

# Wind Bell



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COVER: Oryoki bowls in the  
Tassajara dining room.  
Photograph by Kathryn Stark



*Paul received guests at 273 Page street prior to the Mountain Seat Ceremony.*

## *An American Dharma Steeped in Tradition*

*Jen Hagar*

*WHEN NEW ZEN CENTER ABBOT* Ryushin Paul Haller enters Zen Center's mountain monastery, Tassajara, someone hits the han (the wooden sounding board struck to signal the beginning of meditation) to announce his arrival. At first he thought this announcement was "rather wonderful." But then it felt maybe "not so wonderful," he said. "Am I supposed to do something other than what I usually do?"

When Ryushin became abbot on February 2nd of this year, his ceremonial entrance was announced by a drum, bells, clappers and the clashes of metal rings on the abbot's ceremonial staff. These sounds were punctuated



*Paul arrives at the front door of City Center.*

by long silences as the new abbot offered incense at altars throughout the temple. At the front door, before entering, he offered this poem:

*After traveling half a lifetime,  
I arrive at this unavoidable gate.  
It swings freely in the spring breeze  
Has it ever been any other way?*

The Buddha Hall was filled with Paul's friends, family, students, teachers, and visiting dignitaries. An overflow crowd in the dining room watched the nearly three-hour-long Mountain Seat Ceremony on a large video screen. The "mountain seat" in this case was a four-foot high platform built in front of the main altar and draped in festive yellow. (The ceremony originated in China, where Zen monasteries were built at high altitudes and an abbot took the name of the mountain itself.)

Sunday, February 2nd was sunny and beautiful, but the nation was on the brink of war. Many who spoke throughout the ceremony to offer congratulations and to challenge the new abbot with questions expressed concern about the world climate and our country's role.

Judith Randall, a longtime student of Ryushin's, during the ritual questioning at the center of the ceremony, asked him about the terrible suffering approaching and how not to harden our hearts towards those in power. His response was that to keep the heart open it is necessary to allow oneself to experience suffering. Later, he acknowledged the seeming contradiction of being filled with joy and gratitude at a moment of impending national and global tragedy.

Throughout the ceremony, other references were made to the shadow side of power and authority. Myogen Steve Stucky, in reference to the groundhog seeing his shadow, spoke of the period following Zentatsu Richard Baker's abbacy as a "cataclysm" and advised that while "expounding the light" the shadow not be ignored. Hilda Guitierrez-Baldoquin, a Zen priest born in Cuba, also cautioned that "when people ascend to high places the air gets a little thin and mind lapses can happen . . ."

Zen priest Taigen Dan Leighton noted that Ryushin, a Belfast native and the eighth abbot in Zen Center's 41-year history, is the only one since Shunryu Suzuki (and Dainin Katagiri, who served for a year) not born on American soil. During the ceremony the new abbot spoke of how he arrived



*Paul reviews the abbot's contract presented by Zen Center president Vicki Austin.*



JUDITH KEENAN

*The procession emerges from the meditation hall.*

fresh from Asia (where he had practiced as a forest monk in Thailand) at the steps of the Center 28 years before and was turned away. He jokingly asked, "Am I any different than I was then?" Ryushin, who has matured as a teacher at Zen Center, comes into the leadership of a matured institution with the task of bringing authority to the position while avoiding the mistakes made in the past. Towards the end of the ceremony, Sojun Mel Weitsman, from whom Ryushin received dharma transmission, expressed his confidence in his practice and abilities. Describing his own abbacy in the years following Richard Baker's resignation, when City Center "was like a hotel, and practically no one was going to the zendo," Weitsman attested that Ryushin was one of three pillars who, with Michael Wenger and Pat Phelan, "held me up and helped turn things around. The three of them picked up what was necessary to do and interacted with each other in great harmony." His wish for the new abbot was that he be able to "find harmony within the chaos."

Zentatsu Richard Baker, the second abbot of Zen Center who succeeded founder Shunryu Suzuki, ordained Paul Haller in 1980, giving him the name *Ryushin Zendo*, "Dragon Heart, Zen Way."

The abbacy is now a position that is held for an initial four years, with a possible three-year second term. It is held concurrently by two senior

priests. Ryushin shares the abbacy with Jiko Linda Ruth Cutts. Darlene Cohen describes Haller as having "tremendous strengths," possessing an "American dharma, with great respect for the democratic process, while at the same time being steeped in tradition."

"What is a Zen priest? What does Zen have to offer? These questions have guided my life," said Ryushin during the ceremony. For the past five years he has been taking his question and the strength of his practice back to his native Belfast, where he talks with and listens to both Protestants and Catholics working for peace. His sister, Marie Clarke, who came from Belfast to attend the ceremony, read a statement of gratitude from the Black Mountain Sangha. This group, guided by Ryushin, is developing mindfulness practice with social workers, ex-prisoners and those affected by the trauma of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland. Marie added a note of levity to the serious proceedings by noting that her brother once fell down the Black Mountains, low-lying hills around Belfast, "doing yourself quite a bit of damage." Actor Michael O'Keefe, also doing work with ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland and representing friends of the abbot, brought congratulatory messages from Roshi Bernie Glassman's Peacemaker Order. He couldn't resist adding his observation of the occasion, "A finally honed sense of tragedy will sustain an Irishman through any period of joy."

Congratulations were conveyed during the ceremony from other figures in the wider American Buddhist sangha, among them Robert Aitken of the Diamond Sangha (who sent a message) and Dharma Master Heng Ch'ih (the sister of Ryushin's student Judith Randall) from the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

Taigen Leighton, active in the Buddhist Peace Fellowship's organization of Buddhist presence at antiwar rallies, spoke of the abbot's Irish roots and his strengths as an engaged Buddhist—"his ability to be inclusive and flexible, to think freshly," while at the same time having a grounding as a "model monk." Haller created and ran the Outreach



JUDITH KEENAN

*The new abbot responds to Steve Stucky during the question and answer portion of the ceremony.*

department at Zen Center that takes meditation into the prisons and recovery facilities, feeds the homeless and makes practice available to people of diverse cultures. In a recent interview, Ryushin said he sees issues of diversity as the big challenge for Buddhism in the West in general. His particular background has made him attuned to the oppression others experience. "For me it was the strife between Catholic and Protestant," he says. He has great respect for the visioning process Zen Center is currently undergoing. "I value the collective process which has a strength that the hierarchical lacks." He is also interested in "promoting and strengthening traditional Zen training and finding a way of expressing our practice in society both as compassionate service and making it available to as many people as possible."

While he has been moving towards this "unavoidable gate" all his life, Ryushin has also been leading an ordinary life. As the "dharma mailman" bearing a message from Genko Akiba, director of Soto Zen in North America noted, the most unusual thing is also the most ordinary. To sit quietly every day for twenty years, as Ryushin Paul Haller has done, following the basic schedule, is the essence of the Buddha Way. As previous abbess Blanche Hartman, who had stepped down from the Mountain Seat the day before, said, "There is no going up the mountain and no coming down the mountain. There is just continuous practice."



JUDITH KEENAN

*Emila Heller, Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi, and Leslie James. Hoitsu, Shunryu Suzuki-roshi's son, came from Japan to help with the details of the ceremony.*



# Stepping Down from the Mountain

Hilda Ryumon Gutiérrez Baldoquín

*"It's all continuous practice, day by day, living our life of vow together, making our best effort just on each moment forever."*

—Abbess Zenkei Hartman's opening statement

*THE BELLS, THE BOWS*, the forehead touching the velvet mat, the offerings, the chanting.

On an ordinary winter afternoon, on the first Saturday in February 2003, Abbess Shunbo Zenkei Blanche Hartman, Inconceivable Joy, sat, one last time, on the yellow-shrouded mountain.

Family, friends, students, Dharma sisters, brothers and teachers gathered to witness this ordinary, beautiful old woman ceremoniously ending a seven-year tenure as abbess of San Francisco Zen Center, the first woman to embody this role in the young history of the house that Suzuki-roshi built. So significant was Zenkei Hartman's tenure that *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* made note of it in the article, "Moments in American Buddhism," appearing in the magazine's Fall 2001 Tenth Anniversary issue.

City Center hummed with the activity-filled energy that only a momentous occasion can provide. In the Buddha Hall, preparations had been made to create a space where our hearts would feed in the intimacy that endings often bring. In the kitchen, a sumptuous meal was prepared by some of Blanche Sensei's closest disciples and supporters, and what better tribute to the teacher!

The feeling in the crowded Buddha Hall was one of lightness, sweetness and intimacy. As the abbess had wanted it, this was to be "a joyful occasion with no regrets for her stepping down and making room for Paul."

In inviting the mondo questions, she set the tone by stating:

*This may seem like a solemn occasion, but actually it's a joyful occasion. We are about to invite new life to lead this Sangha. The incoming abbot is called 'Shinmei,' new life. So it's time for me to step down and make room for new life. I intend to keep enjoying myself, practicing with you, sewing, living with you. I'm not losing anything. I'm gaining some freedom and the opportunity to see my dharma brother, Ryushin Zendo, step forward and lead this Sangha for the next seven years. So in the light of just enjoying our practice together, please bring me your questions.*

The abbess' forthrightness and gentleness came through in her answers. Her first Dharma heir, Seirin Barbara Kohn, asked, "What are you born as now?" Amidst hearty laughter, Zenkei-san responded, "A free spirit—I don't know. I truly do not know."

In very simple terms she showed us the heart of her teachings: to just embrace whatever arises, and just this is it! When asked, what was it that joy taught? She answered, to find your own way—to really appreciate the Buddha that you are. And at the end of her formal role, Zenkei-san continues to apply the teachings to herself. "What will be your koan now?" asked a disciple. The teacher replied, "What is it? What am I going to do now? I have to find out, what is this?"

The abbess' love for the teachings that came to her from Joshin-san, her devotion to sewing Buddha's robes and her respect for the lineage, were highlighted by many. When asked, "How can we repay Joshin-san's deep compassion?" She replied:

"We can repay Joshin-san's compassion by continuing to sew Buddha's robe in the way that she taught us. And by teaching others to sew Buddha's robe in the way that she taught us so that everyone can come to understand that this is, as she said, 'every robe is the whole body of Buddha.' "

At the close of the mondo, she spoke directly to our hearts. "I'm glad that I'm not going anywhere and that I will continue to practice with all of you. I know that I loved you, that I love you all and sometimes I forget how much, and you've all helped me to remember again how much I love you all. Thank you for your wholehearted practice. Thank you for continuing this compassionate path that we have received from Suzuki-roshi and from the whole lineage before Suzuki-roshi and from all of those other teachers like Joshin-san and Nakamura Sensei and Suzuki Sensei and so many others who have given such heart to this place that we can love each other so much. Thank you."

Many people shared words of appreciation, among them Abbess Linda Ruth Cutts, Senior Dharma Teachers Sojun Mel Weitsman, Tenshin Reb Anderson and Zoketsu Norman Fischer, as well as Rev. Shohaku Okumura, Rev. Lou Hartman and Zen Center President Shosan Victoria Austin.

Her root teacher, Sojun Weitsman, reminisced the first time he laid eyes on the abbess. "Hojosan, when you first came to my door with your long braided hair like a huge horse's tail down to your waist, I knew that there were great things in store for you. I knew you were a person of quality. I could sense that, and I'm so happy that you were the first person I entrusted dharma to. It's been such a joy watching you find your way."

Abbess Linda Cutts allowed us a glimpse of Zenkei-san's willingness to be intimate: "I also know that your door is always open for anyone to come in, have a cup of tea, and to be enveloped by your listening heart."

And Shosan-san reminded the abbess "a bodhisattva never retires."



RENSHIN, JUDY BUNCE

*Blanche rides in the Fourth of July parade at Tassajara.*

In her characteristic unassuming manner, Zenkei Hartman did not take all the credit for her achievements as an abbess. "While I appreciate all the appreciations that I've heard from you, it should be clear to everyone that nothing that's happened during these seven years has been my doing. It has been the doing of this whole sangha. The welcoming feeling that you speak of I think is most exemplified in the growth and enthusiasm of the Saturday Sangha, which has been due entirely to the ceaseless efforts of the tanto. The Outreach Program has grown and prospered and made a very important contribution to the opening of this temple, and that has been due to the efforts of Ryushin and his staff. The sewing has been prospering whether I go to Tassajara or whether I stay here and has been due to people like Stuart Travis, John Renwick, and Cynthia Gair. So what has been accomplished while I have been abbess has been the accomplishment of everyone here, and I deeply appreciate the support of all of you and the practice of all of you, and let's keep doing it until we drop!"

Indeed, enjoyment and laughter and deep wells of mutual gratitude sprang forth honoring Zenkei Hartman, as she also honored those who made her abbacy possible. In ending her last Dharma lecture as an abbess earlier in the day, she said:

"I don't know how to describe the gratitude that I feel for the support that I have received over these years of sitting on this mountain. It's really amazing and wonderful and I truly, truly appreciate it. My gratitude to

Suzuki-roshi for bringing us this way of practice is just unbounded. But the gratitude that I've been given the opportunity to try to share my practice with you is also unbounded. And the gratitude I feel for seeing your practice and seeing your transformation as you practice, is unbounded."

Throughout the entire ceremony, the abess, sitting on the mountain one last time, seemed to be having a ball. Who wouldn't? As she said during the ceremony, "it's a love fest down here." And later she recalled the experience as "a warm love bath, a nice shared bath of warm love."

Referring to her teachings, Zenkei Hartman has often said, "there are only three strings to my banjo." Perhaps when the music of the Dharma, as well as Suzuki-roshi's teachings and Joshin-san's lineage are passed down in a wholehearted way, the number of strings doesn't matter. For when it comes to these tunes, the old gal from Alabama can certainly play elegantly and endlessly.

Blanche-san, here is to your continued good health, and may your Dharma continue to flourish and benefit all beings.



MAESHA ANGIUS

*Judy Bunce (second from left) and Tova Green (far right) received priest ordination on January 4, 2003 at City Center. Preceptors for the ceremony were Senior Dharma Teacher Blanche Hartman (far left), Abbess Linda Cutts, center, and Steve Stucky (back row far right).*

# Turtle Man

Ryushin Paul Haller

October 2001

*FOR MANY YEARS THERE WAS SOMEONE* who would come to City Center to sell us tins of candy. They were very sweet caramels, coated in chocolate and they looked like little turtles, so we called him the Turtle Man. The Turtle Man was blind, so we'd buy two boxes instead of one. We'd put the tins of candy out on the desk in the front office, and even though we all thought they were too sweet, they were quickly eaten.

This ritual continued for many years. The Turtle Man, with his white cane, tapped his way up the stairs, tapped on the door until it was opened, came in and charmed us into buying the candy, and then left.

Somehow the Turtle Man could roam around the City, selling boxes of candy, coming to places like Zen Center and persuading people to buy a couple of cans of the sweet candy. Actually he was a bit of a hustler. He knew we really didn't want them but that we couldn't resist his charm. It was always a thrill to see him—a miraculous event. The Turtle Man defied conventional notions of limitations. So it was always a little exciting and joyous when he turned up at the door.

One day while I was out on the street, I heard a voice cry out, "Help! Help! Help!" It was the Turtle Man. He was standing on the corner of Page Street and Laguna. He needed to cross the street and his way of accomplishing that was to stand on the curb and cry "Help!" Just crying "Help!" until someone came along and escorted him across the street. After he crossed Page Street and walked down Laguna, I assume that at each street crossing, this was how the Turtle Man negotiated the crossing. He just stood there and said, "Help! Help! Help!"

What an amazing, courageous life. Walking along until confronted with an insurmountable barrier, then to stop and just cry out "Help!" Not knowing who you're calling to, if anyone. Just waiting until somebody turns up and helps you cross that barrier. Then walking on, knowing that pretty soon you're going to meet another barrier and then again you're going to have to stop and cry out "Help! Help! Help!" Entrusting your life to the innate generosity of existence that helps all beings to cross barriers and keep moving forward in their lives.

I tell you this story to insult you. To insult your common sense. Our common sense tells us that it is very helpful, even necessary, to be capable and self sufficient, to know what's going on and to be able to implement our intentions. This is what seems necessary to make life work. But every now and then we have the good fortune to run into someone like the Turtle Man who takes our common sense and turns it upside down.

What an adventure to be blind. Making a living hustling people into buying tins of candy that they didn't want. Unable to cross the street without crying out for help, everyday life is filled with helpful people. Every day has extraordinary accomplishments that surpass individual ability. From out of nowhere help comes to surmount impassable barriers. Each day presents itself as an opportunity to surrender to the unpredictable kindness of others.

So this insults our common sense. I doubt anyone is going to leave here and call up their doctor and say, "I'd like you to make me blind. I'm going to give up my job and start selling boxes of candy." No, that would not be a reasonable thing to do.

Usually we see the world—the world that we've created and the world that has created us—through the lens of practicality, reasonableness and common sense. Sort of. Actually if you observe yourself and notice closely what goes on in your own mind and how you behave, you realize it's not really all that reasonable and orderly. It has elements of determined order, but then for good measure it has other things thrown in too: repeating preoccupations, habitual behaviors, fears and wishful fantasies. These give each of us our own taste of the Turtle Man's dilemma and opportunity to venture into the unpredictable enterprise of being alive.

This is the challenge of our human life. How else could we break through the web that we weave as reality if we didn't have a little piece of Turtle Man in us. But this is an intimidating proposition for most of us, because we don't have the excellent training of Turtle Man. It is obvious to the Turtle Man that he has no option about how to lead his life: either stay at home or go out to meet the impassable barriers and unpredictable challenges that the world presents and, entrusting his life to the kindness of others, cry for help. Those are his choices. By contrast, most of us think that if we maintain our separateness and strive to accomplish self-centered wishes, our life will be more rewarding. Then every now and then there are moments when we feel our options are limited, that we have encountered an insurmountable barrier; and because we're not used to it, this is very upsetting. Crying for help, without knowing who, if anyone, will respond, is a frightening possibility for most of us.

This is why we have an ambivalent relationship to practice. Although there's something totally intriguing and liberating about the possibilities that engaging in the unfettered dynamic flow of interconnectedness holds, there's also something ominous about the realization that if we really paid attention to our life, we would notice that we don't know what is going to happen this afternoon. We can't be confident that we are capable of dealing with it and creating a desirable outcome. We can reassure ourselves that what is going to happen will not be much different from what has usually been experienced and will turn out to be manageable. So we close down



*Zenshin Bradley sews his okesa in the Tassajara dining room. It is traditional to take refuge in Buddha with every stitch.*

that liberating, unknown possibility with the reassurance of predictability.

The practice of awareness takes us below the predictability we like to think defines our lives. When we pay attention to our experience, we start to see that the intrigue of our inner dialogue has a mysterious quality to it. The stories that go through our minds and the feelings that go through our heart are not orderly or predictable. We also notice that regardless of our hopes or fears, each moment springs forth according to causes and conditions that go beyond our personal efforts.

The practice of awareness asks each of us to engage this process without becoming too frightened by the uncertain nature of what might unfold. Or too complacent by subduing it with notions of predictability. This is the delicate work of awareness.

In Buddhism there is a classification for practicing awareness called *shamata/vipassana*. *Shamata* is pausing on the curbside and *vipassana* is calling out "Help! Help! Help!" I just made that up! That's what we do all the time—we just make up definitions of reality. You hear a sound and you think, "That's a truck going around the corner of Page Street." It all happens in about a half a second. We see someone and we make up a story "Oh they're that kind of person." Without the careful attention of awareness, we become convinced by the world we create and the "I" that is also created.

The practice of *shamata* is to pause the constant creation of inner and outer reality so that it can be carefully attended to. *Vipassana* is to pay

careful attention to what arises moment by moment.

We pause this stream of thought and feeling that's so convinced it knows exactly what the world is that it skips over experience and goes straight to reaction. Straight to having a feeling or a judgement or plucking something back out of the past so it can be rehashed: "How dare she say that to me. That's the biggest insult I ever heard." Plucking something out of the future: "Oh no, how will I get through that?" How do we put this on pause? Pausing is the discipline of shamata. As long as mind is running rampant in an obsessive-compulsive way, we don't consider any other possibility. The internal movie is so tantalizing we never see the Turtle Man. He's just some old fool who is getting in the way, bothering us. We never realize our lives are filled with Turtle Man,

extraordinary beings showing us the courageous compassion of entrusting our lives to the Way. Maybe answering the Turtle Man's call for help is how we're going to be helped. Usually we give our vitality and convinced endorsement to the continuous stream of our own dialogue and feelings. Attention to body or breath or mind objects cuts through mental preoccupations and pauses the constant stream of thought. The practice of vipassana doesn't say don't create your world. That's what we're hardwired to do. It may not be a volitional act to think, "truck" after hearing the sound of a truck. The practice of vipassana says don't grasp it too tightly. Don't be too convinced by your version of reality. Instead examine it closely and see its ever-changing, interdependent nature.



RENSHIN JUDY BUNCE

*Catherine Gammon cuts fabric for sewing Buddha's robe.*



There are two factors in the practice of shamata/vipassana. One is through discipline. The discipline of returning to what's being experienced in the moment. Returning to body as physical sensation, sound as hearing, thinking as the phenomena of mind. This interrupts the ceaseless endorsement of the-world-according-to-me. All the vitality and energy that is involved and committed to that is also interrupted. The-world-according-to-me consumes a lot of energy because it's simply not completely true; there's more to what's going on than the-world-according-to-me. It takes a lot of effort to keep it going. One aspect of shamata is interrupting that commitment and allowing that vitality to involve itself directly with what's happening here.

We have mixed feelings about this interruption. On one hand, it's a great relief. It's simple, direct and trustworthy. It brings its own kind of clarity and for that we deeply appreciate it. On the other hand, it directly challenges the-world-according-to-me without which my existence may feel threatened. When it's interrupted, that may produce an unsettling feeling, a kind of anxiety. An early sutra says, when the-world-according-to-me is completely put on pause, it's like "plucking a fish out of water." A fish out of water quivers and flaps as if it doesn't know what is going on or how to exist outside its usual environment. What do I do now? If I'm not me, then what am I? If this is not the-world-according-to-me, what is it?

We prepare ourselves for the discipline of shamata by acknowledging that there will be a constant attraction to returning to the-world-according-to-me. It will repeatedly arise. Even though we may sincerely want to be present to the suchness of what is, it'll still come up. Even if we are successful about being present, it might not feel that comfortable. It might feel as though something precious is being lost, as though I'm losing me. So we prepare ourselves with the understanding that letting go of a sense of self may be something we are reluctant to do even though it is liberating. In the practice of awareness, we call that Right View.

Today we are doing what we call a one-day sitting. Every activity of the day is devoted to the practice of shamata/vipassana. We sit as still as we can, being present and aware. We eat being present and aware. We clean the Center being present and aware. We rest being present and aware. Every activity is devoted to being present and aware.

So pausing is one factor of awareness. The other factor is what the Turtle Man is trying to teach us: that maybe we just shouldn't be so sure what a successful life looks like, what it is to be doing well, what accomplishment is, what's the best way to navigate and negotiate this human life that we have. So we take this mind that can lock itself into obsession and initiate compulsive behavior and we turn it to look at itself with receptive inquiry. Nothing to know, everything to learn. We look at the assumptions we make. We don't have to chase them down; we just watch them as they

come into being here and now. We watch the story of what reality is arise, acknowledge it, and let it register. No matter how often it arises, let the story arise in boundless space without judgement or grasping. Endless stories can arise within a single human being. We have a genius for stories. Even repeating the same story is an expression of that genius. With endless patience and kindness we inquire into the nature of these stories and let them arise and fall away.

Somehow, as we continue the practice of just meeting and acknowledging, the way that we have committed our life to our stories stops making so much sense. Sometimes it completely stops making sense and we drop it completely, becoming no one, not even body and mind. Sometimes we just loosen it up a bit. Acknowledging, engaging, immersion in, and releasing is the sequence of becoming what is rather than staying separate from it or holding it as something solid. When each story becomes the experience of now and transforms into energy, we stop taking it personally. It's just what's happening and the self is not different from the sound of the car in the street or the feeling of our knees on the zabuton. It's just another experience that goes on in the course of being a human life. We start to glimpse the wisdom of not clinging to experience as if our life depended on it.

Each human being has a karmic life. Each human being creates feelings and thoughts and memories and ideas and imaginings and weaves them into a potent drama. We can stop translating experience into a fixed self and start to experience it more as the vitality of our life stream. Then struggling to change what is ceases and the-world-according-to-me just becomes another part of what is. Usually these two factors of awareness, the discipline of pausing, and then receptive inquiry by making contact, acknowledging, and engaging, support each other. If there's just discipline, it's like trying to push your hand against a hose that has a very powerful jet of water coming out of it. You keep pushing against it and maybe sometime you can push really hard and stop it. But then when you stop pressing, it pushes your hand out of the way. The jet stream is the vitality of the-world-according-to-me. It can be transformed through insight but it cannot be permanently stopped. Without having discharged the urgency of our stories, it is difficult to just engage arising experience. Shamata prepares mind for the inquiry of vipasana.

We look deeply into the nature of the-world-according-to-me, and that loosens up its determination, and our attention can hold it and can acknowledge it and experience its completeness. In that simpler way of being, it's OK to become like the Turtle Man. It's OK to sometimes have the experience of not knowing what to do next. To run into a barrier. It's OK to realize that life has a mysterious quality to it, an element of uncertainty. It's OK to realize sometimes we need help, that calling out for help is a very generous act because it allows others to help us. It allows us to be helped.

Sometimes we're calling out for help, and sometimes we're offering help. Then this hostile world becomes a very different place. It's a world where there is help being received and help being given. A world where non-separation is an appealing state of being and separateness is seen as a source of suffering.

In such a world this compelling, determined world-according-to-me loses some of its urgency and desperation. It's not so necessary in a generous world, in a world where help is available, to be so adamant in promoting self-centered agendas that exclude others. Maybe the world according to someone else would be a real help. Maybe it would help me through this barrier. Maybe if I pause and hear someone else's world, I can help them. Maybe not being so sure what the world is and what has to happen opens up an array of possibility.

That day when I met the Turtle Man, I helped him across the street. How could I not? Could anyone in this room walk by someone who was quietly, determinedly saying, "Help! Help! Help!?" I walked with him across the street and he walked quite slowly. I got a taste of another world—a world where you slowly and carefully feel your way along. It was both wonderful and scary and that was very helpful for me. I thought, "Thank you, Turtle Man." I thought, "There's always a dharma teacher around to help."

Such a world is available. It's really up to each one of us as to whether or not we are willing and interested in experiencing and becoming this world of compassionate interdependence. Thank You.



TOWA GREEN

*Rakus drying on the clothesline at Tassajara*

*Scenes from  
Zen Center's  
Benefit Event  
at Greens*



*Tony Patchell and Ethan Patchell*



JULIA SOMMER (4)

*Shoho Kubast and Siobhan Cassidy*



*Emila Heller and Ruth Brinker*



BARBARA WENIGER

*Art Atkinson and Dennis Rodriguez*



*Larry Bye and Norma Fogelberg*

*At this year's benefit on May 4, 2003, Ruth Brinker and Tony Patchell were honored for their years of compassionate work in the world. Ruth Brinker is the founder of Project Open Hand, which delivers meals to those in need. Tony Patchell is a long-time advocate for the homeless.*

## Everyday Greens

WE ARE HAPPY to announce the publication of a new cookbook, *Everyday Greens*, written by Annie Somerville, head chef at Greens Restaurant.

The recipes in *Everyday Greens* have been tested to achieve the flavor and originality that garnered awards and bestseller status for Annie's previous book, *Fields of Greens*. This book offers a new infusion of flavors from Southeast Asia, North Africa, Mexico, and India. The "everyday" of the title does not mean these are all basic dishes you can throw together

in minutes; they run the gamut of skill levels. Rather, "everyday" refers to the practice of bringing awareness of mind to every moment of daily life.

An advocate of eating locally long before it became fashionable, Annie remains committed to cooking with the seasons. "The Kitchen Cupboard" includes advice on pairing wines with food, while the chapter on worm composting, "an earth science project with delicious results" explains how to draw maximum riches from your soil. There are also wonderful inserts and hints about a variety of basic foods



Annie Somerville signs her new book at  
Zen Center's benefit event

*"Greens pleases because of the finesse of its kitchen and its own organic Green Gulch Farm produce."*

—Gourmet, in their "Best American Restaurants" issue

*Everyday Greens*, illustrated with full-color woodcuts by Mayumi Oda, was published by Scribner in May 2003. \$40.00

# Taking Our Places: The Buddhist Path to Truly Growing Up

A new book from Zoketsu Norman Fischer



TAKING OUR PLACES  
THE BUDDHIST PATH TO TRULY GROWING UP

NORMAN FISCHER

*"For any of us who have struggled with our practice amid the complexities, frustrations, and ambiguities of real life."—CHARLOTTE JOKO BECK, author of *Everyday Zen**

*"Most of us take maturity for granted, as if it were something that comes quite naturally and completely as our bodies grow and our minds and hearts fill up with life experience. In fact, however, few of us really occupy our places. We are merely living out a dream of maturity, a set of received notions and images that pass for adulthood."*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TRULY GROW UP? Norman Fischer was challenged to answer this question when four Zen Center couples asked him to mentor their teenage sons. Norman and the boys met over the course of two years, and their stories and struggles formed the inspiration for this in-depth look at the qualities which support the development of maturity.

While Norman's mentoring work has since inspired many Coming of Age programs, including Zen Center's own, his book explores the issue of maturity for adults of all ages. Our culture has neglected in spades the question of what it means to truly grow up. In *Taking Our Places*, Norman addresses this largely ignored topic, examining what true maturity is and detailing the qualities that help us cultivate a deep and lively maturity. Norman's years of Zen practice and his warmhearted teaching style suffuse this vital contribution to encouraging our engaged practice in the world.

*Taking Our Places: The Buddhist Path to Truly Growing Up* was published by Harper San Francisco Publishers. \$23.95



## *How to Sit Zazen—the Zen Buddhist Way*

*Sam van der Sterre, age 14  
September 17, 2002*

**WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT MEDITATION**, you might think about a guy sitting down in a *zendo* (meditation hall) with robes (meditation clothing), doing his thing. But, really, you do not need all of this. All you need is the earth under you, the ability to sit, and an open mind. Pick a quiet place, maybe in your room. Sit down with your legs crossed and back straight and hands where you think they are comfortable. This might be a little painful at first, but it is good to be a little bit uncomfortable when meditating because it creates focus and discipline. Then open your mind, listen to the noises around you. I'm sure there are some because the world is moving and changing and is always noisy. Then listen and calm your mind and try to think of as little as possible.

If this sounds pointless and a waste of time, well, poopoo on you. But if you think it would be cool to try this, go right ahead and experience the joy of the aftermath of meditation: a sane body and mind and a firm view of the world.

# Zen Center's Vision Statement

Dear Friends of Zen Center,

This is a major turning point in San Francisco Zen Center's history. Two years ago, the Board of Directors and the Senior Staff of Zen Center realized that it was critical to come to a unified understanding of where we want the organization to go in the future and to involve the wider sangha in that process.

Since then we have worked vigorously on the development of a Vision and Strategic Plan. After over 250 interviews, many meetings with the sangha and residents, and hundreds of hours of work—much of it by dedicated volunteers—we are pleased to present our plan, which is summarized on the next few pages.

Over the summer, we will have a series of meetings at our three practice centers and in other venues to present this plan. These meetings will be announced in *sangha-e*, on our web site and posted at our practice centers. We warmly invite you to attend. You may also email us your feedback directly at [vision@sfzc.org](mailto:vision@sfzc.org) or by writing to the Office of the President at 300 Page Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.

In the fall we plan another series of presentations about the implementation plans and budgets for our goals. Your participation helps the whole community, including residents, nonresidents, members, supporters, neighbors and friends. Together we can realize Zen Center's main intention: ". . . to express, make accessible, and embody the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha."

On the path with you,

*Victoria Austin*

Victoria Austin  
President

*THE FOLLOWING SEVEN GOALS* will guide the San Francisco Zen Center over the next five to ten years. We commit to regularly reviewing our progress towards them and refining our strategies to successfully reach them.



## GOAL I: STRENGTHEN AND CLARIFY ALL PATHS OF PRACTICE

Objectives:

1. Strengthen and clarify training
2. Clarify priest path
3. Honor the path of the committed lay practitioner through training and acknowledgments
4. Continue to build programs to support parents and children to practice inside and outside of Zen Center
5. Ensure SFZC's capacity to teach to the core curriculum level and beyond
6. Enhance continuing development of individuals with Dharma transmission
7. Ensure consistency of practice among the three practice centers
8. Improve the understanding and quality of work practice at Zen Center

## GOAL II: BUILD UPON AND CONTINUALLY STRENGTHEN SERVICE TO EXISTING AND EMERGING SANGHAS

## GOAL III: ENSURE ZEN CENTER'S LONGTERM FINANCIAL HEALTH

## GOAL IV: CLARIFY AND STREAMLINE THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND LINES OF AUTHORITY

Objectives:

1. Establish and communicate processes for decision-making in key areas of operation
2. Create conditions that allow individuals to function effectively in their work practice positions
3. Optimize the functioning of the Board of Directors as the governing body for Zen Center as an institution



**GOAL V: STEWARD RESOURCES OF LAND, BUILT ASSETS, AND PEOPLE TO MAKE THE DHARMA AVAILABLE TO OTHERS AND TO SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS**

Objectives:

1. Acknowledging and utilizing the work of those who have gone before us, Zen Center will implement plans to achieve this goal
2. Stewardship of property assets
3. Develop personnel policies and human resources practices that support and manifest our mission
4. Routinely review and upgrade our technology infrastructure

**GOAL VI: IMPLEMENT ZEN CENTER'S DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURAL INITIATIVE THROUGHOUT THE INSTITUTION**

Objectives:

1. Create a mechanism and infrastructure for accountability around issues of diversity and multiculturalism
2. Develop and implement an internal training program for the Board, senior teachers, practice leaders, staff, residents and associated sanghas to build organizational competence around issues of racism, classism and other forms of cultural oppression



*Volunteers in the Outreach program pack bag lunches for the homeless*



JULIE BURTON

*On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Outreach coordinator Ben Gustin prepares soup to deliver to San Francisco's homeless population.*

3. Develop, through training and practice, a common language for effective communication regarding issues of cultural differences as they relate to our interactions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards each other as practitioners in the dharma
4. Establish an internal leadership resources team skilled in addressing racism and classism issues at the three centers
5. Continue the implementation of the visiting dharma teachers program to provide practice role models and support for students of color, as well as students from other underrepresented constituencies
6. Establish a representative council from Zen Center's membership and all three practice centers

#### **GOAL VII: DEVELOP AND EXPAND ZEN CENTER'S SOCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM**

Objectives:

1. To be of service and to advocate for populations-in-need in the wider community
2. Intra-Buddhist and interfaith participation
3. Promote and expand our sangha's engagement to support the expression of Buddhist values in all spheres of human interaction at the local, regional and international levels
4. Develop and promote what Zen Center has learned about service and activism at all practice centers and to our wider sangha



JUDITH KEENAN

*Blanche Hartman and Roxie Moazzami at a peace march*

## Honoring Peace

Sojun Mel Weitsman

**T**ODAY WE FACE A CRISIS of monumental significance which involves the entire world and causes each nation and each individual to look deeply within their own conscience and decide whether or not war is a just or viable way to settle conflicts or to dominate other nations or peoples. Buddha is believed to have said that the law of the fishes is that the big fish eat the smaller fish, which eat the smaller fish, which eat the smaller fish and so forth. This is the way of "the world," but it is not the way of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Katagiri-roshi told this story about the difference between heaven and hell: In hell there is a long table and all the guests are sitting around it. On the table is a sumptuous feast, and the guests are issued a pair of long chopsticks. In fact, the chopsticks are so long that although the guests can reach the food to pick it up, they can't get it into their own mouths. That is hell. Heaven looks exactly the same—same table, same chopsticks, same arrangement. But when each person on either side of the table picks up a morsel with the long chopsticks, they put it into the mouth of a person on the other side of the table. Heaven and hell are realms of our own making.

It's like our body/mind which has many co-operating streams; the bloodstream, the water stream, the heat, the breath, the limbs, the brain, the organs—all working together harmoniously. When they don't, the body gets sick. Our body/mind is a microcosm of the world. A city or country is like our body. When goods and services and money don't flow, the body or the country gets sick, and the world as well. The result is pain, trauma, and imbalance. We say "the whole world is our true human body." We have to think about how we take care of the world as one whole body. Compassion and identification with others are qualities that sustain the world.

It is said that to be a bodhisattva is to be a mature human being. As a bodhisattva in the midst of fighting demons, we can offer the precepts of thoughtful conduct. In the midst of so-called animal behavior we can offer the teaching of *Prajnaparamita*. For hungry ghosts can teach generosity, and as humans we can transform desire into Way-Seeking Mind. We can also teach patience in the midst of hellish conditions. Wisdom, generosity, goodwill, and practice/enlightenment are the basis of a harmonious sangha, and a harmonious sangha is the basis of a harmonious world. Traditionally a monastic community is supported by people who see it as an example of pure living, free from greed, ill will and delusion.

In Dogen's time and throughout history most countries have been monarchies of one kind or another. There was not always access for the



RENSHIN JUDY BUNCE

*Butch Baluyut received tokudo priest ordination at City Center from Shojun Mel Weitsman on July 12, 2003. Mel is shown cutting the shura, or the last hairs, on Butch's head. Vicki Austin assisted in the ceremony.*

populace to effect changes in society, except through revolution. In this country we have the vote, and less than half of us use it. We have the privilege of being able to influence what happens here. This is a valuable tool, a gift which it is incumbent upon us to use. Otherwise change will not happen. This is the option that Buddhists in the past did not have. Therefore, Dogen could tell the monks not to be concerned with worldly affairs. The rights and privileges we have here must not be taken for granted and are constantly being challenged. If they are not protected they will be lost before we know it.

I gave a talk at Green Gulch two weeks after 9/11. Someone asked "What can we as a monastic community do to help people in this time of crisis?" I said that through zazen and monastic practice we are showing people that there is a way. By being an example of frugality, honesty, wisdom, compassion and peaceful harmony, we are making a vital contribution to the world. A guest at the talk said "I can't tell you how much I

appreciate this community being here, and for what it offers. When I come here from the world outside, it's like a place of sanity and a refuge. I feel that I can take a deep breath and let go."

This practice is our offering to the sanity and stability of the world. There is no way to measure the far-reaching effect of zazen's radiant light throughout the ten directions.



## *Parting Tears: An Experience at Tassajara*

*Earthlyn Marselean Manuel  
July 2003*

*Zen Center values diversity, but is not always successful in realizing it.  
Here is an example where it happened.—Micheal Wenger*

*AFTER ONLY ONE DAY AT TASSAJARA*, it was clear to me that the people I encountered at the monastery were truly practicing their love for humanity. How did I know this? I felt it. I experienced a fearlessness of difference and a sincere witnessing of human nature through our fear, confusion, joy, and sadness. I felt welcomed and appreciated for having been born into this world and for having a willingness to practice a way of life in which everything was a meditation.

Prior to departing from my home in Oakland, even though I would be joined with other People of Color, I still feared that my dark African skin would stand out and that I would be mostly alone with the mountains, the creek, and the trees. I had to ask myself, "Then why are you going?" The answer, "I don't know." However, once I arrived at Tassajara, I wondered how I could ever have been afraid that I would not be embraced? I was not the only dark African skin; and I was hardly alone. The majority of teachers and students opened their hearts to me and the others in my sangha in a way I have imagined the world—everyone seeing the value of each living being. There were hard times—times of misunderstanding—but these hard times did not become the whole of the experience. In the end, I could be

alone with the mountains, the creek, and the trees, but not because of being ignored or put aside, but because it was a choice. I greeted a young African-American man who was practicing to become a priest; I was so proud of him, I told him, "I'm glad you are here." And he said, "I'm glad you're here too." I knew he meant the whole People of Color sangha. While we ate our last meal and began our farewells, a man who seemed to be from a family of Midwestern farmers, someone whom I might not have ever encountered, began to cry as we said our goodbyes. I cried as well, simply because I felt that he was truly going to miss us.



JUDITH KEENAN

*San Francisco Zen Center People of Color Sangha at Tassajara. From left, Chinh Q. Nguyen, Ryan Nguyen, Josefina Hernandez, Chris Cruz, Earthlyn M. Manuel, Lyn Jung, Hilda Ryumon Gutiérrez Baldoquín and Cau Minh Thi Hong.*



GIB ROBINSON

## Actualizing Dharma Transmission

Lew Richmond  
City Center January 11, 2003

*THE OSTENSIBLE OCCASION* of my lecture today is my recently received dharma transmission from Sojun-roshi, Mel Weitsman.

In this Zen Center, when we say dharma transmission, most people understand that that's your official recognition as teacher. You get to wear a different-colored robe, carry sticks,

things like that—the outward manifestations. In my case, it's a little more complicated. To explain, I need to go back many years.

I came to the Berkeley zendo in 1967, and my first teacher was Mel, Sojun. I was a seminary student in Berkeley, and saw an ad in the *Berkeley Barb*, for Zen. So I'm one of those people who came to Zen through a newspaper ad—very American.

We all sat together in his living room, facing the wall, and one day I heard the rustling of material. Somebody had sat down in the head seat. I was close enough so I could hear his breathing. I turned around and it was Suzuki-roshi. So that was my first meeting with him. I was his student here until his death in 1971.

I have the dubious honor of being the most junior of all his ordines. I'm the 16th of his 16 ordained disciples. There is a tradition in Buddhism about the 16th disciple of the Buddha. He was so stupid, he couldn't get anything right, but eventually he was greatly enlightened; so I take some heart from that.

I lived here in this building and at Tassajara and Green Gulch. I see that people are following that same path. We have three great, beautiful centers to practice in, and you people are still doing that. I had a teaching role in the last few years at Green Gulch that culminated in my beginning the preparations for dharma transmission. That was twenty years ago.

Well, something happened. 1983 was not a good year for Zen Center, and that was the year I left. And to this day I think a lot of the old-timers don't really understand why I did that; and to tell you the truth, I don't really understand why either. I don't think I could tell you if you asked me today. But for the purposes of this talk, and for the purposes of elucidating



the reality of dharma transmission, I'm going to try, because I think it is relevant now, to all of you.

Many people think that I left in anger and disgust because of many things that happened during that time. That's probably true, to some extent, but I think that if I'm honest with myself, it was also time for me to leave. I want to talk a little bit about this time to leave because it's important in the life of a Zen practitioner, and it also relates to something else, which I'll call personal authenticity.

It was never really my idea to be ordained as a priest. But it was Suzuki-roshi's idea, and I loved him, so I went along with it. He ordained me and then died. I realized after I left Zen Center that among other things I was angry at him, too, for ordaining me and leaving me, so to speak. It sounds ungrateful to say you're angry at somebody for dying, but it's a very human reaction. It's a bad stroke of fate, and you're angry about it.

But I can't say that I left just because I was angry about things. After fifteen years here, doing the practice with great vigor and attention, I think the events of '83 were a kind of excuse or catalyst for me to go. At a certain point I felt I had developed a really bad case of cultural and spiritual indigestion. I'd swallowed it all and it didn't take, for a whole lot of reasons. One of these parts was my life as a musician. Another was that I had a family and a young child, and I don't think that my family life had at all been integrated or digested in my practice. That was a very experimental and new time with Buddhism in America, and the whole notion of family life was juxtaposed with a kind of outward asceticism and appearance of celibacy. There were lots of things like that in my life that I felt I needed time to integrate, and so I left. And after leaving, I took on a new kind of practice, the practice of divestiture, so to speak. I wanted to find out how much of all of this Zen business I could divest myself of. So I took off my robes, and I grew my hair, and I got a job in corporate America, and I didn't sit, and I didn't do any of the things that I used to do.

Not long after leaving, I got very sick. I had cancer, and nearly died, and through all of that, I discovered something about this "divestiture," that there were two things that I couldn't get rid of from this practice. One was the vows that I took when I was ordained. The other was my love for my teacher, Suzuki-roshi. He still, to this day, is the most important person in my life.

So those two things, my vows and my teacher, seemed to be ineradicable in some way, which was kind of a surprise. When I left, I had thought "I'm the boss; I can do anything I want." Well I couldn't, really. And that was an interesting and very sobering lesson: that there's something about this practice that doesn't depend on what you look like, the clothes you wear, the place you live, the kind of job you have, whether you have a wife or a partner or not, something deeper than all of that. I think that realization



*A work crew planes a fallen oak tree during the spring work period at Tassajara.*

culminated in my coming back and completing the dharma transmission which I began twenty years ago.

In the meantime, I'd done a lot of things. I've been a corporate executive; I still own my own software business; I'm still a musician; I have a wonderful family and a 28-year-old son. Dharma transmission between Sojun-roshi and myself has a totally different feeling than it did when I was preparing for it twenty years ago. The meaning was different. Mel described it as being willing to acknowledge myself as a teacher and be acknowledged as a teacher. He said, "Lew, you're a very creative and imaginative person, but it's good to do things with people." I really took that to heart. Mel is a wonderful teacher in that regard because he's so easy with people, and that really is the most important thing for any religious leader, to be with people. I think that a lot of what has changed within me is the willingness to once again be with the people here at Zen Center, which is my spiritual home, and let them be with me, and do things like give this sort of talk with my robes on.

There's something else, too. I think part of why I had such a strong case of indigestion back then is that I was very idealistic. I had a sense that religious corruption is everywhere in the West, but at least in this Zen world things are better. The ancestors that have brought us this tradition are really quite unusual people, they're special people, I thought. Probably that's true, but it's also true that it's always easier to idealize something outside of your own culture.

One of the things you do in dharma transmission every day is full bows to every one of the people in our lineage from Buddha to now. As you do it, you realize each bow is a whole lifetime. There are ninety-two of these people. Can you imagine that, a whole life summed up by one bow? And then you wonder how it really was, as compared to how the literature says it was. We've had serious trouble in getting this organization to survive and to prosper. We might think, "Back then it was better, people weren't like this." But I don't think that's true. I think that in any tradition there is the ideal and there's the human reality.

I think that in the history of Buddhism, there have been bad teachers; there's been betrayal; there have been robbers who come in and murder everybody in the temple; there have been wars; there have been famines. As I did those bows, it made me feel better to realize that I was in the company of the ancestors, people who tried very hard to continue the teaching of the Buddha in spite of everything.

But before I got to that point, I had to leave—in my case for twenty



*Meg and  
Elizabeth Levie.  
The Levie family  
recently moved  
from City Center  
to Green Gulch  
Farm.*

years. This is actually not so unique or strange. There is a tradition in Zen that after your formal training in the monastery is complete, you leave. You don't just leave to become some famous Zen teacher, you leave to be nobody.

Anyway, for better or for worse, that's what I did. I left completely, and was content to be nobody, at least in a Buddhist sense, for quite a while. And now I'm back and feeling pretty good about it. It's funny to come back to a place you haven't been to in a long time. All the trees are twenty years taller in the courtyard and yet, I look around and people are bustling up and down the hallways, making the food, going to zazen, doing almost exactly the same things I did. And I realize it goes on. One time I was here doing all this, and now other people are here. Whatever we may think about the health of the institution, there's something quite remarkable about creating a place like this where people can come for the dharma. It's not easy to do. But here it is.

One of the things I did during my time out in the world was hang out with American teachers from other Buddhist traditions, Vipassana, various Tibetan traditions. I wanted to find out what Buddhism looked like without the Japanese cultural coating. My koan was, "What is really the core practice that all of these traditions carry?" I felt that if I knew that, I could come back here and recognize in our tradition what things were authentically Buddhist, and what things were more cultural.

So, for example, the robe, this brown piece of cloth—that's universal, though the color varies. In every Buddhist tradition, there's some idea of a robe that you wear over your left shoulder. But this [pointing to black koro-mo], this is Chinese court clothing from the 13th century; you won't see this in Tibet, you won't see this in Burma. And inside, this is Japanese, a kimono. The Japanese things are culturally specific.

But it's interesting that the sense of transmitting the dharma, the sense of recognizing the next generation of carriers of the dharma—that's not culturally specific at all, it is universal. You see that in all the other traditions; there is some formal and informal way that dharma transmission occurs in the Tibetan traditions, in the Vipassana tradition, in all the other traditions. So that is actually more fundamental, I think, than priesthood, which in our particular lineage is rather important.

So when I finished the dharma transmission ceremony and all that went with it, I realized this transmission is one of the core things that all the Buddhist traditions have. I was ordained as a priest, and inside I still feel like one, and my intention is to continue to be responsible for transmitting the Buddhadharma to America. I'm particularly interested in transmitting it at a level which will impact the society right now. But whether I am a priest or not, I'm now a carrier, a vessel of the Dharma. That's what transmission means.

But it took a long time for me to be willing to do that. I had to work through a lot of feeling, a lot of internal difficulty and conflict. This is also not unusual; this is also an integral stage of practice. Those of us who come to Buddhism in America tend not to be too comfortable with conflict. We want a quiet place where people could be kind to one another, a kind of refuge, or sanctuary from conflict. I think that it's very important. And one of the things that practice places are, if nothing else, are artificial worlds where the ordinary rough and tumble of conflict out in the world is attenuated so you can feel what it's like when people are actually kind to each other.

But in the end, I think that the most important role for Buddhists in the world is to know about conflict more than anyone. Nobody in the world knows how to deal with conflict. We've made almost no progress. In the Middle East we see people fighting over land and God. It's the same as it was in classical Greek times. You look at the solutions people come up with—revenge, more violence—it's the same as it was in 1000 BC. Maybe one of the reasons why Buddhadharma has suddenly sprouted, almost from nothing, in the West is because it's so necessary—because we need some tradition of wisdom that can help us understand a deeper way to deal with human conflict.

A training place like this one is a place in which conflict is rather artificially removed from the situation. Here we all bow to each other a lot. When you bow to somebody, it's very hard to kill them in the next instant. I think that part of this notion of being kicked out, or going out and being in the world, is you get to test how well the incubation has taken. You begin to realize that part of your responsibility includes modeling what you know against the reality of conflict; interpersonal conflict, institutional conflict, nation state conflict, the conflict that is everywhere. So in that sense my time away from Zen Center was a continuation of my training, my testing of it.

I actually think that Buddhist centers should be willing to open themselves up to a little more conflict within themselves. I think one of the reasons why things blew up so badly here in '83 is that we didn't know how to deal with the implicit, under-the-surface conflict that was there between people—the shadow, you might say, of the organization, the practice, the leader, the institution. People experienced things and couldn't talk about them. This is not healthy. This is what leads to things like what has happened in the Catholic church. It's secret; the priests know best; don't say anything, etc.

In the beginning we didn't know; we just copied what Suzuki-roshi and the Japanese teachers brought. And that was necessary. But now I'm gratified to see, not just in this center but in many Buddhist centers, that we're getting through that phase of imitative practice and we're starting to be more ourselves. This is good. One of the things that has to happen for

practice to really flower, to really work, is your whole being has to come to it, you can't leave things out. This is the maturing of practice.

There's a great story about a student at Tassajara in the early days. Tassajara students ate with oryoki bowls and had a very strict vegetarian diet, mostly rice and beans and tofu. But they had town trips and you could buy all manner of candy and goodies to keep in your cabin. So if you looked at what people really ate, it was a combination of very strict monastery food in the zendo and then in their cabins, peanut butter and Twinkies. Well, this student felt very guilty about it. He felt that he was putting on an act to eat that way in the zendo, and then have his Reese's peanut butter cups in his room. So one day at midnight, he brought all of his town trip food, all of his candy, into the zendo. He sat down in zazen, he opened his bowls and he put all the candy in his bowls and he ate them that way, with all the chants and everything. I find that very impressive, that he had the courage to do that, and the realization that he wanted to bring who he really was to his cushion. He didn't want to just be an artificially good Zen monk, he wanted to be himself.

I think that was partly why I left, too. I didn't have a chance to be all of who I was here. The circumstances weren't right, so I spent many years slowly incorporating, testing out, asking, "Does my practice really reach that area?" Some of the first things I noticed when I went into the corporate world and got a job were, (a) how angry people were a lot of the time and (b) how often they expressed it, and (c) how much that was kind of alright! Very different than here. I'm not saying it was OK. Some of this anger was quite destructive. But you would go into a meeting, and people would pound on the table, they'd yell, they'd express themselves, and I started to do it too. And I thought, well, I'm feeling much more like myself, all my fifteen years of Zen training hasn't totally eliminated my capacity to get angry, and it felt kind of like a relief. I didn't feel like I wanted to show anything of my Buddhist years in that situation, but it's interesting that somehow, over time, people saw it. They would come into my office and close the door and they would say, "I'd like to talk to you about something; I can't really talk to anybody else." I didn't want to be a priest, but people seemed to want me to be a kind of priest, in that situation. I began to realize that that was another way in which what I had done here couldn't be easily rubbed off—that it changes you, it changes you in some fundamental way. And other people can see it.

I guess I could say part of what's different now is I don't feel like I'm putting on a performance anymore. Suzuki-roshi once said, "When you are you, then Zen is Zen." What does that mean? Many times things your teacher says take twenty or thirty years to figure out—not because it's that mysterious, but because he's speaking from a place where you have to have lived it; you can't just understand it with your mind.

Suzuki-roshi loved certain ungrammatical expressions in English. He had certain phrases, one of which was, "Looks like good." "Looks like good" is a genuine koan. It's something you can't quite get your head around. When I was doing dharma transmission, there were various people here who were assigned to help me, and there were things they were supposed to do—put down mats, light candles, and stuff. They didn't do it quite the way it was supposed to be—maybe forgot the candle, or the incense wasn't lit, or something—so maybe it didn't look so good in a certain way, if you think that good means somehow doing it a certain way. But in reality it was very good. It was wonderful because they were so sincere and helpful. Their so-called "mistakes" weren't mistakes at all. Just the way it went as we expressed our sincerity together.

There's a very strong temptation in Buddhist practice to fall into "looks like good." You want your outward appearance to be amenable to people. You want to be well regarded. You want to be liked. You don't want to make a mistake. That's OK for a while, but there's a certain point at which "looks like good" can't be sustained and something else takes its place.

Some of you may know that I was very ill a few years ago, and my brain was damaged, and so I didn't look good at all. My behavior was very strange and I cried all the time and I was frightened of everything. All of that went away after a while, but at the time, I just felt so humiliated that I didn't look at all good to anybody, least of all to myself. I got to learn how much I really still depended on looking good in some way or being able to do things well. One of the big lessons of that time was, to my immense surprise, that people would love me even if I didn't look so good. You can learn a lot from being humiliated, just as you can learn a lot from being deeply betrayed.

I've been connected to my root teacher, Sojun-roshi, Mel Weitsman, for thirty-five years. I can't explain how it is that I'm willing to be with him in this context. It's mysterious from the outside, but on the inside it's just the mystery that goes with any intimate human activity. When we begin to understand that, we're on a path that lasts forever. And as I already mentioned, I discovered, when I left here, somewhat to my chagrin, that you can't get rid of your vows and your practice. So don't start unless you're willing to see it through. And I see for all of you it's already too late.



JUDITH KEENAN

Path to the  
bathhouse at  
Tassajara

## *A Lecture on Genjo Koan*

Shunryu Suzuki-roshi  
Sokoji Temple, San Francisco  
March 1966

*IN OBSERVING YOUR PRACTICE*, I notice it is just a small part of your life. You think it may be better to do something else instead of practicing zazen. But our practice is not like that. It is not one of twenty-four hours.

If I scold you, you may go. If I give you some candy, you will stay. I dare say you are impossible, like a child. You lack the confidence to study Buddhism as a whole life study. You think you can get away from Zen, from this zendo. Actually, once you enter, that's it. Some day you'll have to come back. I know that. I tried to get out of it many times, but I couldn't.



I may say, "You are bad now." But what is bad? Who is bad? Someone who is good is bad now. Sometimes I say, "You are very good." But someone who is not good enough is good enough. Same thing, isn't it? Doesn't make any sense, "good" or "bad."

In Japan, young people say, "This is *absolutely* good." It is just emphasizing good. But when we say "absolutely good," it is the same thing as "absolutely bad." When we say "absolutely good," it does not mean good or bad. It is something more than good or bad. So in this sense, absolutely good is absolutely bad.

Sometime we say, comparatively, "This is good, this is bad." These two ways of understanding life are necessary. Sometimes we have to compare something to the other. This is very important, but this comparatively good or bad life has created a lot of difficulties. This comparison is the basic attitude of science and philosophy. It intellectualizes our life. When you intellectualize life, it will eventually come to a dead end. That is why we have difficulties currently. Originally it is just comparatively good. We are comparatively better than some people. That's all. But nowadays we say, "Absolutely good." Here is the big mistake. Even emotionally, that is a big mistake. Nothing is absolutely good.

When you say "absolutely good," it does not mean good anymore. It is the same thing as bad. If you understand or feel it in this way, when you say "absolutely good," that is all right. But when you say, "absolutely good" emphasizing something comparatively good, that is a big mistake. You are forcing your way. You are depriving the freedom of others. This is a big mistake. Dogen-zenji says in "Genjo Koan:"

*That we move ourselves and understand all things is ignorance. That things advance and understand themselves is enlightenment.*

He is talking of the complete understanding of life. What is ignorance and what is enlightenment? What is good and what is bad?

We say "ignorance" or "enlightenment" without knowing what is ignorance and what is enlightenment. But when we say "ignorance" or "enlightenment," we should know what is ignorance in its true sense and what is enlightenment in its true sense. "That things advance and understand themselves is enlightenment." When we have no particular concrete idea of good and bad, we expose ourselves and accept criticism; that is enlightenment.

We may do many things intellectually, intentionally, in the realm of consciousness, but most of these activities are more unconscious activity than conscious activity. What is the true expression of yourself—conscious one or unconscious one? Of course, ninety-nine percent of your activity is unconscious, and that is the true expression of yourself. If you say, "I am

right," that is just a small part of your expression. As you understand yourself, we don't know what we are exactly. "Don't know" is right.

Those two statements about ignorance and enlightenment are based on one big understanding of life. Enlightenment is something which will happen to us sometime, and ignorance is something which will come over us sometime. We are a big box including enlightenment and ignorance.

So in our everyday life, there is enlightenment and ignorance. You cannot escape from ignorance to attain enlightenment, because enlightenment is not somewhere else. Dogen says, to know what is ignorance is enlightenment. And to be ignorant about enlightenment is ignorance. Something good is something bad. If I say something is good, that something should be bad. Because it is the same thing if I say, "Good morning. You came on time this morning. That's very good." That means you do not come on time usually. If I scold you, "Why didn't you come on time?" it means you come almost every morning on time. So it's the same thing. We should not be disturbed by the words "ignorance or enlightenment." If we understand ourselves completely, there is no special thing as enlightenment or ignorance. Ignorance is enlightenment, enlightenment is ignorance.

*It is buddhas who understand ignorance.*

Dogen says, "It is buddhas who understand ignorance"—their own ignorance. Buddha was enlightened about his ignorance, and it is people who are ignorant of enlightenment. So there is no difference between buddha and people—same thing, same human being. But buddhas understand their ignorance, and we are ignorant of enlightenment. But, if I say this, then there will be no need to practice zazen. If we are the same as buddha, why should we practice zazen? When you understand this philosophy or statement just intellectually, you will have this problem.

Dogen continues:

*It is people who are ignorant of enlightenment. Further, there are those who are enlightened beyond enlightenment, and those who are ignorant of ignorance.*

"Enlightenment beyond enlightenment." If you retain consciousness of enlightenment, you know, that is not good enough. So you should go beyond enlightenment. If you attain enlightenment, that enlightenment means enlightenment above enlightenment of ignorance. So eventually you will go towards ignorance, you know. When you say, "I have attained enlightenment consciously," that consciousness is delusion. About what have you attained enlightenment? You attained enlightenment about

ignorance. What you grasp is ignorance, not enlightenment. There is nothing to understand but ignorance for the enlightened person. There is nowhere to go—enlightenment or ignorance. So if you attain enlightenment, you have to go back to ignorance, because there is no other way for you to go [laughs].

So “enlightenment beyond enlightenment” means conscious enlightenment is not good enough. You have to give up enlightenment at the moment you attain enlightenment. When you actually attain enlightenment, what you grasp is ignorance. When you understand how ignorant you have been—that is enlightenment.

So it is impossible for an enlightened person to forget about enlightenment. It is impossible because you have found something which you have. So how can you forget about enlightenment? You should abide in enlightenment forever with people who have the same nature as your own.

If you think “I attained enlightenment” (although most haven’t attained enlightenment yet), “I am the only person who attained enlightenment,” that is a *big* mistake. That is just delusion. One didn’t grasp anything but delusion. It will soon vanish from memory, from experience.

Even though it looks like we are doing the same thing, there is some difference between the people who attain enlightenment and those who haven’t. But for an enlightened one, constant effort will be continued with people wherever one is.

*And those who are ignorant of ignorance.*

“Ignorant of ignorance” means people eventually will attain enlightenment. Those people who are ignorant of ignorance are just ignorant of their own ignorance. You don’t feel that you have the same quality or same nature as an enlightened person. Eventually, as long as you have the same nature as an enlightened person, once you become enlightened of your ignorance you will be saved.

*When buddhas are truly buddhas, they are not necessarily aware of themselves as buddhas.*

If there is someone who has attained enlightenment they will go back to ignorance, and although someone is ignorant of ignorance, eventually that person will become enlightened about ignorance. It is not necessary, even, to become aware of your buddha-nature. We have it. The difference is those who are awakened by their true nature, or they are ignorant of ignorance. That is the difference.

So strictly speaking, it is not necessary to be aware of ourselves to be Buddha. Same thing. That is why I say you will come back. Even though

you are a thousand miles away from this zendo, you are included in this zendo. With this understanding, whether you are here or not is not the point. Do you understand?

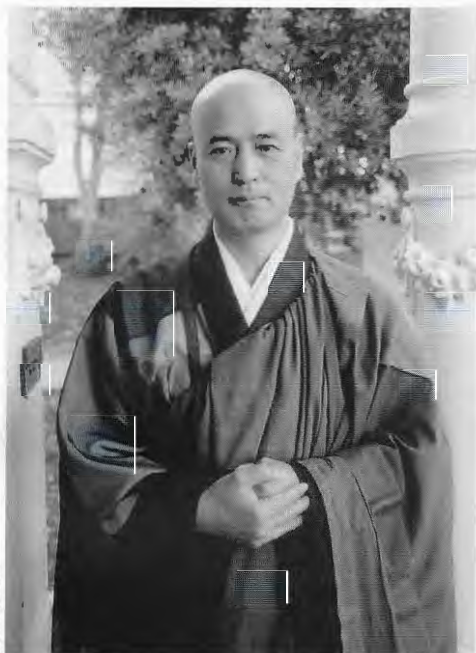
However, you may ask me what is the purpose of practice? I think you are relieved. You have forgotten what you had on your shoulders now. Actually, there is nothing special for you to do. Why then did Dogen-zenji strive for many years, until he attained enlightenment and dropped off his idea of mind and body? He says, "Flowers fall with our attachment, and weeds grow with our detachment." In spite of detachment, the flower will fall.

This is life. And if you do not try to understand this point fully, those profound teachings are nothing for us. So actually, it is necessary to practice—to continue our practice in the realm of duality as unenlightened people. We should all be unenlightened people, and we should strive for enlightenment. We should do that. While you are striving for it, you will really understand what Dogen meant. Intellectually you have understood it already. But do you remain doing nothing in a sunny place eating what you want? Can you do that? Can you always lie down in your bed reading some interesting stories? Can you do that? No, we cannot. For a while you can do it. When we are tired of reading, we will go out, or we will work. And if we earn some money to be lazy, we will come back from work. If you continue your life in this way, you will not find out any meaning in your life.

Someday you will have deep regret with what you have been doing;

you will be disgusted with yourself. And you feel unable to help people, or unable to love anyone. You will be completely isolated from this world.

So you may care for something good—something which is absolutely true, and try to escape from this world, or commit suicide. This is what we do with our life. But there is a way to resume a deeper understanding of life and work with people without any prejudice,



JUDITH KEENAN

*This spring Rev. Shohaku Okamura left City Center for Bloomington, Indiana, where he will lead the Sanshin Zen community.*

without any discrimination, and help each other with mutual understanding. The only way is to share our joy of a deeper understanding of life with people, and to participate in worldly life with more sincere effort. Then you will be a perfect human being as well as a perfect Buddha's disciple.

A new student who was studying Indian philosophy asked, "I read many books about Zen, and they use the term 'oneness of duality.' But actually, what is 'oneness of duality?'" I had no time to discuss with him the oneness of duality. He understood intellectually pretty well what is the oneness of duality. I wanted to help him, but I knew that it is impossible to help him. Until he suffers, until he tries to find out what *is* the oneness of duality, it will take a pretty long time. By long effort, his understanding will be better and better, until, "Oh, this is oneness of duality." How you reach this kind of understanding is to suffer in your actual life, or to think more about your life, or to practice zazen.

So to practice Zen in a noisy place is itself a very dualistic way, a way of the noisiness of the outside [loud traffic noises can be heard]. Try to be calm. This is the most extremely dualistic way, but in this effort there is, you know, a big hint.

So after all those sharp, profound teachings, Dogen writes:

*However, flowers fall with our attachment, and weeds grow with our detachment.*

He comes back to our actual life without any thinking, and where we should make our effort.

*When we see things and hear things with our whole body and mind, our understanding is not like a mirror with reflections, nor like water under the moon. If we understand one side, the other side is dark.*

These three lines are impossible. You cannot do anything with them. It takes a long time to understand this. "When we see things and hear things with our whole body and mind"—without any idea of enlightenment or ignorance—when we *do* something and go beyond ourselves, this is to be enlightened

"Our understanding is not like a mirror with reflections." You say the moon is in the water, but it is not like that. When you watch the beautiful moon, or waves of water, or calm silent still water, that is the moon. So when you see the moon in the water, that is the moon. When you see the moon in the sky, that is the moon. You don't see the moon on the water. It is impossible to see the moon in the water and the moon in the sky at the same time.

The only way is to appreciate the beauty of the moon in the water or

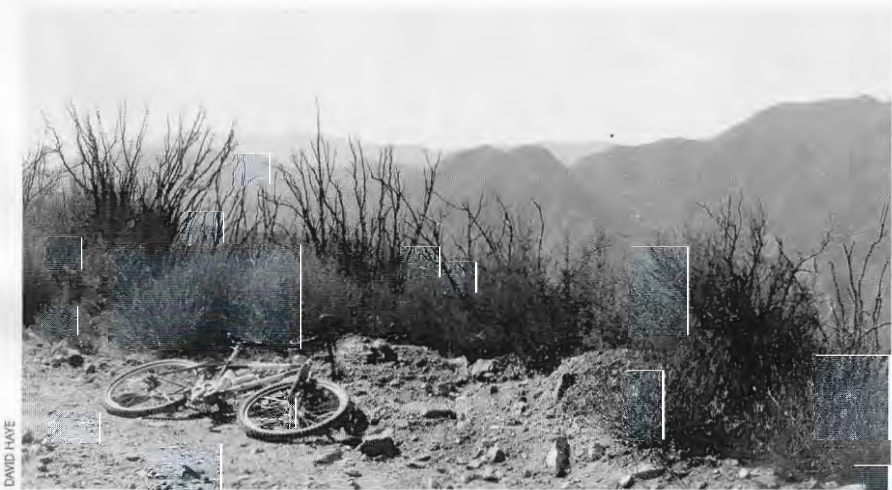
the moon in the sky. But intellectually we say "enlightenment" or "ignorance." It means you are very busy watching. What shall I do? If you sit here, you have a disturbance in your mind. If you are at home, you want to sit. When you sit, your mind is there. When you are there your mind is here, and you are going back and forth. Beautiful moon. Very busy moon.

Dogen says it is not like a mirror with reflection, nor like water under the moon. If we understand one side—sky or the water—or some images in the mirror, we cannot see both sides at once. If we understand one side, the other side is dark. That is two. But usually you want to see the one side only, having some idea or some desire for the other side. So you cannot accept what you are doing. You always have something else in your mind. The perfect way is just to watch one side. That is enough. This is pretty strict. Before you understand that, you will say this is the perfect teaching. It will take time because you have something opposite in your mind always.

Actually, Zen is something more than just sitting in the cross-legged position. But if you understand something more, you have to practice it in the cross-legged position. There is no other way. One side is enough.

You may say, just to sit on your black cushion will not do anything for you. You cannot solve the problems of our life by just sitting. You may say so, but it means you are trying to watch both sides—up and down. Pretty busy. In that way, your practice will not work. If you say, "I have to sit. That's all. Period." There is no need for you to think of the meaning of zazen, even, if you would just sit. That will work out beautifully. This is our zazen.

So one thing is enough. One practice is enough.



DAVID HAVE

*View from the road into Tassajara*



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