybe some of my thoughts have activated your own thinking, and with this exchange of thinking we can become wiser in our shared communal life. Our many thoughts do not actually describe or explain anything completely, but since we are human beings we have to take care of our body and mind, of our house and family, of our sangha, of our world, and make the effort to communicate our thinking.

Thank you very much for listening. I look forward to hearing from you when the occasion arises.

Facing page photos: The First Annual Parents' and Children's Work Weekend at Tassajara was held in April, 1995. Reportedly the event was a big success and a fine time was had by all. If you are interested in participating in special events for parents and children, contact Barbara Wenger at (415) 431-8112. Some of the families who attended are pictured here. Clockwise from top:

Gay, Adam and Jack Reineck
Maureen, Allana, Lemar and Logan Morrison
Nancy, Michael, Hannah and Rachael Gelfond
David, Clay and Elin Chadwick
Rachel, Miranda and Jacques Berchtan
Chloe, Michael and Susan Raftery



TASSAJARA
PARENTS'
AND
CHILDREN'S
WORK
WEEKEND



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. Zenshin Philip Whalen, Abbot.

Jikoji, in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Saratoga, (408) 741-9562.
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 7:10 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

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

Hoko-ji, Taos, NM, (505) 776-5712. Kobun Chino, Abbot.

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

Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131-0566,
Phone (402) 551-9035. Teacher, Nonin Chowaney.

WEEKLY MEDITATION GROUPS

Within California

Bolinas Sitting Group, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 30 Brighton Ave., Bolinas. Thursday 7:30-9 P.M. Led by Taigen Leighton (415) 458-8856 or (415) 868-1931.

Malibu Sitting Group, zazen Sunday mornings, Thursday evenings. Contact Peter Levitt (310) 452-6668.

Mill Valley Sitting Group, 191 Sycamore 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, Cherry Foundation, 4th and Guadalupe, Carmel, CA 93924. Tuesdays 6:30 P.M. Katherine Thanas, teacher. Contact Sara Hunsaker (408) 626-6523.

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

Outside California

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

IN MEMORIAM: HAKUYU TAIZAN MAEZUMI

Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi Roshi, 64, Abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles and a seminal influence on the growth of Zen Buddhism in the United States, died suddenly of a heart attack in Tokyo, Japan on Sunday, May 14, 1995.

Born in Japan in 1931, Maezumi Roshi was ordained as a Soto Zen monk at age 11. After graduation from Komozawa University, he studied at Sojiji, one of the two main Soto Zen monasteries in Japan.

He came to the United States in 1956 as a priest at Zenshuji, the headquarters of the Soto Zen Mission to the United States, located in downtown Los Angeles.

In 1969 he founded what has become the Zen Center of Los Angeles, and in 1976 established the Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values. Both the Zen Center of Los Angeles and Zen Mountain Center near Idyllwild, California, which he went on to establish in 1983, offer Zen instruction emphasizing the importance of individual realization and lifetime practice.

He is survived by his wife, Martha, and children Kirsten, Yuri and Yoshi, all of Idyllwild, California.

ABBOT SOJUN WEITSMAN'S EULOGY FOR MAEZUMI ROSHI

I first met Maezumi Roshi at Tassajara in 1968, but I didn't really get to know him until the late 1970s during my visits to ZCLA. That's also when I got to know his students Tetsugen, Daido, and Gempo, whose openness and hospitality were so heartwarming and genuine that I always felt at home there.

After Suzuki Roshi died, Maezumi Roshi was consistently supportive and over the years we have become good friends. His dream was to see our practice flourish in America, to have harmonious interactions between the sanghas, and for the American sangha to have the sanction and blessing of the Soto school in Japan.

Our last contact with him was at the *tokubetsu ango* (special retreat) held at Green Gulch in April and May of this year. His dharma-transmitted students and some of our Zen Center counterparts were present with him at this significant event where the Soto school gave us its sanction. At the end of *tokubetsu* Maezumi Roshi said, "I feel as if my life work is now finished."

He left behind many well-developed and talented dharma heirs and to me the second phase of his work was just beginning. We can honor his wonderful contribution by continuing our own practice passed on "from warm hand to warm hand."

I will miss him. It's hard to express, but I feel someone very significant has passed out of our lives.



Hakuyu
Taizan
Maezumi
Roshi at
City Center

ZEN CENTER
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San Francisco
California 94102

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Zen Center is comprised of three practice places: the City Center, Green Gulch Farm, and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. The City Center and Green Gulch Farm offer a regular schedule of public sittings, lectures, and classes, as well as one-day, five-day, and seven-day sittings and two- to three-month practice periods. Guest student programs are also available. Information may be obtained from the Zen Center, 300 Page St., San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 863-3136 or from Green Gulch Farm, 1601 Shoreline Hwy., Sausalito, CA 94965, (415) 332-5215.

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center usually offers two three-month practice periods: September to December and January to April, when the Center is closed to visitors. During the Guest Season in the summer months, visitors may come as guests or as students. For more information on the opportunities available, please contact the office in San Francisco.

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