



Community Bulletin

Zen Community of Oregon and Great Vow Zen Monastery

April, 2006

Zen Off the Cushion

“Practice concentrated in activity is a hundred, a thousand, even a million times superior to practice done in a state of inactivity.”

- Hakuin



Words from the Teacher...

How to practice off the cushion? This is the big challenge for Zen students in the west. You arise from your cushion after 30 minutes of serenely following your breath and two minutes later you are tested — a stubbed toe, missing keys, a vomiting child, impossible deadlines, a stopped up toilet, an angry client. What happened to your calm, your poise, your lucid mind, and your warm and open heart, full of love for all mankind?

How can we learn to sustain clarity and kindness in every sort of circumstance? How do we carry the mind of zazen into every activity? This is a fundamental question for all of us, regardless of whether we are lay or ordained.

One of the major differences between Zen in Asia and Zen in America and Europe is that Zen in the west is predominately a lay movement. From what we read in the Pali canon, the Buddha did not instruct his lay followers to meditate. Actually, he taught them practice off the cushion. He said to observe the precepts, to support the ordained with donations and to be kind and generous with those in your care. He gave advice specific to living virtuously as employers and employees, husbands and wives, parents and children, as teachers and students.

In Asia this is the practice of most lay believers. They make frequent offerings to temples and monasteries. They may chant each morning in front of the family altar, and participate in special temple events and ceremonies. The first Japanese Zen teachers in America and Europe, Roshis Maezumi, Suzuki, Katagiri, and Soen, were raised in temples, and what they taught was monastic practice, zazen and ceremonies. They did not have much to say specifically about how to embody the enlightened life as a householder.

Monastic practice follows a detailed daily schedule of practices that are often hundreds of years old. Lay people have to be very creative about their practice and adapt it to the realities of modern life. In the course of practicing as a lay person for 20 years I discovered practices that I could do anywhere, while driving a car, waiting to testify in court, in between patients, at Cub Scout meetings and while waiting in long lines at grocery stores. The monastic rules don't cover these situations.

The Monastery is beginning its fifth year, and seems solidly established. We are fulfilling our mission to raise Zen teachers for the next generation. Now the ZCO Board, the Sangha Council and the teachers are turning their attention again to the downtown sangha and pondering how better to support and deepen lay practice. We have been discussing the possibility of establishing a downtown practice house or center. All of us can contribute to this discussion and cause.



I have made a vow to spend the next few years writing several books that I hope will support and inspire householders. I am writing about the many ways I have found to infuse everyday life activities with mindfulness and appreciation. Because eating gives us at least three opportunities to practice each day, and because disordered eating is causing so much human suffering now, I have begun a book about Mindful Eating. This book is based on our popular Sacred Eating retreat. Because the Buddha taught generosity as the single most effective path to enlightenment, I have begun a book called Becoming Generous: What the Buddha Taught about Giving.

What about training lay practice leaders? There are lay people we call seniors, who have practiced diligently for 20 or 30 years, who consistently seek the guidance of teachers, who have set aside time to do as many long sesshin a year as possible, and who have supported their local sanghas loyally through the ups and downs inevitable to any group of humans. Many students turn to these experienced lay practitioners as a source of sage advice. Recognizing this, the national associations of Zen teachers are discussing how to train and recognize lay practice leaders.

Because small sitting groups are the grass roots foundation of Zen in America, Hogen and I are committed to training and empowering community lay leaders. The Sangha Council and the ZCO Board are also focusing on developing practical paths for serious lay practice.

On the cushion we open to the timeless and eternal aspect of our life through deep zazen. Off the cushion we enter the confusion of a life which is constantly changing, the urgency of a life that is minute by minute growing shorter. On the cushion we open to the perfection of each person and each thing as it is. Off the cushion there is so much work to be done to help lessen the suffering of the beings around us.



Whatever our sangha turns its collective attention to begins to flower. May we continue to deepen our zazen. May we continue to widen our practice of precepts and mindfulness in daily life. May our practice bring benefit to many.

Chozen Bays

Speaking of the Need for Lay Leaders...

In our sangha we are fortunate to have a senior practitioner with decades of experience practicing on and off the cushion, including training under several Zen teachers, both Japanese and American. For thirteen years Abby Mushin Terris has been the leader of the warm and lively sangha called the Corvallis Zen Circle. Two years ago she was recognized as a Dharma Holder. This means a person whose life activity is held in the context of dharma awareness, and one who holds the dharma out for others to experience and enjoy. A Dharma Holder is sanctioned to give practice interviews, public talks about practice, precepts classes and to lead short meditation retreats. (Note: To be acknowledged as a Dharma Holder is not Dharma transmission.)



Mushin serves as head of the Sangha Harmony Committee and is helping lead the Sangha Council in its exploration of how to strengthen lay practice. She is continuing her training through residential practice at the monastery and serves as a consultant to the teachers on issues of student training. Mushin also is responsible for the new look and enhanced content of our bulletin. Thank you Mushin!

Smoke Signals

by Chuck Ensoku Gleason

One of the things that has always struck me about Buddhism is its emphasis on the ordinary, on finding insight and wisdom in the everyday world around us. Perhaps the reason this appeals to me is that I pretty much like the everyday world, and tend to have limited appreciation for doctrines and zealots bent upon getting away from it. There are rich veins of quotidian practicality running through most Buddhist lineages; it is a practice conducive to being involved in living.

That said, there is an undeniable, powerful yet subtle thread connecting the “practices” we undertake as Buddhists with what happens when we are not engaging in them. What kept me coming back to zazen after I first encountered it twenty-odd years ago was exactly this linkage; it didn’t take too long to realize my life went differently (probably better) with zazen than without it.

In December I had a pretty powerful example of this. While indulging in Sunday night television (a thoroughly unenlightened alternative to going to the Dharma Center), Fran and I heard a small “pop” sound and noticed the lights dim. Minutes later we smelled smoke; a trip to the kitchen and a look down the basement stairs revealed a full-tilt house fire working its way up to the main floor. In the couple of minutes that followed we rounded up our dogs and headed outside as the fire blew out the electricity in the house. A passing neighbor called the fire department on his cell phone, and we found ourselves spectators in our very own disaster. Seven fire trucks appeared on the scene in short order, I showed them the best way to run hoses into the house and we watched and waited with a couple dozen neighbors on the corner across the street.

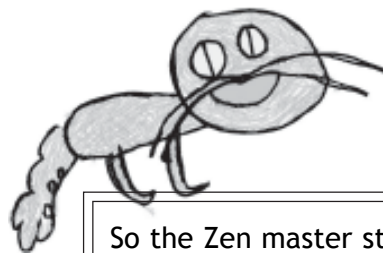
Eventually the firefighters found and rescued our two cats, we were invited to spend the night with our next door neighbors and we and our dogs were comfortably asleep by 11:00.

(Continued on page 11)



“Bearing in his right paw the Shovel that digs to the truth beneath appearances; cuts the roots of useless attach-ments, and flings damp sand on the fires of greed and war.”

- Gary Snyder, *Smokey the Bear Sutra*



So the Zen master steps up to the hot dog cart and says: “Make me one with everything.”

The hot dog vendor fixes a hot dog and hands it to the Zen master, who pays with a \$20 bill. The hot dog vendor puts the bill in the cash drawer and closes the drawer.

“Where’s my change?” asks the Zen master. The hot dog vendor responds: “Change must come from within.”

The Calculus of Picking and Choosing

by Greg Hill

Sosan's great poem, *Affirming Faith in Mind*, makes the promising claim that "the Great Way is not difficult for those who do not pick and choose," and urges us to "cast our preferences aside." As I have chanted this text, the "Way" has at times seemed very difficult, a vision from the distant land of Zen enlightenment. Still, I remain inspired by the compass heading of awakening. And after some years of practice, I have also come to treasure the daily, vivid, practical applications of insight I have gained on the cushion. And so I ask: How would Hakuin teach Calculus?

Among other things, I am a mathematician and a teacher of mathematics. I have explored the initial wonder of geometry with sixth graders, guided mathematics graduate students through the intricacies of the modular representation theory of finite groups; and calmed the algebraic fears of laid-off diesel mechanics retooling at community colleges—fifty-year-olds trembling before the mysterious "x". Anxiety, fear, hope, determination and boredom are all present in mathematics classrooms. So how does sesshin help here? I'll tell just one story, a typical student episode from last semester's calculus course.

Charlie is a budding engineer, taking calculus in his first year at college. His ROTC scholarship pays for him to become an engineer in exchange for military service. Although he passed his high school calculus course with a B+, he is struggling in mine.

I had posted my office hours, announced them in class, and encouraged students to come for just this kind of situation. But Charlie didn't come.

This is typical. Charlie is a young man in uniform, fully identified with his good-at-math, strong- and-independent image—but with a fragile confidence in this image. I asked him, "Charlie, when do you have free time on Wednesday?" Suspicious of my intention, he answered quietly "Um, after 10 a.m. up until lunch, and then after my last class at 3:45." "Good. I have time at 4 p.m. I'll see you in my office then."

Yes, I *commanded* him to show up, thereby relieving him of the embarrassment of asking for help. He could tell his classmates, "Yeah, I went to Dr. Hill's office—he made me." Compassion is not about picking and choosing actions that let me see myself as a "nice" person. In this case, the Great Way was about taking a breath, sitting with the situation, and removing obstacles, so we could move forward together.

Charlie came to my office right at 4 p.m. He was having trouble with a problem involving rational functions, fractions that have x's all over the place, up above, down below. As we talked, I realized that



Charlie did not understand fractions. He didn't know how to add them, multiply them, find the common denominator, cross multiply... it was all a confusing jumble to him. And more fundamentally, he wasn't really sure what a fraction really is.

This was something he just never "got" back in sixth grade, when confusion was not allowed, and he'd been hiding it ever since.

(Continued on page 10)

Life Off the Cushion

by Delia Shugetsu Garigan



Once more I've chased the friend
with too much clatter
clouding the air with thoughts
that little matter.

Turning to silence again
I long to still
mysterious intoxication.

- Diana Keishin Saltoon-Briggs

To me, “life off the cushion” is life outside the monastery. It’s a life where I can eat whatever I like, where I have my own room, with a door; where the people I encounter may or may not have much insight into why they do the things they do, buy the things they buy, or drive the things they drive; where fears and assumptions masquerade as political and social truth. It’s a pretty wild place.

Zen is about responding to the circumstances of our lives. When we have no money, we get a job. In my case I am working part time in a quirky women’s clothing store. I won’t work in a clothing store forever. But I need money, and there’s plenty to learn.

When I go to the store, I put on clothing that makes me look more like a fashion consultant and less like a little Zen waif. I will help customers, or get ignored, or have my ear talked off. I will be asked to fetch thirty garments for someone who buys none of them. I will work alone, or without a break, for long stretches of time. Like any work, it can be satisfying, or infuriating, depending on the mind you bring to it.

The nicest part of the job is helping customers choose gifts for people they love. It’s very sweet to watch a little girl choosing the perfect earrings for her step mom. The hardest part of the job is the shoplifting; there are some typical behaviors to watch for, but there’s only so much you can do, especially when the store is busy.

It’s so sad to come across a discarded tag or an empty hanger, and to know that some deluded person has created

(Continued on page 11)

Artists and poets!

Consider sharing your artwork and poetry with the sangha for future editions of this publication. Hush the inner critic and offer the fruits of your creative practice to delight and edify.

Please e-mail submissions to Jogen at sourcemode@yahoo.com

Sangha Spotlight: Larry Trussell

CB: Have you always felt at home with Zen practice and if not, how long did it take to recognize this as your path?

Fuho: A great—and humorous—expression that I love is, “I am of two minds about this.” For example, being a member of the mainstream Western scientific establishment, I often look around at the zendo and all its inhabitants and think “What in God’s name am I doing here?” Then the other mind kicks in and finds this to be a perfectly natural way of living life.

I certainly have had enough time for it to start to feel natural. I first encountered Zen 28 years ago when I met Joko Beck at a tai-chi class. This dear Bodhisattva made practice available to me in a very non-pushy and clearheaded way, introducing me to the San Diego group and Chozen, and to ZCLA and Maezumi Roshi.

At the time, I was definitely looking for a way to explore a long-standing yearning for a meditative tradition. So when Joko took me to my first sitting, I was completely hooked. But being hooked is not always what it seems. In fact, no starry-eyed rapture with Dharma set the course of my life after that. After a few years, I began to sense the disparity between what I thought I was supposed to “achieve” in the practice and how I really felt. As one monk at ZCLA told me “Now you’ve got a tiger by the tail.” I was to spend a very long time looking into what this tradition is about, and what my life is about.

During that period, I left formal Zen practice, coming back—after quite some time—when I began to feel that my direction was not quite right. The practice elements of zazen and precepts eventually seemed a more sane foundation for a life than the standards

some of my peers and colleagues were living by.

What I received from my youthful exposure to Zen was a training in how a person can live, a training which stayed with me (the hook!) at a deeper level. As I age, as my mortality becomes more apparent, and the stresses of life more continual, this deeper grounding is here when I need it.

CB: Would you say something about your current relationship to practice?

I am 49 years old and I sincerely feel new to practice, and unaccomplished. I do feel lucky to have been drawn to it and to have had sanghas there to guide me. I am amazed at the strength of my fellow sangha members. I am challenged by many aspects of practice, and by the questions practice inspires. Sesshin only gets harder for me, yet it is always rewarding.

More than ever, I find Zen, and Buddhism in general, to be an incredible kick at both the intellectual and experiential level. I wonder where this Way will lead

me.

But most of all I wonder how someone like me, a very busy layperson, can ultimately deepen practice and really make this tradition the core of life. What are the models for such a life? Are there areas where Dharma and modern life will not merge? How can I know what aspects of my life need care and discernment, and how can I realize change by bringing awareness to these aspects?

One thing I have learned is that the most meaningful answers can come by themselves, just from living life with awareness and good intention. But I think the Buddha may have already mentioned something about this...



Sangha NEWS

by Yuko Krieger



Ceremonies

Within our sangha there are a number of ways to formalize one's practice and commitment to the Dharma. The first level of outer commitment is to take the Five Precepts in a Wagesa ceremony. On December 15th, 2005 at the Portland Dharma Center a Wagesa ceremony was held for sangha members **Cibyl Kavan** and **Richard Ballentine**. May we all continue to support them in their commitments to follow the precepts of non-killing, non-stealing, not misusing sexuality, non-lying and not becoming intoxicated. Thank you, Richard and Cibyl, for your sincere practice.

On December 8th after Rohatsu sesshin, **Ryushin Creedon's** ordination (or *tokudo*) ceremony was held at Great Vow. As a novice priest Ryushin will serve the monastery and downtown sangha for five years..

Flora and Fauna

As spring arrives the monastery grounds are greening and blossoming. Thanks to arborist **Jutta** who visited us from Germany by way of the Olympia Zen Center, the orchard trees are healthy and pruned for the season ahead. . . **Genmyo**, the monastery's gardener, is at Zen Mountain Monastery in New York for spring ango; he will return in April to a much more abundant garden than when he left! Lettuce and early spring produce are already beginning to bear in the greenhouse.



Speaking of the garden... it's time for a **Turkey Update**. Just before Thanksgiving three young wild turkeys mysteriously deposited themselves on the monastery grounds. It delighted the soul to see them standing by the kitchen door every morning awaiting their breakfast, trailing after outdoor walking meditators, pecking in the zendo windows during sesshin teisho, and nesting above the residents' dorm come evening. As they grew large and more rambunctious the potted flowers in front of the monastery began to be torn asunder – flower tops eaten as snacks, potting soil tossed about. The garden suffered a similar fate. Our three turkey friends – **Tetrazini**, **Tryptophan** and **Giblets** – loved to munch on the tender vegetable starts and mulched rows. During one retreat an incredible crash was heard within the building; Hogen and Ryushin found a stunned turkey (Giblets) in the main hallway and a turkey-shaped hole in one of the tall windows. A generous gift from **Bill Metz** enabled us to replace the window. Soon after this neighbor and sangha member **Jim Scott** offered the trio free run of his land; they were lured into the back of a truck and driven down the road to his house. Since then they have nestled down happily, and send their regards to all who may remember them. Ah, the good old days.

Monastery Residents

The flow of residents in and out of the monastery keeps things lively and fresh. People come into training for a period ranging anywhere between one month to five years (novice ordination). Residency is a wond-

(Sangha NEWS continued)

erful opportunity to delve more deeply into the practice, to live with the teachers and monastic community and to do regular sesshin.

This winter and spring Great Vow was/is graced by the presences of **Josh Munen Bartok** from Boston, **Friederike Eishin Boissevain** from Germany, **Alex Parmalee** from Nebraska, **Evan Wong** from California, **Walker Diebolt** from California, **Lisa Tetsugan Zummach** from Minnesota, and **Rita Morgan** from Northern Ireland. Along with these fine people, the core residential community continues to hold down the fort, providing a place of steady, deep practice for all those who come for retreats, workshops and visits to the monastery.



The ordinary and sacred
living together;
Dragons and snakes
all mixed up.

*(from A Zen Forest
translated by Soiku Shigematsu)*



Volunteer Work Program

Get into the rhythm of Great Vow. We are developing a volunteer work program that will provide the opportunity to deepen your practice in a quiet setting. Relish the opportunity to practice Zen off the cushion by helping maintain the grounds (cutting grass, whacking black-berries, trail maintenance, etc), in housekeeping (vacuuming, sweeping, etc.), in the garden (assisting in producing vegetable and flowers), and in ZenWorks (sewing, ceramics). Join us as we continue to bring forth this sacred space dedicated to peace and refuge by giving generously of your skills and life energy. Come for a morning, a day, or a weekend. Get to know the residents and enjoy the delicious monastery food. Those coming to do volunteer work are welcome to stay at Great Vow at no cost.

For additional information please contact me at Dconroy97217@yahoo.com

Peace,
Dan Conroy

Financial News

Thank you so much for your enthusiastic response to our 2005 year-end campaign. Over \$60,000 was donated to the Capital Campaign fund during the months of November and December.

We could not have anticipated such a generous response! Not only does this put us back on stable ground in terms of paying this years' mortgage and dealing with anticipated repairs, we are also able to move forward with the installation of the long-awaited heated floor in the zendo (details coming in the mail soon). ☺

In gassho,
Kojun Hull
Development Coordinator, ZCO/GVZM

Thank you

Marvin Windows - new Zendo windows
Virginia McGuinn & Lynn Moser - two beds, table, chairs, encyclopedia Britannica
Lynn Moser - hot-water urns
Bill Metz - new window

Membership

Welcome new ZCO members who have joined since October 2005. Thank you for joining our community. The steady growth we have seen in the past year has been a strong demonstration of how we manifest the Way. The presence of new members allows us to deepen our practice by sharing it, and provides a strong vessel for the dharma. It's really great to see more and more people interested in the Dharma and committing to inquiring into this wonderful mystery that we share.

Deston Denniston ♦ Dirk Dunfee ♦ Muir Ferdun
♦ Katherine Kane ♦ Bill Metz ♦ Jaimie
Peltzman ♦ Joe Rhinewine ♦ Steve Routon ♦
Banjo Weymouth ♦ Allen Whitaker-Emrich ♦
Lisa Tetsugan Zummach

In gassho,
Alex Rudinsky



Tryptophan

Worms

(Traditional)

The worms crawl in and the worms crawl out
The ones that go in are lean and thin
The ones that crawl out are fat and stout
Your eyes fall in and your teeth fall out
Your brains come tumbling down your snout
Be merry, my friends, be merry

Sung by Hoben after Parinirvana sesshin



GVZM Wish List

World peace
High quality garden trowels
Commercial vacuum cleaner
White towels & wash cloths
White single bed sheet sets
Matching bedspreads for guest area
Large size industrial doormats
Bedside lamps
Adobe “In Design” for Windows

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(Greg Hill's piece, continued)

He made his way through a high school calculus class using a combination of memorization, technological crutches, tricks and excuses. Very quietly, I asked Charlie, “Do you want to see a cool way to visualize fractions?” He was embarrassed, but he said “Sure.” So we drew pizzas and bars and looked at fractions the same way I do with sixth graders. Not only did he “get” it, he absolutely melted with relief.

So where is the Zen in this story? Most university mathematics classrooms are driven by the syllabus. The judgment is: the farther you get through the text, the better job you’ve done as a teacher. The course begins at A, moves through B, C... and ends R, or T if you have time.

But the art of teaching is seeing clearly where a student actually is, and then helping them to move forward. That may seem obvious, but let me assure you it takes all the heart and mind I can muster to do a decent job at this simple task. My practice on the cushion is crucial here. I have to “cast preferences aside” over and over again.

“Was that a good breath...? *Drop that judgment!*”

“He should know how to add fractions, he’s a college student.... *Drop that expectation!*”





Contest!

Can you think of a **new name** for this publication? If so you can win a bunch of free stuff! Old computer keyboards, used car oil, broken glass, and much more! No really, you can win a free Weekend Retreat at Great Vow Zen Monastery. Send your ideas to Abby Mushin Terris at abbydharma@gmail.com.

(Shugetsu's piece, Continued)

terrible karma for herself. One girl, who had been acting suspiciously, returned to the store with an eighty-dollar shirt she said had "fallen into her bag." It was an extremely awkward situation. But, having done the wrong thing, all your options are painful.

Most of what happens in the store is formalized. There are the rituals of offering assistance, answering the phone, ringing people up, and running the credit card machine. We tag merchandise, straighten the racks, and greet the UPS man. In spare moments, I fold and dust and sweep and straighten the racks. It's like living in an altar.

(Follow Shugetsu's adventures at <http://shugetsu.blogspot.com>)



Kojun Hull



(Chuck's piece continued)

That's a much-abbreviated account, but its matter-of-factness accurately reflects how we were (amazingly) able to experience the event. The weeks that followed were filled with sorting through ashes as we identified possessions, met with the insurance company, reviewed preliminary plans with contractors, and moved to a house just across the street that we were (amazingly) able to rent. It was a lot of work, especially for Fran who took on the mantle of Chief Restoration Officer. While there has been difficulty, discouragement, frustration and exhaustion there's been a consistent undercurrent of calmness as we've worked through the challenges.

Some part of me recognizes that this is what practice is really about, the subtle shifts that happen at our deepest levels that prepare us for the tough stuff. We hope to return to our home around the end of April; meantime I'll likely spend at least some time on the cushion.



Q: Why don't Buddhists vacuum in the corners?
A: Because they have no attachments.



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ZCO Board meetings

May 7, June 11, July 30,
August 20, Oct. 15, Dec. 17
All Welcome!

E-mail info@greatvow.org to confirm time and place.

GVZM Sesshin Schedule, April - December, 2006

April 17 - 23 - Boundless Mind led by Hogen Bays
May 15 - 21 - Denkoe led by Dharma Rain Zen Center
June 19 - 25 - Loving Kindness led by Chozend Bays
July 17 - 23 - The Endless River led by Hogen Bays
No sesshin in August
Sep. 22 - Oct. 1 - Longing for the Ancient Way led by Hogen Bays
October 16 - 22 - Three Virtues and Six Tastes led by Chozen Bays
November 13 - 19 - Generosity led by Hogen Bays
December 3 - 10 - Rohatsu led by ZCO, DRZC, & Eugene Zendo

PDC Class Schedule, April - December, 2006

Inner Critic - April 2, 9, 16, 23
Sexuality and Spirituality - May 14, 21, 28, June 4
Jukai and Precepts - June 18, 25, July 2, 9
Flower Arranging - July 16
Compassionate Communication - August 1, September 3, 10
Prayer & Buddhism - November 5, 12, 19, 26