

How Buddhism Changed My Life ❖ Transmission of Zen ❖ Building Practice

Spring Wind

**BUDDHIST
CULTURAL
FORUM**



FALL 2005



UPC Code (short one)
823212 41303 7 53

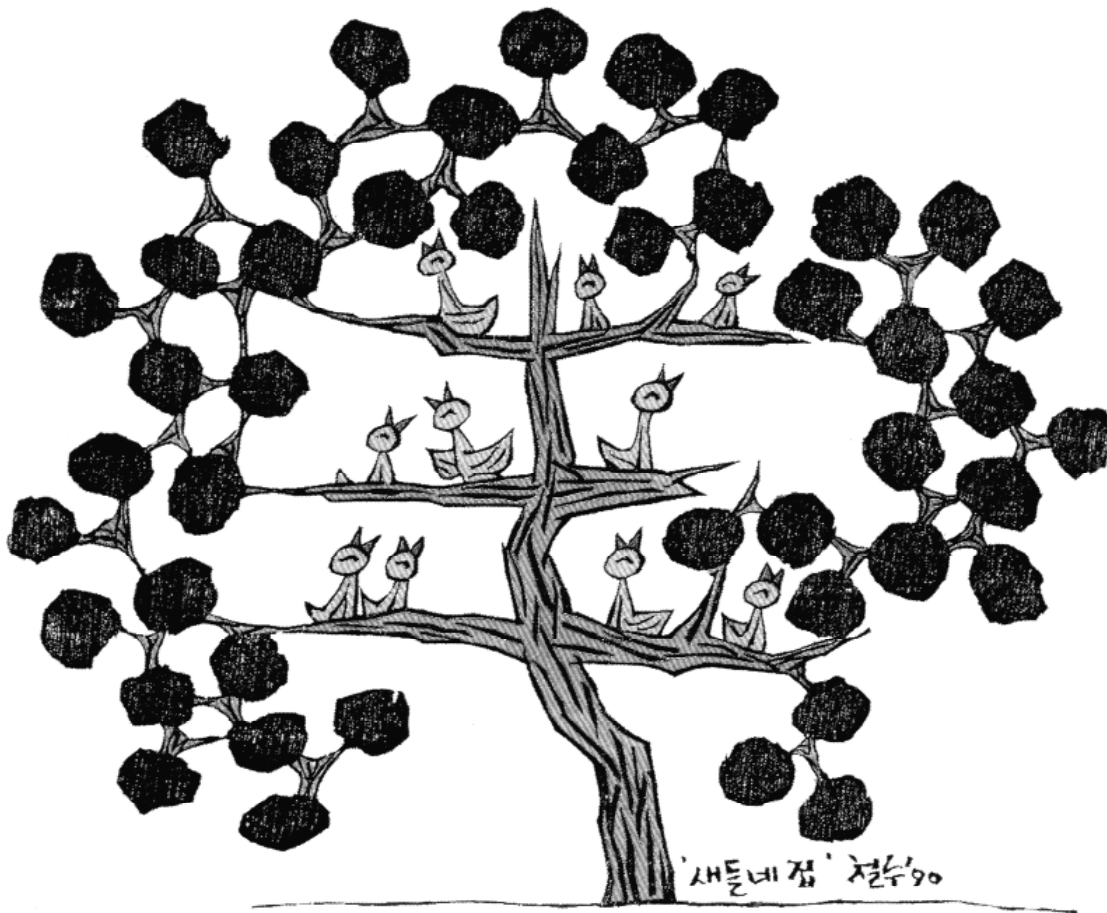
\$5.50 U.S./\$7.00 CANADA
WWW.SPRINGWIND.ORG

Maitreya Buddhist Seminary

offers three-year residential and non-residential programs leading to ordination as a Dharma teacher or Buddhist priest. The training is based on personal meditation practice, doctrinal study, ritual practice, and cultivation of devotional and wisdom heart.



For more information, please call (773) 528-8685
or visit www.ZenBuddhistTemple.org/seminary



Lee Chulsoo

Spring Wind | BUDDHIST CULTURAL FORUM

WWW.SPRINGWIND.ORG


FALL 2005

- 4 **Monastic Community & Transmission of Zen, Part 2**
Venerable Samu Sunim

How Buddhism Changed My Life

- 19 **Wild and Rustic Journey**
Kojun Kim Rodriguez
- 26 **Water Runs Down**
Bopch'ul James Carrol
- 32 **Seven Ways Buddhism Changed My Life**
Chahaeng Joseph Halbgewachs

Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom

- 36 **Zen Buddhist Temple, Toronto**

Everyday Buddhism

- 38 **Late August**
Joe Reilly
- 44 **Diving In**
Konghwa Elizabeth Enciso
- 49 **Homemade**
Rev. Sanha
- 50 **Building Practice**
Tamara Dean

56 **Sitting in the Forest**
Charyu Christina Wall

61 **Instant Dharma**
William Ace Remas

*May the merit from this issue be transferred
to all beings throughout the universe!*

Dear Readers,

You are buddhas and bodhisattvas. Your everyday stories of awakenings and struggles will help each of us find wisdom and compassion and build an enlightened society. Please submit articles, artwork, and letters to *Spring Wind*.

✿ Coming Themes

Winter '06: Love, Desire, and the Way of Relationships
Spring '06: Buddhism and Consumerism
Summer '06: Meditation and Prayer in the Buddhist tradition

✿ Please mail or email articles to:

Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum
1710 W. Cornelia Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657, USA
submission@springwind.org
www.SpringWind.org

✿ Please note that there is no guarantee unsolicited manuscripts, letters and art will be published, and they are subject to editing.

Publisher Venerable Samu Sunim
Editors Bopsan John Hall
KosuDiane Snider
Art Director Kongsim Rob Brown
Production & Advertising
Rev. Sanha
Editorial Board
Rev. Haju Sunim
Rev. Toan Sunim
KosuDiane Snider
Kosa Joseph Schuman
Won'gam Matthew Goulish

Advertising & Subscription Inquiries

(773) 528-8685
sanha@springwind.org

Editorial Office

1710 W. Cornelia Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60657, USA
(773) 528-8685 Fax (773) 528-9909
Email: submission@springwind.org

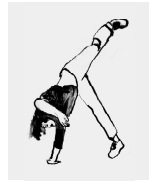
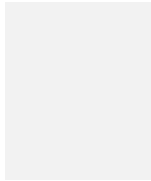
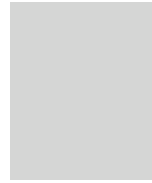
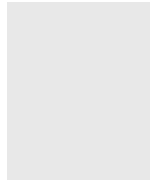
Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum (ISSN 0825-799X) is published quarterly in February, May, August, and November by the Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom, a North American Buddhist order. Vol. 10, No. 4, Fall 2005.
© 2005 *Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum*. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Requests for permissions and reprints must be made in writing. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom or the publisher. Readers' comments and ideas are welcome.

Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum prints only original articles and does not guarantee the publication of unsolicited manuscripts. All manuscripts and artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. *Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum* cannot be held responsible for loss of or damage to unsolicited material.

Annual Subscription Rates: \$20 U.S., \$25 Canada, International add \$15 U.S. for surface mail. Subscription inquiries and changes of address should be sent to: *Spring Wind*, 1710 W. Cornelia Avenue, Chicago, IL 60657, USA or subscription@springwind.org.

printed on recycled paper

www.SpringWind.org



On the Cover

Photograph by Anjali Jacques Oule.

Letters

Dear *Spring Wind*,

A belated but heartfelt note of appreciation and gratitude for your publication in general, and, in particular, for Kongsu Adam Lewis's article, "Depression as Practice," in the Winter 2005 issue. Like him, I have been diagnosed as having bipolar disorder, and I agree with him that there is something uniquely human about those of us with this disorder. His words were encouraging to me, and I wish him success on this challenging path.

Sincerely,
Tim Denesha
Buffalo, NY



Rev. Toan José Castelao

Monastic Community & Transmission of Zen

CHINA—JAPAN—THE WEST

Venerable Samu Sunim

Zen Buddhism did not take root in Japan until the beginning of the thirteenth century, when Japanese monks returning from Southern Song China introduced the teachings of Zen and its monastic life. The two Japanese monks responsible for introducing Zen to Japan were Eisai (1141–1215), who went to China in 1187 and returned to Japan in 1191, and Dogen (1200–1253) who went to China in 1223 and returned to Japan in 1227.

In 1202 Eisai founded Kennin-ji, the first Zen temple in Kyoto, with the help of Minamoto Yoriie (1182–1204), the second shogun of the Kamakura bakufu, and began to propagate the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism. The Kamakura period (1185–1333) ushered in a new period in

Japanese history generally known as the medieval period. It was the beginning of Japanese feudalism in which political authority passed from the nobles at the imperial court in Kyoto, to warrior rulers who established themselves in Kamakura.

It was significant to the establishment of Zen in Japan and the impact it was later to have upon her culture that Zen was introduced when Japan was entering this new phase of her history. However, Zen was slow in establishing itself on Japanese soil, for a number of factors worked against its early growth. First, the old established schools of Buddhism still held much sway and Zen encountered determined opposition from them. In fact, the powerful Enryaku-ji followers of

"Monastic Community & Transmission of Zen: China—Japan—The West" was originally published in *Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum*, Fall 1984.

the Tendai School successfully influenced the imperial court in 1194 to have the new teaching of Zen temporarily proscribed. Second, the elite society and the populace in general were ignorant of the new form of Chinese Buddhism and so remained indifferent to it. They largely followed the teachings of the Tendai and Shingon schools and believed in the efficacy of esoteric rites and incantations. Around the same time, the new schools of Buddhism, the Amidist and Lotus schools, were actively engaged in winning converts from among the local warriors and peasants, and Zen had to compete with these vigorous sects.

All the leaders of the new religious movements had come from the established Buddhist Church. The established schools had lost spiritual vitality and were unable to provide inspiration and spiritual training for the young monks who were becoming increasingly disenchanted with the wealth and secular powers of their church and were looking for a new spiritual impetus. Clearly, it was time for spiritual renewal. The leaders of the new movements capitalized on the fervor of religious aspirants and attracted people in great numbers. In fact, this period in Japanese history is sometimes called the “religious period.” The new schools of Buddhism founded by Dogen (1200–1253), Shinran (1173–1262), and Nichiren (1222–1282) were to have lasting impact on Japanese religious life. The three sects, Soto, Jodo shin, and Nichiren, founded by these three leaders account for the majority of Japanese Buddhists today. In addition, the three powerful new lay religious movements—Reiyukai, Rissho Kosei Kai, and Soka Gakkai—are offshoots of Nichiren Buddhism.

However, the new schools of Buddhism were sectarian, devotional, and evangelical, and they each proclaimed that their path was right. Zen was clearly at a disadvantage in this sectarian struggle because it did not enjoy the dynamism of the followers of the *Lotus Sutra* with their strong sense of mission, nor the simple and easy approach to spiritual practice of the Amidists

with their absolute faith in the salvation offered by Amitabha Buddha, which appealed directly and widely to common people. The spiritual path of Zen was either viewed as a saintly path and therefore a difficult one for ordinary people by the advocates of the True Sect of Pure Land, or rejected outright as an evil “tempter” by the adherents of the Lotus School. I think similar attitudes to Zen Buddhism are held in North America today, although by those of different religious affiliations.

Surrounded by hostile forces, Eisai had to defend himself and his new teachings. Eisai wrote the *Treatise on Promulgation of Zen and Defense of Nation* and argued against the established Buddhist schools’ opposition to Zen. He maintained that it was in the vital interest of the state to protect the Buddhadharma, because the Buddhist deities would protect the state in return and the Buddhist clergy serve the society. He asserted that Zen was the essence of Buddhism and the precepts and rules of monastic life were embodied in the Zen life. In Kennin-ji, which he founded with the help of Minamoto Yoriei, Eisai taught esoteric rites as well as Zen and erected halls of worship dedicated to the patriarchs of Shingon and Tendai schools in order to accommodate established Buddhism. He also emphasized the importance of keeping Vinaya precepts. Earlier in his life as a monk, Eisai had studied Shingon esoteric Buddhism and trained in the Tendai tradition. He never completely broke away from the Tendai school.

Aside from Eisai, there were other monks who tried to introduce the Zen teachings of Song China to Japan. These monks believed Zen was the purest and most vital expression of Buddhism and refused to accommodate any other Buddhist teachings. It appears that Eisai was embarrassed by their aggressive purism and kept away from them. Some maintain “His aim was to reform and strengthen Japanese monastic Buddhism both by substituting the newer Song Zen teaching for the Tang Zen hitherto accepted within Tendai, and by

reemphasizing the importance of taking and keeping the Vinaya precepts.”¹ Although Eisai is now regarded as the founder of the Rinzai Zen school in Japan, perhaps it never was his intention to found a new school of Zen. Perhaps his syncretism was a contrivance to practice and spread Zen secretly.

Gradually, the new teachings of Zen won sympathy and support among the nobles and members of the imperial family in Kyoto, as well as from the warrior rulers in Kamakura and the military governors in the country. They were initially attracted not to the new, mind-shaking teachings of Zen and its meditation practice, but to the straightforwardness, mindful attitude, and physical vigor of its practitioners. The wide learning yet simple and strict discipline of monastic life also attracted their attention. They were interested in the continental culture brought from China by the Zen monks. The Zen monks of the time were cosmopolitans who introduced to Japan not only Zen and its related monastic culture but also the refinements of the secular culture of Song China. It was Eisai who introduced tea drinking to Japan. In 1214 he wrote a book, *Tea Drinking as a Care of Health* for Sanetomo (1192–1219), the third Minamoto shogun. These cultural activities by Zen monks aroused the intellectual curiosity of the Japanese elite society in the new Chinese culture. For the warrior rulers in Kamakura, this may have provided them with an opportunity to form a cultural identity of their own appropriate to their new political and military power.

Therefore, it was mainly through the political backing of the shogunate and the sympathy of the imperial members and elite members of the society that Eisai and his followers were able to establish a small but active community at Kennin-ji. In other words, Eisai and his followers failed to win popular support for their new religion. This set a course for Rinzai Zen and explains why Rinzai Zen in Japan today, despite its widespread influence in many aspects of Japanese culture, has such a small

number of adherents. The eclectic efforts made by Eisai and his followers notwithstanding, full acceptance of Song Chinese Zen in medieval Japan and its establishment as an independent school took over a century and a half from the late twelfth to the early fourteenth century. During this period, a score of Chinese Chan monks who fled from the Mongol rule in China arrived on Japanese shores and were invited to Kamakura by Hojo rulers. The “new” Chinese Zen was introduced to Japan with its famous claims of “no dependence upon words and letters” and “special transmission outside the scriptures.” One can well imagine the upset and anger of the established Buddhist schools who strongly depended on words and scriptures. They countered by criticizing the Zen monks for their calm assumption of superiority and denouncing their practice of meditation saying that they just “doze in their seats and think depraved wanton thoughts.” It is well to remember this criticism which should serve as a warning to all Zen Buddhists.

Dogen, who once trained under Eisai at Kennin-ji, took a course very different from that of Eisai when he returned from China. Upon his return, he went back to Kennin-ji and lived there for three years. It was there that he wrote his first essay on Zen, *Universal Recommendation for Zazen*. However, he found the quality of training at Kennin-ji had deteriorated significantly. Lamenting the decline of Buddhism, he left metropolitan Kyoto. Eventually, he built a temple in the remote mountains and with a small number of his close disciples sought to develop a pure form of Buddhism. Unlike Eisai, Dogen consistently kept his distance from those in power. Not only did Dogen refuse Regent Tokiyori’s request to stay in Kamakura but he expelled Tokiyori’s messenger who had brought his letter of donation. It is said that Dogen cut out the floor of the temple where the messenger had sat, dug up the earth underneath seven feet deep, and threw it all away. Perhaps he inherited his disdain for political authorities from his Chinese teacher, who advised



Dogen (1200–1253)

him before his return to Japan, “You should not live in cities or other places of human habitation. Rather, staying clear of kings and ministers, make your home in deep mountains and remote valleys, transmitting the essence of Zen Buddhism forever, if even only to a single true Bodhi-seeker.”² Mindful of his teacher’s instruction, Dogen kept himself away from worldly influences and devoted his life to pure practice and severe training. Soto Zen spread in the provinces and developed as a popular religion, but not until it became tarnished with folk practices such as magical prayers and mortuary rites, quite to the contrary of Dogen’s intentions. In Japan, there is a saying “Rinzai for the shogun, So to for peasants.”

Zen Buddhism finally flourished under the patronage of Hojo regents, who were the de facto rulers of the country from the middle of the thirteenth century to the early years of the fourteenth century. Tokiyori (1227–1263), the fifth regent, set the pattern for Hojo patronage when he invited Lan-ch’i Tao-lung (1213–1278) and Wu-an P’uning (1197–1276), both Chinese monks of the Rinzai line who left Southern Song China because of the social unrest caused by the Mongol threat. He built Kencho-ji, the first full-scale Song Chinese style monastery in Kamakura, and practiced meditation first under Lan-ch’i and later under Wu-an, one of the foremost disciples of Master Wu-chun Shih-fan (1177–1249). Tokiyori attained enlightenment under Wu-an and received his *inka* (sanction). After the death of Tokiyori, Hojo Tokimune, son of Tokiyori, dispatched two monks from Kencho-ji to China and invited Wu-hsueh Tsu-yuan (1226–1286), a disciple of Wu-chun. Tokimune appointed Wu-hsueh abbot of Kencho-ji and resumed his study of Zen under Wu-hsueh. In their Zen encounters Wu-hsueh did not forget that he was dealing with the most powerful warrior in the country. Their discussions were conducted through an interpreter. When the master wished to strike his disciple, the blows fell on the interpreter.

Two years after Wu-hsueh’s arrival in Japan,

the Mongols launched a second and greater attempt to land and invade the country. A feeling of crisis and fear ran through the nation from the rulers down to the commoners. As the crisis mounted, Tokimune, the man responsible for the affairs of state, continued to do zazen under the guidance of Master Wu-hsueh Tsu-yuan in order to overcome his fears and to be able to deal with the external situation. It was during this time that Wu-hsueh trained his student in Right Now Zen and the famous Kamakura koans.³ Eventually this type of Zen training, practiced by the warrior class in order to attain no mind and absolute detachment, gave rise to *Bushido*, the Way of the Warrior.

The invading Mongols were again repelled by storms. After the war, Tokimune built Engaku-ji, a monastery in the Song Chinese Zen style, and installed Wu-hsueh as founding abbot of the monastery. Tokimune died at the age of thirty-four. When he knew he was going to die, he asked his Zen teacher Wu-hsueh to ordain him as a Zen monk. Hours later he died with his head shaven and clad in a Zen monk’s robe. After Tokimune’s death, his consort became a nun and founded Tokei-ji, the Rinzai convent in Kamakura. It is said that many of Tokimune’s vassals left worldly life after the death of their lord. Two years later, Wu-hsueh also died, but secure in his knowledge that Song Chinese Zen had taken firm root in Kamakura. Engaku-ji has remained an important monastery today. It was at Engaku-ji that D. T. Suzuki (1879–1966) first trained in Zen under Shaku Soen, the abbot. When Shaku Soen attended the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, D. T. Suzuki accompanied him as his translator. This was the very beginning of the introduction of Zen Buddhism to America. D. T. Suzuki was only twenty-three years old at the time.

With Chinese refugee monks from Song and Yuan China in Kamakura and Kyoto, interest in Chinese culture and literature prevailed. The successors of Tokimune regarded Zen not only as a spiritual training and awakening, but as a source

of intellectual and cultural stimulation. Although they ruled the country, the warrior rulers lacked the cultural refinements of the aristocrats and nobles of Kyoto and as a result suffered cultural subordination. Now they acquired culture and arts from their spiritual mentors who not only supplied the Hojo regents and their circle with a rudimentary knowledge of Neo-Confucian metaphysics, statecraft, and theories of social hierarchy, but also introduced them to the study of Chinese poetry, painting, and calligraphy. The literary-minded Chinese monks spent a great deal of time teaching secular subjects to the Japanese monks who studied with them and to their warrior ruler patrons. Thus, Zen contributed significantly to the Japanese warrior culture of the medieval period in return for patronage. Patronized Zen monasteries fell under close bakufu supervision through a series of guidelines and regulations.

Zen spread under the patronage of the Hojo regents, in part due to its cultural elements. Nobles and members of the imperial family in Kyoto were attracted to Rinzai Zen by its aristocratic character, its lofty silence and self-reliance, and also the vistas it offered into high Chinese culture. Hojo regents encouraged provincial warriors to embrace the way of Zen and they, in turn, were drawn to the Chinese culture that accompanied Zen. Although one cannot disregard the missionary efforts made by learned Chinese monks who took refuge in Japan as a result of the Mongol conquest of China, Zen Buddhism of the Kamakura period was largely limited to the ruling warrior circles in Kamakura who controlled the Zen monasteries with patronage and supervision. It is for this reason that the Zen Buddhism of the Kamakura period is often called "Warrior Zen." It means that Zen failed to reach common people, including middle and lower class warriors in the provinces.

Towards the end of the Kamakura period the secular tendencies of patronized Zen became more pronounced. The collecting of Chinese art

objects and their appreciation had become a passion among Zen monks and patrons. It seems that they were more preoccupied with waiting for the vessels sailing from Yuan China than with their spiritual training. The art objects thus obtained were eagerly admired with popped eyes at tea meetings and then carefully preserved. Ironically, the priceless collections of Zen art, which include portraits of Chinese Zen masters and paintings of Wu-ch'i, Liang-K'ai, and Yin-t'o-lo now in Zen temples and art museums in Japan, are the result of this passion of Zen monks and their patrons at the expense of their Zen training. With the cultural maturity and self assurance of the warrior rulers, Kamakura grew to be a center for cosmopolitan culture, and the influence of continental Zen flowed between Kamakura and Kyoto, the imperial seat of Japan of that time. Kameyama (1249–1305) was the first emperor who patronized and studied Zen. He helped build Nanzen-ji, which was to become a major link between metropolitan Zen and the imperial court. However, it was the emperor Hanazono (1297–1348) who took up pure Zen training under Shuho Myocho (1282–1337), for whom he helped establish Daitoku-ji. After Shuho's death, Hanazono continued his Zen practice under Shuho's disciple Kanzan Egen (1277–1360), the founder of Myoshin-ji. It was from these two monasteries, Daitoku-ji and Myoshin-ji, that modern Japanese Rinzai Zen derived.

Kamakura Zen patronized by the warrior rulers of Kamakura left a lasting impact not only on Japanese Zen but on Japanese culture in general. It was no coincidence that the young D. T. Suzuki, who was born to a family belonging to the samurai warrior class and the Rinzai school of Zen, turned to Zen training as a lay disciple when he suffered anguish of heart while studying at the Imperial University of Tokyo.

During the Muromachi period (middle of the fourteenth to middle of the sixteenth century) the base of political power shifted from Kamakura to

善哉子孫不知禪
物重面命誰說禪
三十年來肩重
一人荷擔松源禪
前往大德林初為
頂相自贊謹拜書



Ikkyū (1394–1481)

Kyoto. But Zen Buddhism continued to enjoy official and imperial patronage under the Ashikaga shogunate. During this period the official Zen establishment in Kamakura and Kyoto was reorganized into “five monasteries and ten temples” in imitation of the temple organization in Southern Song China. Under this system, the monasteries were ranked. The highest ranking monasteries with their associate temples enjoyed prestige, wealth, and influence, but rankings changed with the different shogun rulers. The cultural pursuits and secular interests of the Zen monks weakened the religious spirit of the monasteries. From the temple diaries of the time, we learn that the Zen monks never did any manual work. Nor is there any mention that the monks did much actual meditation practice. The Ashikaga shoguns, who lavished their attention on the monks of the ranking Zen monasteries for secular motives, never practiced zazen but rather attended elaborate ceremonies, sponsored feasts, and organized literary gatherings at these Zen monasteries and their sub-temples.

It was under these circumstances that the culture of the metropolitan Muromachi period blossomed. Arts, literature, and crafts such as painting, poetry, Noh drama, architecture, printing, and garden design all developed and flourished during this period. In all these cultural and literary activities the Zen monks were in the lead or served as an inspiration. The five ranking monasteries and ten or fifteen subsidiary temples became centers of intellectual and literary movements, out of which came what is known as “literature of five mountains (monasteries).” However, the literature of the five monasteries was not the literature of Zen teachings as we know it today, but rather compositions of prose and verse in the best Chinese style. The simple tea ceremony that had originated in the Zen temples now developed into a refined form of social entertainment, which included the arts of incense burning and flower arrangement and the display of works of Zen calligraphy. Some serious monks

lamented the situation and denounced the “shaven-headed laymen” who gave literary lessons to their rich patrons and attracted intellectual circles to their monasteries. However, their concern and condemnation had little impact on these monks, who were the poets and literary figures of their day and satisfied themselves by praising their own verses.

Although the cultural brilliance of the Muromachi period, often compared with the Renaissance in Europe, had little to do with Zen as a spiritual training, it did produce some individual Zen monks of great stature. Among these, Ikkyu (1394–1481) stands out. He, too, was a literary figure, but he criticized in writing the secularization of the Zen establishment and derided the monks who went around in pomp and luxury or satisfied their enthusiasm for arts at tea meetings by calling them “connoisseurs of pots.” He is generally regarded as a Zen eccentric. He rejected monastic discipline to wander around the country. Through his wanderings he helped spread the teachings of Zen among common people. At the age of eighty-one Ikkyu returned to Daitoku-ji and helped its economic recovery.

The Zen establishment was so inextricably linked to the ruling regime of the Muromachi period that their fortunes went hand in hand. The metropolitan Zen monastic centers were made vulnerable when the political stability of the Ashikaga shogun weakened. The ensuing political struggles surrounding the succession to power sparked the Onin War (1467–1477). During the ten years of fighting nearly all the major five monasteries in Kyoto were plundered and razed to the ground. It was the inevitable fate of patronized Zen. With the destruction of the metropolitan Zen establishment, the Zen monks of the Rinzai school scattered throughout the country. Some were attracted to Myoshin-ji and Daitoku-ji, the two unpatronized monasteries in Kyoto that had always kept up strict monastic training, while others founded small temples in the countryside or wandered in search of a meaningful life.

Fighting continued throughout the sixteenth century. It was a troubled time and we hear little of Zen during this period. So it is not surprising to learn that a few wandering Zen monks converted to Neo-Confucianism, a new idea then being introduced to Japan. One Zen monk was so taken with the upright character of a Korean Confucian scholar brought to Japan as a prisoner that he became his student and contributed much to the establishment of Confucian learning in Japan.

During the sixteenth century when the country was in turmoil, Myoshin-ji and Daitoku-ji quietly grew and their influence expanded into the countryside. Also, Soto Zen became popular in the provinces, but expansion and popularity were achieved by dilution of Zen with folk beliefs, offerings of prayers and funeral ceremonies, or with esoteric practices. In 1654, Yin-yuan Lung-ch'i arrived in Japan from Ming China to escape the Manchu invasion and subsequently founded the third Zen school in Japan, Obaku, which served as a stimulus to the Rinzai school, which had lost its spiritual vitality. It was not until the great awakening of Hakuin (1686–1769), however, that Rinzai Zen revived again.

The Tokugawa period saw several new developments in Japan. The culture patronized by the ruling warrior class was now a thing of the past. In its place, new Confucian rationalism stimulated scholarly and philosophical activity among the educated class. Christianity was introduced around this time. The religious intolerance of the Christian missionaries incited opposition from the Buddhist clergy, which led to sporadic persecutions of Christians by the political authorities. In 1639, during the rule of Tokugawa Iemitsu, the Portuguese people who introduced the Christian faith of the Roman Catholic Church, were ousted, and Japan closed its doors to foreigners. Then Iemitsu established the system known as *danka seido* whereby every Japanese household was required to register affiliation with Buddhism at one of the Buddhist temples, regardless of their faith, sects, or schools. Thus, Buddhism was once

again made a state institution. Buddhism now became a "household-centered religion." This system provided for the traditional Japanese Buddhist establishment a very important social support and economic stability. However, as a result, people's relationship to the temples became increasingly nominal and they came to temple primarily for the rites of the dead. This was the beginning of degeneration of Buddhism into what came to be known as "funeral Buddhism." *Danka seido* was abolished by law in 1871.

When international influences were felt in spite of the isolationist policy adopted by the Tokugawa shogun, national Shintoism was revived and strengthened by a literary movement called "National Learning," which was initially started by Confucian scholars in their historical research. However, the most important development of this period was the rise of commoners and townsmen and the growth of commerce, which contributed much to the urban culture of this period.

The revival of modern Japanese Rinzai Zen is attributed to the establishment of koan Zen practice by Hakuin and the setting up of special Zen training centers, *senmon dojo*, at Rinzai Zen monasteries in the country. Times had changed. Now the aristocratic Rinzai Zen had to direct attention to common people for its support. Bankei Yotaku (1622–1693) and Shido Bu'nan (1603–1676) were two pioneers in this regard. They preached a popular version of Zen Buddhism that was simple and unsophisticated. Zen was now finally acquiring a Japanese taste away from the Chinese influences that had dominated it for so many years since its introduction. It was a new age of Zen. No less than Bankei and Shido, the celebrated haiku poet Basho (1644–1694) contributed to this new age through his poetry. He was a genius. Just as Sesshu had done before him through painting, Basho was able to grasp the enlightened essence of nature and instill it into the form of seven-teen-syllable haiku. The result was manifestation of spiritual

insight that is constantly evocative of the beyond. As a lay disciple of Zen, he wandered around and did not cease from “longing for wind and clouds.”

This road!
With no one going
Autumn evening⁴

Hakuin was born to a commoner family of low status. He entered a temple when he was fifteen. However, he was not satisfied with his training, and he began to doubt the Buddhist path to liberation. His anxiety mounted. In his nineteenth year he read the story of the tragic death of Zen Master Yen-t'ou, and this intensified his despair. Restless, he took to wandering and visited various temples. In Zuin-ji in the province of Mino, he met the poet Ba o, who stimulated Hakuin's literary interest. One summer day, the poet carried the many volumes of his library outside to air them in the sun. Hakuin was overwhelmed at the sight of so many treasures of wisdom. He did not know which volume to choose for spiritual guidance. So he sincerely prayed to all the guardian deities of Buddhadharma for guidance and then picked up a volume. It turned out to be a collection of Zen stories from Ming dynasty China. Hakuin was greatly aroused when he read about the Rinzai Zen Master Shih-shuang Ch'u-yuan who meditated day and night without interruption and who, when beset by drowsiness, would bore into his flesh with a sharp awl in order to awaken his mind through the pain.

Hakuin then determined to return to the Zen meditation hall and persevere until he attained full enlightenment. At that time he received the news of his mother's death. First, he wanted to go home to attend her grave. Then, he felt it would do more good for her departed spirit if he would devote himself completely to the realization of full enlightenment. With this in mind he went around in search of spiritual training. He attained his first experience of enlightenment when he heard the Dharma talk of Shotetsu. He

then went to Shoju Rojin (1642–1721), the Dharma heir of Shido Bu'nan, who trained Hakuin ruthlessly. No pain or humiliation was spared him. But Hakuin was grateful to the old monk for the “great kindness” of his ruthless training. Hakuin stayed with Shoju only eight months, for he was soon called back to Daisho-ji to care for his sick old master.

It is most probable that Hakuin did not receive Shoju's sanction of his spiritual experience or sanction from any teacher for that matter. But he continued to practice with the greatest intensity. His spiritual experiences now multiplied, but his physical condition deteriorated drastically. He suffered a series of nervous breakdowns. In 1710 he visited a hermit who taught him a psychological treatment for his “Zen sickness,” and he was restored to health with the help of the hermit. He returned to his native village upon the news of his father's death and settled permanently at Shoin-ji, which was to become the center of the strongest Zen movement of the Tokugawa period. He frequently traveled and drew students from far and wide. Myoshin-ji in Kyo accorded him rank, the right to succession, and the name Hakuin. His fame spread throughout all Japan.

Although Hakuin insisted on strict and rigorous koan Zen study and training for monks, he was generous towards lay people. He often counseled them in both worldly and spiritual matters and conveyed his teachings to them with songs or through his now famous Zen paintings. His numerous ink paintings that are interspersed with his words and poems are replete with his Zen humor and wit. The large radiant eyes that look out at you from his portrait paintings speak of the vigor and insight of Hakuin Zen. For Zen practice Hakuin insisted that the student should have three basic qualities: a great faith, a great doubt after the koans, and a great perseverance. Hakuin universally recommended the Mu koan for seeing into one's own true nature, but later in his life he devised his own koan, the “sound of one hand.”

Inspired by his example, many of his Zen students trained themselves fearlessly. Some of the more zealous ones met with early deaths because of the rigors to which they subjected themselves. Hakuin, who learned early from his own experience, attended the ailing monks and warned them against physical collapse. “His warnings are underscored impressively by the long row of tombstones of disciples, whose remains rest beside those of the master in the cemetery of Shoin-ji.”⁵

Hakuin worked tirelessly to an advanced age. He wrote in vernacular language for the common people and taught the illiterate using their own expressions, as in the song, “While Hoeing the Weeds.” He did not neglect children and old women. In a “Song of the Old Woman Grinding Grain,” he reminds her of the universal Buddha-nature which is present everywhere and has her sing at the end of the song: “If the old woman searches her heart rightly, the true way of the patriarchs cannot fail. Persevere; keep well! The old woman now parts from you.”⁶

Hakuin fell seriously ill in his seventy-eighth year. One night he had a dream in which he saw all his former teachers and old friends. First, Hakuin was very much impressed to find himself among the departed. He was happy to see them again and felt good to be finally with them. He then asked how they had achieved their enlightenment and looked around for response. Everyone was stony silent. When Hakuin began to feel that he was in the wrong place, someone shouted, “yongmaeng chongjin” (intensive and fierce effort) which woke him up from his dream. After the dream Hakuin suddenly recovered from his illness and became vigorous again. In his eightieth year, more than seven hundred disciples gathered at his temple for spring training. He passed away in January of 1769.

Hakuin revived Zen Buddhism in Japan at a time when the traditional continental Zen Buddhism from China faced extinction. Although he was an independent advocate of the popular

Buddhist movement that had arisen in Edo (present-day Tokyo), he also engaged in intellectual and artistic activities for the spread of Zen teachings. Hakuin discovered Zen and revived and organized it. Into this revived Zen he injected Japanese elements so that Zen would appeal both to monks and laymen. This distinctly Japanese Zen widely influenced Zen students in Japan and finally dominated the temples of the Rinzai school. Today, all the Zen teachers belonging to the Rinzai school of Zen in Japan trace their spiritual lineage to Hakuin. They study and practice the koan Zen established by Hakuin and recite his “Song of Meditation” and *Enmei Jikku Kannon Gyo*, the “Ten-Phrase Kannon Sutra for Prolonging Life,” in their monasteries. Hakuin recommended the latter to commoners and samurai for recitation, but it was adopted by Zen monks blindly. It is this Hakuin school of Rinzai Zen that was introduced to the West in the twentieth century.

Spurred by Hakuin’s revival movement, the Zen monks in the metropolitan monasteries of Kyoto that had been rehabilitated from destruction got together for organized Zen training. There were only a few serious Zen monks in each Zen monastery, so they jointly held the summer and winter training in the different monasteries in rotation. (This was called “rotation training.”) This stimulated interest in Zen training among the monks and eventually gave rise to special training centers throughout the country. It is at these special training centers in the large public monasteries that have preserved the medieval and Song dynasty Zen that Zen monks still carry on in the traditional monastic life.

The modern period began with the Meiji Restoration in 1868. With the Meiji Restoration, Shinto was made a semi-state religion, and Buddhist elements were ousted from Shinto shrines. This was the beginning of anti-Buddhist activities, which reached their climax in 1871. This was the only instance of Buddhist suppression in the history of Japan. In 1872, by government decree the monks were allowed to marry



Hakuin (1686–1769)

and adopt a non-vegetarian (meat-eating) diet. Women were admitted to the temple. It was also this year that the Japanese government adopted the Western calendar. The Buddhist schools followed suit. These were important changes for Japanese Buddhism and had a far-reaching effect on Zen Buddhism in particular. As a result, today most Japanese Zen monks are married and lead a household life in the temples, a radical departure from traditional monastic life. With the secularization of the religion, modernization programs were introduced to the Zen temples. The Zen temples had to cope with the changing Japanese society. As a result, academic institutions were created to educate young monks so that they could acquire basic knowledge in order to serve society as priests. Academic activities stimulated scholarly interest in the studies of the school by their members, and the result was the establishment of sectarian studies by each school in order to promote their own teachings.

The two main systems that maintained Zen temples before the Second World War were the system of family temples and the system of household affiliation with Buddhist temples (*danka seido*), which continued even after its official revocation by the government in 1871. The family temples, which comprise the majority of Zen temples in Japan today, are basically family owned and thus hereditary. Usually, the eldest son of the priest's family becomes a monk in order to carry on his father's duties. He would attend Hanazono College in Kyoto if his father was from the Rinzai school, or Komazawa University in Tokyo if his father was a Soto priest. After graduation, he would enter one of the Monk's Halls (*sodo*) of the large public monasteries belonging to his father's school. Monk's Halls are special centers set up to train monks in monastic life. He would train there for two to three years. For most monks, this is the only time they experience monastic life. After the two- to three-year training he would return to his father's temple and take over his father's duties within a few years.

During the Pacific War (Second World War), all Japanese Buddhist schools including Zen actively collaborated with Japanese imperialism and militarism. Zen priests were sent to Taiwan, Korea, and China as missionaries to support the Japanese war effort, thereby angering Asian Buddhists at large. It was a serious violation of Buddhist precepts. However, Japanese ethnocentrism and the long history of Buddhist association with the state prevailed over any Buddhist universals. For this reason and also for its long history with the Japanese warrior regime, Japanese Zen is sometimes called "samurai Zen" or "samurai religion." The only exception to this was perhaps Shirouzu Keisan Roshi (1897–1973), the former abbot of Heirin-ji, who criticized Japanese expansionism. After the war, Japanese Buddhist monks were alienated from other Asian Buddhists, not only because of their arrogant and unrepentant attitude, but also because Japanese Buddhists had discarded Vinaya rules and adopted a secular lifestyle.

The introduction of Zen to the West is the single most important contribution Japanese Zen Buddhism has made in the twentieth century. Ever since Buddhism left India, the land of its origin, more than two thousand years ago, the teachings have been spread to different places by traveling Buddhist monks and laymen, but the extent of their travels was largely confined to Asia. Now, finally Zen Buddhism has been successfully introduced to North America by Japanese Buddhists. For this we are greatly indebted to them.✽

NOTE:

For the Kamakura period of this article, I have consulted *Five Mountains* by Martin Collcutt, in which the author put forward new interpretations of Kamakura Zen based on his research, thereby challenging the generally held views of this period in the Western Buddhist literature.

I have been unable to treat the Soto Zen school properly because of my ignorance of this tradition in Japan. Therefore, my article is limited largely to the treatment of the Rinzai Zen school in Japan.

1. Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: the Rinzai Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan* (London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 39.

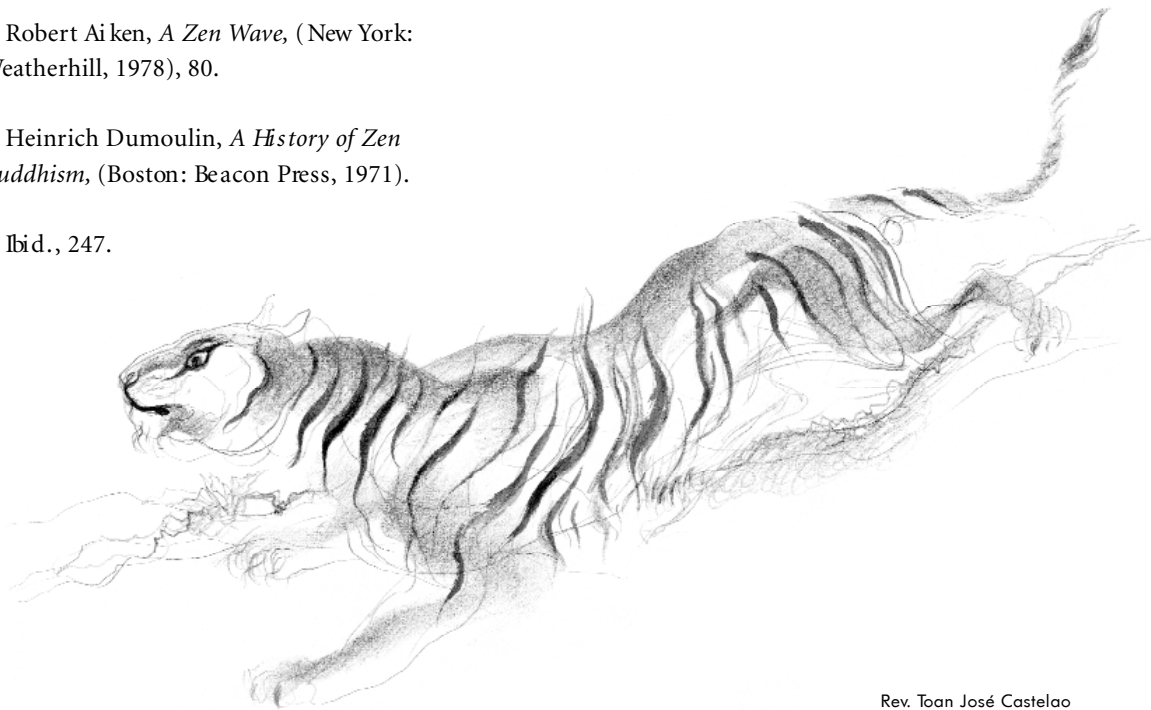
2. Yuho Yokoi, *Zen Master Dogen* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), 33.

3. Trevor Leggett, "Kamakura Koans," *Zen and the Ways*, (Boulder: Shambhala, 1978), 71–113.

4. Robert Aiken, *A Zen Wave*, (New York: Weatherhill, 1978), 80.

5. Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

6. *Ibid.*, 247.



Rev. Toan José Castelao



Konghana Tero Nauha

Wild and Rustic Journey

Kojun Kim Rodriguez

I became a Buddhist at a run-down movie theater at the end of a showing of “Little Buddha.” The film portrayed the life of Siddhartha and his journey to becoming the Buddha, but I went to see the film only because it was two bucks and it starred Keanu Reeves. The moment when Siddhartha touched the ground and the Earth confirmed his enlightenment was the moment I felt a transforming thunderbolt. I saw my life very clearly. I was unhappy. I did not know what I wanted to do with my life. I did not know who I was.

I remember leaving the theater and feeling the chilly fall wind blow against my face. I was feeling raw and exposed internally. I’d just had one of the most purely painful moments of my life. There was no excuse I could make to deny how I felt at that moment. There was no story I could create to give myself comfort. My life at that moment was

exactly as it was. I did not know what I needed, but I had to find out more about Buddhism.

At that time, I had just graduated from college and was transitioning to full-time work, but I felt constantly afraid. I had suffered from worry and anxiety from a very young age, and it was ordinary for me to experience panic attacks several times a day. A panic attack would happen out of nothing—strange noises from my car, my phone ringing, or police sirens. My mind would expand with fear, and I was quickly paralyzed with my heart pounding, my skin cold, and such pressure on my chest that I would think that I was having a heart attack. As the panic passed, my mind turned into a vacuum of emptiness and despair. Sometimes while I was in high school, I was too afraid to go outside, so I would stay home. Living a sheltered life was both a comfort and a cage.

During college, I managed to grow up a bit and become more comfortable socializing and going out at night, but I went to the extreme of always going out, always being busy, and always being on the move. I had too much superficial attachment to party people and not enough genuine connection to others. I spent a lot of time with people in noisy bars or nightclubs, inhaling a lot of smoke, having meaningless conversations with people who were stoned or drunk or who were very status-oriented and competitive. True feelings of joy and happiness were misdirected toward eating out, shopping, and clubbing in an effort to end my sense of isolation and leave my high school years behind.



I found a temple and went to meditation practice regularly. I needed something but did not know what it was. For a long time, to be alone in silence during sitting was very uncomfortable. Sitting still on the meditation cushion was hard. I felt very self-conscious about my muscles twitching and my stomach gurgling and my body making a lot of other noises. My toes would feel numb, and the pins-and-needles sensation would creep up my legs, and I would mentally whine to myself about how hard this was and how I must be crazy. That movie must've been wrong!

My teacher's encouragement to rely upon myself and to help myself was confusing and terrifying. I was feeling separation from my family in many ways for the first time. I did not move out of my father's house until I was thirty, almost like Siddhartha, except I made a choice to live an extended adolescence after graduation from college. I had few problems living with my dad as long as I could come and go as I pleased. I had ample spending money and few responsibilities. Growing up and attaining full independence was not something I chose to embrace but to consciously avoid, deeply lacking confidence in myself. After I began attending meditation sittings,

I began to worry—could I attain enlightenment if I'm still living with my dad?

Sitting on a meditation cushion, without the cocoon of my family, I came to face all my dinging, despair, and fear, and struggle with comfort and need. I would wander away from my *hwadu*, "What am I?" toward overwhelming worries. Will I die doing this? What if something horrible happens? Will the temple catch on fire? My worries would be about the most unlikely and spectacular things, but it would never cross my mind to figure what I would do if these things really happened.

This compulsive worrying made overnight retreats and my initial *Yongmaeng Chongjin* very difficult. I was terrified of the *mokt'ak*. I would wake in the middle of the night and worry about the *mokt'ak* sound, and the image of that stick hitting the wooden gong repeated in mind. I would worry for hours, but slowly I would return to sleep, just to be startled awake at five a.m. by the true wake-up call. I would be hurtling into an awful panic attack.

I decided to talk to Sunim about it once during an interview. I described for him my waiting, waiting, and waiting for the sound of the *mokt'ak*. He looked at me and said, "That's very neurotic." He urged me to concentrate on my *hwadu* and let my power of concentration take over. I could not really let go and allow that to happen.

"You don't like change," he said. "That is a problem for you."

I have often heard Sunim say that on a meditation retreat, we are like rocks in a bag that when shaken, knock against each other and help to shape and polish each other. In this way, we help each other to wake up. As I participated in more retreats, I would try to keep that image in mind, stick to my *hwadu*, and accept struggle as normal. I began to experience time passing without a panic attack or a worrying spell. My body would relax, and my breathing would flow. I began to experience solitude without isolation. I would hear a siren or tires squeal or hear people yelling at each other on the street, and it would not affect



Chia-Lun Chung

me. I might worry about it, but increasingly it was easier to go back to my concentration.



I formally became a Buddhist in 1997, participating in the precept-taking ceremony at Zen Buddhist Temple in Chicago and becoming part of the Dharma family “Ko.” At the time, the idea of being in a “Dharma family” was strange and a bit alienating. I attended the ceremony by myself because I did not know anyone whom I could ask to come.

I thought a lot about my grandmother, my father’s mother, during the ceremony, but I did not tell her about my involvement because I did not know how she would react. I kept the temple and my Buddhism a secret from my family as long as I could because I feared I would be disowned. I was also very afraid of my family’s anger towards me.

I have always valued my relationship with my grandmother, and I felt I needed to be honest with her about my being Buddhist. I desperately wanted a family member to know and hopefully love me and not reject me. I decided to go to Florida and visit her to tell her in person.

After I passed the security gate at my grandmother’s retirement community, I silently rehearsed how I would say that I was now a Buddhist and what I would say in case her response was negative. I took my meditation beads, my precept certificate, and a mini-book of the *Dhammapada*, just in case she had any questions, but more importantly, to support myself in telling her why I was a Buddhist.

I walked up to her small pink stucco house. It was part of a complex of other similar candy-colored stucco retirement homes, and yet her house was different from all the others. I saw a Buddha statue on the front stoop. I forgot everything I planned to say.

My grandma welcomed me into her house with hugs and kisses, and I noticed more Buddha

statues inside her house—a small Buddha by the door, a Buddha on the coffee table, a picture of the Buddha on the refrigerator. I was absolutely confused. Why does she have these things here? I was speechless.

On top of the toilet, where a tissue box used to be, there was a Buddha sitting on top of a pink crocheted doily. That was it. I finally found my voice to ask, “Abuela, what’s with all the Buddha statues?”

“Oh that,” she said, turning away from me nervously. “I became a Buddhist. I wanted to tell you, but I wasn’t sure how you would react.”

“I have something to tell you,” I said. “I’m a Buddhist too!”

“To be a Buddhist is an acknowledgement of the dignity of the human being,” my grandma explained. She became involved in Buddhism through Vietnamese co-workers at her part-time job at an upholstery factory. She was so happy for me. I felt a flood of relief and also great excitement in sharing my experience with her. We sat on my grandma’s bed and talked for a long time. A dam of separation and generation fell between us, and we snuggled on her bed, feeling love and respect for each other. But grandmother was not happy with everything I told her.

“When I come to Chicago next,” she said, “I’m going to visit your temple and become a Buddhist. I’m going to speak to that Sunim and tell him to give you a better Buddhist name. ‘Kojun’—wild and rustic...”

“The name has a higher purpose—an inner, an outer, and a hidden meaning,” which I still say whenever she brings it up. “I’ve had this name for a long time. It fits me.”

“To be rustic is to be an uncultured person—to be a bum!” she replied. “My beautiful granddaughter deserves better.”

Since then, I have learned many things from my grandmother. My grandmother has connected me to my heritage from the past but also has served to prepare me for the future. According to Buddhist teachings, death is a part of life. Spending time with my elderly grandmother gives me a perspective on

aging that I would normally want to avoid because I really don't want to think that I will be sharing my grandmother's experiences when I'm on the cusp of being eighty years old. I am the only family member outside of Florida who visits her regularly. To spend intimate time with my grandmother means accepting that she can't hear as well as she used to. She has to take many pills for assorted chronic ailments to get through the day, and she's increasingly afraid of things that used to be commonplace, like riding in car going over 35 mph.

In a retirement community, death always happens. It's a commonplace topic of conversation, almost like discussing the weather. She has new friends every year because most of the ones I meet often pass away between my visits. Whenever I grimace or make a face when our conversation turns to her passing away or her worries about potential incontinence or her possibly developing dementia, she reminds me, "Everyone is going to die. I am ready."

My grandmother has given me love and acceptance that I hoped to receive about being a Buddhist. However, my Buddhist lifestyle—because the temple has become an important part of my life—has been very difficult for the rest of my family. In conversations with my parents, I struggle to remain truthful to myself and also keep in mind that they worry for me and don't want me to be hurt. Being a Buddhist has set me apart from my family because I chose to be different. I chose not to be a Christian.



When I told my mother I became a Buddhist, she became very angry and reminded me that I was baptized Presbyterian. "This is who you are!" she insisted. She would call to remind me of that several times afterwards, especially during the day while I was at work. "This is who you are!" again and again. She finally told me, "Don't tell me anymore. I don't want to know."

My mother is Presbyterian, but she was raised

with evangelical Christianity in the mountains of West Virginia. She told my aunts about my Buddhism, and my aunts have offered to help arrange for me to be "rescued." My choice has been very painful for her. After several years, I openly tell her that I'm going on retreat or going to the temple for meetings, and she responds by nodding her head and smiling, but her green eyes always look very sad.

My father is not Catholic or Presbyterian and religious like my mother. He's spiritual and prays on a daily basis but refuses to go to any church, preferring to watch the preachers on Sunday-morning TV. He feels strongly that you don't have to give money to any church in order to experience God, especially the Catholic Church. "God is free, and you are too," he says.

After I took my precepts, my father noticed that I was no longer staying out so late on Saturday nights at the nightclubs or sleeping off hangovers until Sunday afternoon. Instead, I was mysteriously rushing off somewhere. He usually did not know where I was going, and he never really inquired about it until then. I finally told him that I was attending a Buddhist temple.

My father wanted to know more, so he questioned me about what I do at the temple. I explained that we meditate in silence and chant and try to be mindful. The Buddha attained enlightenment, and I was trying to do that also.

"Do you take drugs [for enlightenment]? If someone there offers you drugs, tell them you're not that kind of girl."

"You don't need that place," he would say. "You can do this here at home, right here on the couch...right next to me while I watch TV."

I stubbornly went to the temple sometimes just to defy my dad, resentful of his attempts to alter my decision to be a Buddhist, but more importantly, reactive to his attempt to keep me the same person he helped to create. Once as I walked out of the courtyard of our building, I heard a window open, and I turned to see him pop his dark head out the second floor window

and call out, “Don’t eat or drink anything those people give you! Don’t give those people money!”

My parents are accustomed to my Buddhism now, and although they really do not approve, neither of them complains to me about it anymore. My dad even visited the temple once without any drama. When I got my first apartment, I experienced relief and freedom that I could go to the temple as often as I wanted without drawing anyone’s drama or criticism. For a while I felt ashamed for not having moved out sooner. But freedom is appreciated most when you realize you finally have it.



Meditation has provided me with the space to focus on what is important and what is not important. Meditation retreats, especially the past six to seven summer Yongmaeng Chongjins, helped prepare me for living on my own and to persevere through much more difficult transitions in life, such as when my boss passed away and when my dog died. It is easier now for me to address the deeper questions. What do I need to be happy? What is really important, and what is not important for my happiness?

At the start of the 2005 Yongmaeng Chongjin in Toronto, Sunim gave all the participants advice on how to live during the retreat by telling us that we had to figure out what was important and what was not important. I had three pleasant days with that advice, but on the fourth day, Sunim gave everyone the advice of “one set practice,” which transformed the retreat for me.

The fourth day turned out to be the hardest day for me because I had slipped and fallen down some stairs during the night so my knees were bruised and the lack of sleep and the humidity made me very drowsy during the day. Extra obstacles arose in my body and my mind when I had thought that the most difficult day had been the one just before.

By the time evening came, my body was slum-

bering, and I was feeling the creep of negativity and futility in my mind. I was ready for my “one set practice.” I got up from my cushion and did 108 prostrations. I did them slowly because of the ugly bruises on my knees, and soreness and achingness coursed through my body with each movement. I made every one of those prostrations matter. When I finished, I felt my spirit, my body, and my focus refreshed. This is why I think this recent retreat sank into my bones more deeply than previous retreats. I felt energized to continue the retreat beyond the five days.

After the retreat ended, I renewed my precepts. Standing shoulder to shoulder with all the other precept renewers as we loudly chanted, “Sogamoni-bul,” was a very affirming experience. All the voices chanting as one, thundering with the energy of commitment, made me feel solidarity with the group, the room, the building, and the earth.

A week after the retreat, I was on vacation at an Oregon beach facing the Pacific Ocean at sunset. I completed 108 prostrations and chanted “Sogamoni-bul” until I felt ready to stop. As the sunrise glow faded, I felt very warm so I pulled off all my clothes and ran into the surf. The silver waves knocked against me, and my skin turned icy. I briefly worried about someone watching me but so what? I was very awake and alive. Braced by the waves with my hair plastered to my head, bitter salt on my lips, and the force of the ocean pushing and pulling me to go with its flow, its rustle and its hush, my life blossomed with rich contentment and with the ease of feeling self-assured and at home in the world.

✽ *Kojun Kim Rodriguez was born and raised in Chicago and is currently a member of the Advisory Council of Zen Buddhist Temple in Chicago. She studies karate and is an active member of Sierra Club. She writes when she’s inspired and occasionally creates paintings and photography.*



Michele Champagne

water runs down

Bopch'ul James Carrol

I was born in 1962 in Devon, in the southwest of England. The winter was unusually hard. Heavy snow isolated the villages from the outside, and they had to be supplied by army helicopters. My grandmother and mother washed my diapers in a bucket with water from the one tap that still worked. We had no television when I was little and, of course, no computer and no cell phone. We were all going to die in a nuclear holocaust. The Beatles were on the radio, and man had not yet stepped on the moon. It was not that long ago.

I believed unquestioningly in the other beings—the phantoms, the fairies and black dogs, the ghostly huntsmen. Sometimes I felt them, and, until school and reason imposed themselves, sometimes I saw them. My parents divorced, and I moved to London with my mother and her partner, who became my stepfather.

I joined a reserve battalion of the Parachute

Regiment, left after two years, got a place on a biology degree course, dropped out after six weeks, hitchhiked around Europe for two months, and ended up in Egypt. I resat school exams and went to university to study philosophy and English. I was awkward, though not inexperienced, with women. I did not make friends easily, and I was violent. I fought in the streets, I fought in bars, I fought workmates, school friends, and flatmates. I fought from the south to the north of England, and I fought in Scotland, where I lived for eight years. Sometimes I put people in the hospital, but mostly I lost fights. I was kicked unconscious, stitched up by doctors, picked up by the police. I fought with men more times than I slept with women.

I injected myself with drugs, usually heroin, and I eventually used methadone, Temgesic, Valium, amphetamines, cocaine. I smoked hash,

swallowed mushrooms, dropped acid. I measured out my life with dirty spoons.

Why? I'd had a happy childhood. My mother is eccentric and volatile by temperament, but we shared a sense of humor that often diffused our fights and battles of wills. One of the nicest things she ever said to me was, "I don't care what you do with your life; I just want you to be happy." When she discovered I was an addict, she wrote me a letter that I still have, a cry of anguish from a mother unable to protect her child. The only other letter I have saved is one I received from my father, after I told him I had renounced his surname and taken my mother's name. The tone is calm and measured but of hurt beyond understanding.



During my years using heroin, I knew people who overdosed and died. I knew people who were dragged unconscious out of houses by their hair and left in phone booths to die but for the emergency call. People who were beaten to near-paralysis in arguments over bad deals. People who were jailed for thieving and possession. And, later, people I knew began dying of AIDS. Early in my period as an addict, my stepfather asked for advice from a streetwise friend, who frankly told him that I would never quit until I made the decision myself. "The best you can do," his friend said, "is to get him away from it." My stepfather and my mother were planning to move out of London, and he asked me to work on decorating their new house. I stayed for three months. At the time, I thought it was I who was doing him the favor. He pulled me back from the brink, and although I continued to use drugs later on, I never went to the extremes of that life again.

My final break with the needle came when I came to share an apartment in Edinburgh. "Don't do that here," said my new flatmate. I saw myself going under again and kept my word not to use. But I drank heavily, and I still smoked hash. The years passed, and I saw my friends drop out of the

party scene. They married and had children. I realized I was wasting my life. I began to seriously question what life was about, what it was for. The meaning of it all.

Between 1993 and 1994, I worked with a humanitarian aid agency that delivered food, clothing, and medical supplies into Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war. I volunteered for mixed reasons—for adventure and a determination to work against another war in Europe. My grandfather was killed in the Second World War a few months before my mother was born, and my grandmother drove an ambulance through the London blitz.

Near Vitez, our route on these supply runs passed the blackened shell of a bus by the side of the road. The bus had been hit by mortar fire during an agreement to evacuate the inhabitants of an enclave. The British soldiers at the local UN base told me that old women with pitchforks joined in the butchering of those who were still alive. Disgusted, the British battalion refused to let the bus be moved and left it as a testament. In the hospitals were children who had been targeted by snipers. Why?

We delivered supplies to refugee centers and orphanages. Sometimes we were caught in cross-fire. We were lucky; no one was killed. I met the man who worked as our interpreter; when I saw him again a few months later, his hair had turned white. The stories I heard, as much as the death and near-death, showed me the reality of violence and how violence causes violence.



By the early nineties, raves and ecstasy had arrived, along with the well-meaning mantra of "peace, love, unity, and respect." I still needed an answer. One night, I took too many different pills. I climbed the stairs to my apartment, and something exploded in my head. Everything I thought I knew about my life in the world was shattered by the enormity that suddenly con-

fronted me. Time stretched in all directions. I stood frozen on the stairway, aghast and awestruck, clutching the banister. My friend pried my hands off and led me to my room. All the color, he said, had drained from my face. I saw the profound concern in his eyes, and I wanted to reassure him: "It's all right. It's all right; nothing matters. Nothing matters; it's beautiful." I said it over and over. I felt I could abandon everything and step confidently into eternity, not to go anywhere but just to be. I saw my sister and all the good people who had done so much to help me. They had already received the knowledge that was now flooding over me, and they had been waiting for me to understand it. I felt a great urge to explain this knowledge to my friend, to share its beauty with him, but my ignorant, undisciplined, and drug-addled mind could not cope. Heaven turned to the hells of fear and paranoia. The door of perception, if that's what it was, slammed shut on me.

My friend sat patiently with me all night and talked me down. A few days later, I saw him off on a train. I do not know fully what I put my friend through, but I never saw or heard from him again.

That experience has haunted me. It lurked constantly in the background of my thoughts. I felt more strongly than ever that there was something beyond my limited understanding of the horror of life as I knew it.



Gradually, I began to pull myself together. I started writing for newspapers, started journalism school, and accepted a position on an English-language newspaper in Estonia, where I met the woman who would become my wife. She worked at the rival newspaper, and we met to swap ideas.

Eventually the two papers merged, but we already had. We talked through the night, about our lives and about spirituality. She had lost her faith in the Catholic Church. Her mother had been a nun, and her father had been a seminari-

an, but both had left. The family joke was that they had met at the last-chance dance. Her uncle had remained a priest and her aunt a nun.

Raised an Anglican, I attended church services every Sunday morning. Sometimes I had to be dragged to the services. Going to church became an exercise in extortion: no church, no borrowing the car. I told my future wife of the clash I perceived between belief and reason. I had been confirmed, but I could not understand the role of prayer. I believed God helped those who helped themselves. The priest suggested I try meditation, and I did. I would close my eyes and try to visualize a rose, a cross, or something else. Very soon I would be asleep. Eventually, I just drifted away. No one was able to answer my questions; church had simply become empty and irrelevant.

I spoke to her of Spinoza's notion of one substance—that the God of the spirit and the world of matter were one. We talked of the Gnostics, of Plato's cave, and of Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence. I told her I believed there was something greater and that we were a part of it. I said I did not know what it was but I desperately needed to know. I described my breakdown experience.

Somehow, my future wife understood. She understood as no one else had, and I came to love her deeply.

After a year or so, we left Estonia for Britain, and I began work at a local newspaper until red tape pulled her back to Canada. I followed.



We married within months, and I began the immigration process. My status was uncertain, and I was not allowed to work. I had been a journalist talking to prime ministers and presidents, and now I was nobody. I had given up my country of birth, given away most of my possessions, and arrived in Canada with nothing but what I carried in a backpack. Somehow, I was on a horse hurtling pell-mell into the forest, and my feet weren't even in the stirrups. I failed to welcome



Mazu Leisa Thompson

my new freedom. I drank hard, became depressed, blacked out, and ranted and raged. I began taking my frustration out on the woman who loved me.

I had to do something to calm down. I thought of meditation, but how was I to sit? I remembered that Buddhists meditated, so I went to the library and eventually found a book with pictures of postures. It was Philip Kapleau's *Three Pillars of Zen*. I checked out the book and read right through it. I was amazed. This is it, this is it, this is everything I had come to believe in, to know. This is what I had been searching for. It was right here, and it had been around for more than 2,500 years. I never knew. I was astounded.

I started sitting on my own, through the agony of the pain in my legs. I sat for about six months, until my wife suggested I should find a teacher if I was serious. I looked up Zen in the Yellow Pages and took a walk to a temple on Vaughan Road. I think a retreat must have been in progress. A man answered the door. I wanted a book to read, but he suggested I keep an open mind instead and gave me the dates of the next introductory meditation course. My wife and I signed up.

Anjali led the evening classes. He taught us how to sit and how to chant. He taught peace and happiness, gratitude, sincerity, mindfulness, and concentration. Someone asked about enlightenment. "Sitting is enlightenment," he replied.

One Wednesday evening, Sunim arrived and led the sitting. At the interview bell, I leapt from my cushion and ran to the top of the stairs, lost my footing, and slid down them on my backside. And so I stumbled into the first of many interviews.

I participated in my first *Yongmaeng Chongjin* retreat. On my cushion, I slowly came to realize that my addictions were the poison of greed. I came to realize, too, that nothing is more addictive than the ego.

Sunim encouraged me to take the precepts, but for a year I hesitated. I was still in a battle with alcohol. I began a counseling course, and in

the group I heard hair-raising accounts of crack addiction. I told my fellow participants about my Zen practice and how it had helped clear my mind. I went on the wagon for four months; I have not returned to the destructive binges, the blackouts, the rages, and the self-mutilation. In the end, however, I followed Sunim's advice, and in the summer of 2001 my wife and I both took precepts.



The temple teaches me to work mindfully. What I work at does not matter. Once, I washed windows a round the neighborhoods of Toronto, and I have washed the windows of the Toronto and Chicago temples. For five years I have been a roofer, and I have climbed the ladder, so to speak, from laboring on the ground to becoming the foreman of the crew. "There's no 'I' in team," we say. We share food and cigarettes and drink water from the same bottle; we watch each other's back. I am happy they know I am a Buddhist. When I get angry or frustrated, the crew teases me: "Think of Zen," they say. "Be one with the roof." My bosses humor my refusal to kill the ants and bees we encounter. A cloud passing, a bird flying overhead returns me to my practice.

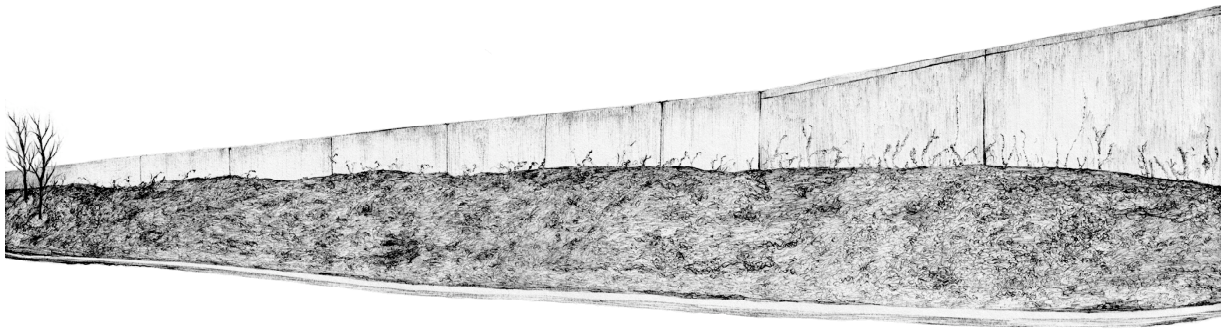
I take my propane torch to the temple for Yongmaeng Chongjin. The roof desperately needs replacement, which will be a great expense. For now, I burn on membrane patches. It is like repairing a worn pair of meditation pants, prolonging its usefulness for another winter.

Eleven months ago, my son, Jarvis Ashoka, was born. He is pure joy to me. He is everything that is intimate, immediate, spontaneous, and obvious. I have been so happy to see him welcomed into the sangha. A few months after my son was born, Sunim held a special and beautiful blessing service that was attended by my mother and my wife's immediate family. It feels right to raise my son as a Buddhist. I see his Buddha-nature shining out, and he helps me see it in others.

When I started to learn to shingle, I could not get it. “How do I cut this tab? Where do I put this step-flashing?” I would ask. “Water runs down,” was the invariable answer. One day I suddenly got it—a simple revelation: of course, water runs down. How stupid of me; I knew that all the time.

My practice is step by step; I have utter confidence in this path. I make mistakes; I fall down. “When we hit the ground,” Sunim says, “the only way is up.” I rely on the precepts, the Eightfold Path, and the Six Paramitas to help me back up. I return to my practice, and I try harder. I owe so much to my wife, Bobhyang, who led me here, walked beside me, and helped and encouraged me. Buddhism is the teaching by which I live my life. I may not always be a good Buddhist, but I am a Buddhist. I know that sincere meditation practice affects the people around me, my community, the country I live in, and the world.

✿ *Bopch’ul James Carrol walks the roofs of Toronto and enjoys rain days at home with his wife and son.*



Manora Katy Fischer



Konghana Tero Nauha

Seven Ways Buddhism Changed My Life

Chahaeng Joseph Halbgewachs

1. Finding a Direction in Life

I decided that Buddhism was the religion for me in a washroom. In the summer of grade 12 my mother bought me a book, *If the Buddha Dated*. It was meant to be a funny present because I always complained about not having a girlfriend and I used to try to start arguments with

Christians by telling them I was a Buddhist. I never really had a clue what Buddhism was about; I assumed that it had something to do with worshipping statues. One day I had nothing to read in the washroom so I took the book in for some casual reading. Eventually I came to a section about the Four Noble Truths. Upon reading them I felt struck. It seemed as though this was the

philosophy that I had been searching for all my life. The Four Noble Truths pointed toward a clear purpose for human life—to end suffering. This is the first thing that I am grateful to Buddhism for: providing me with a purpose in life.

2. Quitting Therapy

After reading about the Four Noble Truths, I decided that it was time to learn more about Buddhism. In the summer of 2001 I bought a book called *The Art of Happiness* by the Dalai Lama. Reading the book, I was very impressed by the rational nature of the Buddhist worldview. I was especially impressed by the principle of causality and how Buddhists defined right and wrong without resorting to dogma.

At this time, I had just finished grade 12, and my lifestyle was very immoral. During high school I had decided to take up a gangster lifestyle—dealing drugs, drinking, and getting into fights. I was taking medication and seeing a therapist twice a month to help me stave off depression. Depression had been an almost lifelong problem for me, but it was particularly bad in high school.

As I read more of *The Art of Happiness* and started trying to put some of its principles into effect, I gradually felt happier. That summer I was finally able to go off anti-depressants. The more of the book I read, the more excited I became. As the summer ended and school began, I began to tell my friends about this new philosophy. I rationally examined it from all angles, and I talked to them about it at great length. However, something was lacking. Gradually, the good feeling that I had began to wear off, and depression began to set in once again. I soon discovered that reading a book and talking about its principles are very different from putting the principles into effect. I searched “Toronto Buddhism” on the Internet and found the website for the Zen Buddhist Temple. I decided to check it out. Every time I came to the Sunday service, it felt like

going to a therapist, only far more effective. Eventually I took the introductory meditation course and became a member. I found the Wednesday membership sittings to be very powerful and I soon realized that I no longer needed a therapist. When I told my mother that I was going to quit therapy and go to the temple instead, she was very happy. I asked her to pay for my monthly membership donations, and she replied, “Well, it’s cheaper than therapy.”

3. Getting into University

By the end of grade 12, I knew I wanted to go to business school, but there was one big obstacle—I needed to have a grade 13 math. Unfortunately, because of the path I had chosen in high school, I had only taken math up through grade 10. Time was running short. I came up with a plan: I would complete grade 11 math in a summer correspondence course and then do grade 12 and 13 math in first and second semester.

As the summer wore on, I was finding it hard to muster the necessary self-discipline to complete my correspondence course, and by the end of the summer I still hadn’t finished. This meant that I no longer had the option of taking grade 12 math first semester. I felt very discouraged. Luckily, I learned that one grade 13 math didn’t require grade 12 math. By the end of the first semester I had finished my correspondence course. Now the only barrier left was Finite math. I enrolled in the course, but the math teacher suggested that I drop out because Finite math would be nearly impossible without grade 12 math. He said that he had never known anyone to complete Finite without a grade 12 math. I felt very discouraged, but I decided to stick with it.

As the semester went on, the course was getting difficult to handle. Fortunately, I had just become a temple member, and meditation practice was improving my concentration. I took up a regimen of meditating each morning and during my study breaks. I also meditated during the day

when I had to wait in line or when I was waiting at a stoplight. The results were amazing. I was studying far longer than I had in the past, and I got much more work done. I remember telling one of my friends, "Man, you should try meditating, you'll be able to study for three hours!" Eventually, I finished Finite math with an 83%, and I was admitted to university. I can honestly say that I would never have made it without the meditation training and guidance I received from the temple.

4. Avoiding a Conflict

At the end of grade 12 a new kid moved into our school; he seemed to think he was very tough. This upset one of my friends who had been considered the toughest guy in the school. My friend got into a fight with him and put his head through a window. At the time, I was running a website called PK Gangster that gave the underground news of our high school. On my website I wrote an article about the fight, and I introduced this new student in an unflattering light.

The following year the new guy brought his brother and a few friends to school. They found all of my friends hanging out together after school, beat them up, and threatened to kill them. The new guy made it known that I was next. I was very angry. After all, my friends and I had done whatever we wanted in the high school for so long. Who was this guy to think he could treat us that way? I set up a series of meetings with my friends to plan a way to retaliate. All of them seemed to want to let it go, but I was adamant that we should have revenge. At that time, I had finished reading *The Art of Happiness* and had just become a member of the temple. Inside I was torn between the desire to follow my pride and the desire to practice these new principles that had already helped me so much.

Wednesdaynight membership sittings became excruciating. The more I thought about hurting this other guy, the more difficult meditation

became. One Wednesday night after sitting, I asked Anjali, a Dharma teacher, for advice. Anjali told me to let it go. He said, "If he gives you a notch and you give him a notch, then it will go on like that." Instinctively, I knew this was the advice I had wanted to hear, but still it was very hard to swallow my pride. To avoid conflict I would have to try to stay unnoticed at school. So for my last eight months of high school, I parked my car away from the school parking lot and spent a lot of my time studying. I took this new guy's stares and insults without saying anything. This was difficult because I was so used to being in the group that everyone feared and respected. In due time, the year ended, and I went on to university. However, the situation could have been very different if Anjali hadn't given me good advice and if Wednesday-evening meditation hadn't been so painful when I was heading down the wrong path.

5. Quitting Marijuana

Because of the lifestyle that I had chosen to lead, I became addicted to marijuana in high school. I relied on marijuana to sleep well and to help me through stressful times. Everyone I knew smoked it, so it had also become important in the social aspects of my life. Eventually I decided that I would like to quit marijuana, but I was finding it very difficult. Throughout the 2001/2002 school year I tried several things to quit, but I was having a very difficult time of it. However, once I started going to the temple, I soon realized that after a session of meditation, I felt much better than if I smoked marijuana. In addition, meditation cost less than marijuana, and I could do it any time I liked. Gradually, I started to replace marijuana with meditation, and eventually I was able to muster the discipline to quit it completely. If it weren't for meditation I would probably still be addicted to marijuana today.

6. Forgiving Myself

My first two years of university went by with many ups and downs. However, I can sincerely say that I would not have been able to adapt to and succeed in university without the power of concentration offered by meditation practice. At the end of my second year of university, in the summer of 2004, I moved into the temple. That winter, while living at the temple, I began to feel very bad about all the poor-quality things that I had done in the past. I was becoming confused about the precepts and how to strictly follow them, and was having particular trouble with the precept not to lie. I felt that I was lying every time I answered “no” on a form that asked if I had a criminal record. My emotions began to get the better of me. I thought that maybe I should turn myself into the police for everything I had done and turn my friends over as well. In hindsight, this was nonsensical; I had no right to judge my friends in such a way. As days and weeks went by, I eventually reached the breaking point and decided I had no choice but to turn myself in. Before I went to the police station, I decided to go and ask Sunim for advice. I expected him to be angry or dismissive, but he was very kind and listened to what I had to say. Instead of telling me that I should turn myself in, he gave me a 100-day repentance practice to help me forgive myself. He told me to start the repentance practice immediately and to write a confession of all the things I had done. I was very surprised and grateful, and I went to my room and cried. For the next three-and-a-half months, I carried out my repentance practice while trying not to think about my past. I am very grateful to Sunim for instructing me. My past was a heavy burden to carry, so I am thankful to have had the opportunity to forgive myself.

7. Training to Help Others

After I finished my repentance practice, Sunim allowed me to enter the seminary. At first, I thought of Dharma student training as something like a more involved meditation course. However, it has become clear to me that it is worth much more than that. In spending time outside of the temple, I noticed that people can become inspired even when someone helps them with the dishes or wakes up early. The priests at the Zen Buddhist Temple have helped me to advance my life a great deal. Sunim and Muhan have both provided me with invaluable advice and inspired me through their example. I feel very grateful for the opportunity to learn to help others advance their lives in the same way.

*

Three weeks ago, I moved out of the temple. In looking back, it is clear to me that every positive change that has occurred in my life in the past four years can be directly attributed to Buddhism. I look forward to seeing what the future has in store. I have a feeling that the changes I have seen in my life so far are only a small portion of the benefits that meditation practice can bring.*





Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom



Zen Buddhist Temple, Toronto

BSCW Welcomes the “Ma” Dharma Family

On July 3, 2005, the Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom held its 16th Biennial International Precept-Taking and Renewing Ceremony at its Toronto temple, with Venerable Samu Sunim presiding as preceptor. Forty-five participants from Canada, the United States, and Mexico took precepts as a means of formally committing themselves to the Buddhist path of peace and happiness for all beings. They received meditation beads and Dharma names containing the root “Ma.”

Cristina Smith—Mala
Katy Fischer—Manora
Jeffrey John Wisniewski—Mara
Timothy Ashton Wilson—Manas
Andrew Cheng—Mahyang
Lori Dee Renzi—Mallika
Leonard Earle Bass—Maitreya
Charles Boyer—Madu
Gloria Cox—Maum
Brent Eastman—Mattang
Brian Dean Gentz—Maju
Scott Matthew Harris—Marananta
Dale Lawrence Jensen—Maso
Laurie Lachance—Madana
Matthew Lachance—Mattika
Alexis Levine—Mahesi
Kathleen Moniaci—Ma
Sujitkumar Nandagawali—Manam
Eric Pinaud—Madong
Eric M. Popp—Marici
Ashley Elliot Pryor—Map’ung
Henry E. Riekels III—Maji
Matthew Sears—Mach’um
Leisa Thompson—Mazu

Michael Maurice Umbriac—Magamok
Daniel J. Watermeier—Maru
Robert Harold Wilcox—Marpa
Bryan Samuel Thomson—Marga
Jeremy Dean Hinzman—Maya
Wenny Yuan—Marang
Jason John Wells—Masa
Cho, Nam-yong—Magok
Judy Esther Brown—Mani
Marcus Quin—Manatta
Robert P. C. Nagy—Magadha
Angeline Damianidis—Mahi
Kathleen Ogino—Manim
Kenneth A. Bleyer—Madangbal
Adam Benjamin Stotts—Magwang
Michael Thorn—Maha
Thomas Richard McCallum—Mahapurusa
Idania Luz Rodriguez—Maitri
Richard J. Desmond—Mahinda
Gustavo Adolfo Cabarcas—Manoma
Shannon Elizabeth Kingsbury—Mahasal

Late August

Joe Reilly

You give me gifts of cicada songs and cricket harmonies
of time slow as molasses
and time to vacuum my car

You give me another year of growth
more fruit, more roots
stories to bring back to the fire
and pens to write them with

August, you are starting to go to seed
and once again transform this landscape
into a sea of brown broom bristles
and prickly witch's hair
but not before the purple blooms of aster
make me laugh and cry all mixed into one
again

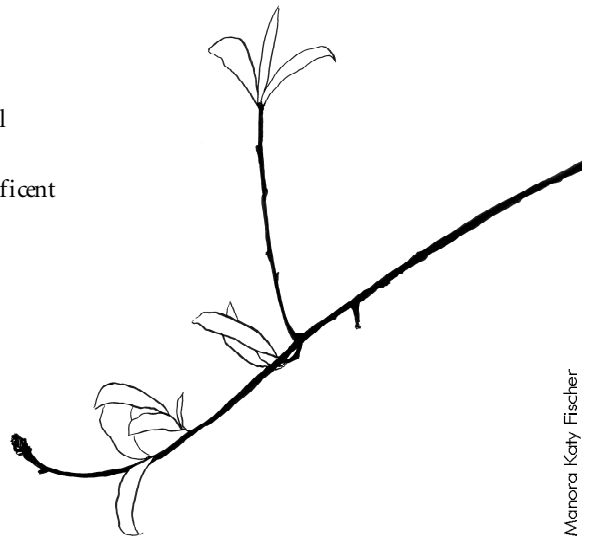
You are so magical

I remember you
when you pulled me into this world
just before you passed
and let September take over

That exact moment left your imprint on my soul

Your synthesis of summer and autumn is magnificent
You are a true genius of color and form

Here I am again August
ready to embrace your mysteries of change
ready to be who you call me to be



Monora Katy Fischer

Bring back the thunder
and let me dance in your savannas
of oak and blue stems

I will dance for you so hard
that all of the animals will come to see
this crazy August boy
and the people, my brothers and sisters, will
wake up to you

We will celebrate your cycles
We will celebrate your ability to bring together
stillness
harvests
steady
currents
death
hope
new
life

I will be sad when you go, I always am
but you are in each moment of February
I will be August in Winter
and we'll be there together
through the dark cold days
of barren snow scapes

Yes, under the thick white blanket
we will be laughing and waiting
to once again
bare our hearts to the world.

IT IS A VERY WINDY DAY. I can hear the waves crashing in on Lake Michigan. The wind is blowing sand around this ancient wild lakeshore. Monarchs struggle to stay their course in spite of the fierce air currents. I am once again camped at Nordhouse Dunes, the only wilderness area in the lower peninsula of Michigan. It is a beautiful, humble place. I hear it whisper, "I have everything you need." And it does: plenty of fresh water, sandy beaches, polished stones, miles of dunes, and forests of birch, cedar, oak, and pine.

It is a perfect place for simple living and has become one of my favorite camping retreat destinations. I arrived yesterday, my birthday, in the company of my good friend and Dharma brother Jake. He and I were on the swim team together in high school. We remained friends and, after college, reconnected in Detroit where we both found jobs. It was there that Jake gave me my first introduction to a practicing Buddhist community when he moved into Still Point Zen Buddhist Abbey. He is a great friend with whom to share this birthday. This marks my twenty-seventh year on the planet, in this life. I am happy and grateful to be alive. This moment is a gift—the perfect solitude, the late August sunshine, and the freedom and ability to use my body, mind, and voice.

I am a singer and songwriter and have spent the summer teaching children about stewardship, nature, and interdependence at an environmental education center in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I have written several songs with the kids, including "The Declaration of Interdependence," and "Human Nature." I am happy with where I am in my life. Children, nature, and music teach me about love and offer me hope, especially in times

of despair. Looking back on this year and on the past few years, I see how I have been shaped and transformed by a growing practice of mindfulness amidst experiences of pain, joy, sorrow, loss, love, and struggles. I have realized that I am walking a spiritual path. I continue to walk, sometimes stumbling in the dark, but still being guided by my heart and supported by the different traditions and spiritual practices that are alive in me.

I was raised Catholic in Kalamazoo, Michigan, by my Irish and Cherokee American father and my Italian American mother. I consciously began to reject Christianity in high school, partially out of sheer rebelliousness but also as a result of learning about the abusive history of the church, particularly in relation to indigenous peoples. I began connecting more with Native American communities during high school and college. As a student at the University of Michigan, I became a singer with an intertribal Native drum group called Treetown. I enjoyed traveling with Treetown to various social and spiritual gatherings and ceremonies throughout Indian Country. On one such trip, I participated in a Native American Church ceremony, a sacred round of prayers that begins at sunset and lasts until sunrise. I was reminded of how important prayer is to me. I began to see singing as a form of prayer and to understand more deeply the spiritual dimension of my role as a singer. Much of what I learned about using my voice and singing came from those experiences.

It was suffering that opened my heart to transformation, brought me back to organized religion, and eventually led me to the Dharma. One of the first major episodes of despair and anxiety that I encountered on my path occurred directly after the September 11th attacks. Not only did I feel a great sense of vulnerability and fear, I was outraged by George W. Bush's proclamation that waging a war was the path to peace and resolution. I knew deeply in my heart that I needed to find a way to counter this violent cycle with sincere, non-violent peace and love.

I happened to pick up a copy of *Being Peace* by Thich Nhat Hanh from my father's bookshelf. I read the book intently, word for word, savoring the simple profound truths in its message. To create peace in the world, the book directs, we must literally live up to its title and first cultivate peace in ourselves. This sounded both foolish and revolutionary to me. I was hooked. I decided I would seek this peace in my heart. This was my first introduction to Buddhist teachings. I was so impressed, I bought more books by Thich Nhat Hanh, some for my own reading and others to give as gifts.

Yet even with this new insight, the peace I sought in my heart and mind was fleeting. I began to experience increased bouts of anxiety and even panic. This suffering welled up within me and eventually brought me back home to my roots in the Catholic Church. I sought spiritual direction with a Catholic priest who helped me pray for peace of mind. My father gave me a rosary and it became my first set of meditation beads. I said the Rosary and the Prayer of St. Francis ("Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...") to the rhythm of my breath and began again to taste peace. I was struck with the kinship both Christianity and Buddhism share in the acknowledgment of life's suffering and in the teaching of paths of liberation. Could Jesus have been Buddhist?

Despite my searching for peace and freedom, my personal suffering continued to surface and at times felt unbearable. I tried anti-depressants for a few months but did not feel that it was the right solution for me. I was referred to a therapist by my spiritual director and found therapy to be very beneficial in cultivating well-being. After my first session, I felt as if I had thrown up—in a sense, I had. I released the stress, anxiety, and guilt that had accumulated in my mind for many years. It felt freeing. I stopped taking the medication and continued with therapy for an entire year, working on listening to and trusting my intuitive voice.

During that time, I had the opportunity to



Joe Reilly

attend a retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh at his Deer Park Monastery in Escondido, California. I was humbled by the community of monks, nuns, and lay people who live sincere lives of peace and mindfulness at the monastery. Thay (a Vietnamese word for teacher, used in endearing reference to Thich Nhat Hanh) described pain as “inevitable” but suffering as “optional.” He identified anxiety as “the sickness of our age” and taught that peace and happiness are available in the present moment. I wanted more. I felt nourished deep within my heart by his teachings and practice of mindfulness.

I returned to Chicago, where I had been living for the past year. Once again, suffering arose in my mind in the form of anxiety. It became amplified with the loss of a dear intimate relationship. I felt empty, confused, and in despair. I located a list of Chicago Buddhist temples my friends in Detroit had given me before I moved. I decided to try the one they had circled, the Chicago Zen Buddhist Temple. I made my way to the temple for a Sunday afternoon service. Sanha, the temple

priest, conducted the service, which helped nourish seeds of peace, love, and hope in my heart. I spoke with her after the service and explained my suffering and recent heartbreak. I was surprised and comforted by her response. “That is good,” she said. “Pain is good. It can help you grow.” There was no pity there. There was deep understanding and compassion, which emanated from Sanha’s very being. The effect was profoundly healing for me. My suffering had a place, and it was a window into freedom. I didn’t need to stay stuck there, but I could feel the pain, sit with it, and let it go.

I found myself asking Sanha if I could move into the temple. I wanted to cultivate that peace in my heart that felt so evasive—but perhaps I was the evasive one. I decided to attend a three-day retreat at the temple. Upon arriving, I was greeted at the door by Kongsim, one of the seminary students and temple residents, who I think was surprised to see a wild-looking dude with a guitar at the door for a meditation retreat. “Do

you know this is a silent retreat?" he asked me. "No, I wasn't sure," I told him. In fact, I found that silence can be healing. The meditation practice that I learned over those few days helped me sit with my suffering in a noble and healthy way. It helped me face my pain and the great loss I had just experienced. I knew that I needed to live in a community that would support this practice.

It was very difficult for me to follow through with my decision to move inside the temple door. I came close to scrapping the whole idea. I eventually did move in and found the lifestyle of early morning practice to be most supportive and energizing. I felt fueled with mindfulness each day. During sitting meditation, sometimes I experienced glimpses of a deep peace that had been with me all along, a wise and spacious peace that is solid in the ground of my being, even amidst the windy storms of my mind. I felt each prostration help me let go—over and over—of my grip on pain and guilt, of my attachment to a small, individual self, and of my fear of being alone. This letting go is so important. I think it is what Jesus refers to as being "poor in Spirit," and what the Buddha calls "emptiness."

Over the four months of my temple residency, I was able to see cycles of my moods come and go. I found my practice of concentration, awakening, and mindfulness growing in strength with each breath. I began to see a reality that is taught also in Native American spirituality—that there is an interconnectedness among all life, phrased by Native people as "all my relations." I applied this view to world religions and realized that there is even an interdependence among these different belief systems. Would Christianity exist without Buddhism? Certainly it could not exist without Judaism. Sunim, the founder and spiritual director of the temple, told me in an interview that "meditation is concentration" and "concentration is oneness." The practice was beginning to give me an experience of this inter-being and an anchor in the ocean of peace that I have come to know tenderly as Creator, God, Love, Spirit,

Buddha-nature.

As I sit here now, in these dunes, amidst the grass and trees that survive the harsh winds, I breathe out and feel the trees breathe in; they exhale and I inhale. The tufts of clouds above the water blur the division between sky and lake, and here I am, right in the middle of it, a human being. That is what I am doing to the best of my ability: being. And this is what is: oneness. I hear the dunes whisper, "Breathe. Do only what you can do right now. One thing at a time. One minute at a time. Be here now. Breathe."

The wind has brought more clouds over the dunes. Jake is resting in the tent. I see in this landscape a reflection of myself, my true nature. It is simple yet complex in its interdependence with all of creation. Its surface is shifting and transforming, but it remains what it is: a sand dune. And I am what I am: Catholic, Cherokee, Italian, Irish, US Citizen, Buddhist, human. I am a convergence of the many ancestors, faith traditions, and spiritual practices that flow through me. Like rivers, the traditions are distinct but all flow into one ocean. The water in each is the same and is interconnected, giving me many lenses through which I can see my true self.

Beneath my suffering, even beneath my religion and ethnicities, there lies a deep ocean of peace, a knowing and unknowing, a great mystery of the universe. I breathe into it, hoping to become a little closer to it in each moment, to know it even more deeply, to touch it and live it, to be peace. ✨



Michele Champagne

diving in

Konghwa Elizabeth Enciso

I grew up in the Arizona-Sonora Desert. Summers were hot, and at the beginning of each summer, my sister and I eagerly anticipated the opening of the local swimming pools. My father would take us to a pool across town. When we arrived, I'd strip down to my swimsuit, run to the edge of the pool, and jump in without a second thought. That particular swimming pool was filled with well water, which meant it was bitterly cold. The minute my body hit the cold water, I was temporarily paralyzed, unable to breathe, in shock from the temperature of the water. Then I'd start moving and wouldn't get out of the water for hours. My lips and fingertips turned blue, and my body shivered. I didn't care. It was thrilling.

As I grew older, I unlearned the ability to let go of trepidation and jump into a swimming pool of cold water. In high school and college, my summer job was giving swimming lessons, and I developed a ritual of getting into the water slowly and hesitantly. I was afraid of discomfort. I

wanted to avoid that initial shock of the cold water engulfing my body. I moved in inch by painful inch, waiting until each part of my body had become adjusted to the water temperature. Ironically, this fear just prolonged my agony. After several torturous minutes, I'd be completely immersed. My mother would laugh at me as I tiptoed into the pool. "Elizabeth, I think you enjoy suffering," she'd observe.

I have approached Buddhist practice with similar hesitation. I have been practicing with the Zen Buddhist Temple in Chicago for nearly three years, and for nearly three years, I successfully avoided five-day retreats. The mere title of these retreats—*Yongmaeng Chongjin* or "fearless practice"—was enough to keep me away. The prospect of what it might mean to practice fearlessly was just too terrifying. In deed, I had heard many accounts of past retreatants' experiences. The common theme was bitter, self-inflicted struggle culminating in some kind of rewarding



Michele Champagne

breakthrough. I dreaded the struggle and worried that I'd never have my own liberating moment. More importantly, I was all too familiar with my well-honed ability to create the perfect conditions for suffering. I imagined the retreat would be one prolonged battle with myself, and I could not imagine carrying that on for five days of silence and intense practice.

For three years, I had fail-safe excuses for avoiding Yongmaeng Chongjin: work, relationship, money, and so on. My reasons were practical enough to disguise my underlying fear. However, because of various life changes this year, my excuses all disintegrated. There was no job, no conflicts with relationships, and no lack of money. With no excuses left, I went to Toronto for the full five days of summer Yongmaeng Chongjin. I even decided to participate in the precept-renewing ceremony being held after the retreat. I survived it all. I even grew to love the experience.

Nevertheless, the retreat was anything but easy. In fact, when I began the retreat, I was a bit of a mess. I had arrived in Toronto a few days early to assist with necessary preparations. During this time my teacher, Samu Sunim, asked me and a couple of others to be responsible for wake-up *mokt'ak* during the retreat. We eagerly agreed. However, it didn't take me long to fixate on the fact that being in charge of waking other retreatants meant that I would be rising well before five every morning. I began to worry. This worry was compounded when Sunim instructed those of us renewing our precepts to complete 500 prostrations during each day of the retreat. Five hundred prostrations a day! This was in addition to the 108 prostrations that were part of the regular practice schedule. Of course I immediately noted that there was little free time in the retreat schedule, which meant that my 500 prostrations would have to be completed after the end of the day at ten p.m. When would I sleep? How would I wake up, concentrate, work? Where would I get the energy I needed?

By the time the retreat started, I was fully engaged in fits of worry. How could I rise at 4:15 every morning, do prostrations late into the night, and expect myself to concentrate through a daily total of almost eight hours of sitting meditation? I was doomed. I knew it. I fantasized about all the ways I would fail, and then I berated myself for being distracted from my practice by my fantasies of failure. My entire first day was spent volleying between voices of fear, self-pity, and brutal self-criticism. During our first afternoon work practice of the retreat, I situated myself in an isolated corner of the back garden and silently wept as I stuffed meditation cushions. I felt insane and was already exhausted. The five days of retreat loomed before me. I feared that in some kind of cosmic joke, the retreat might end up lasting forever.

That night, thanks to Sunim's Dharma talk, I snapped out of it long enough to see through my misery. In his talk, Sunim instructed all of us on retreat to have "Dharma courage." The words struck me hard, like a slap across the face. I almost laughed out loud at the realization: I was a coward! Courage, I realized, was exactly what I was lacking. I had squandered my first day of retreat feeling sorry for myself, hating myself, and obsessing over the possibility of failure. I somehow felt safe wallowing in gloom. Miserable worrying was an easy habit, an old pastime that required little effort but came at a great cost.

I realized that I suffered under the weight of my low expectations. I was so concerned about being able to control the outcome of everything that I underestimated my own abilities to rise to the occasion. I decided to take up Sunim's challenge to muster up some courage. I saw that if I was to get anything out of the retreat, I would have to put forth a wholehearted effort. Nothing else would do. I needed a leap of faith, the ability to dive into the retreat head first. I had to relearn my long-lost knack for just charging in without looking back or looking forward.

That night, after Sunim's talk, I marched

Miserable worrying was an easy habit, an old pastime that required little effort but came at a great cost.

upstairs to the Buddha hall, which had been designated for prostrations during the retreat. There, I met Samso, a fellow retreatant. Before the onset of the retreat, Samso and I had agreed that we would complete our 500 nightly prostrations together. We also decided that we could call it quits after reaching 250 if we found ourselves too exhausted to continue.

The Buddha hall was painfully hot and stuffy. All the windows were open, but there was little breeze. Samso and I plowed into our prostrations. We kept count together in silence. By the end of the first two hundred prostrations, my body was dripping with sweat, and I was dizzy from the suffocating heat, but I just turned my attention to the task at hand—moving body parts up and down, counting as I went along. Samso and I charged on. When we reached 250, we paused. We knew we were capable of more. At that moment we both silently acknowledged that nothing short of 500 prostrations would do—not on this night or any future night of the retreat. We continued prostration after sweaty prostration until we made it to 500.

At the end of this first set of 500 prostrations, I realized that despite the heat, dizziness, and dull knee pain, my experience had not been miserable. In fact, I felt exhilarated knowing that discomfort and challenging conditions were not enough to erode my resolve. In deed, Samso and I convened in that hot, stuffy Buddha hall every night of the retreat for our 500 prostrations. By the end of the retreat we were grateful for our sweaty practice and grateful to Sunim for providing us with a challenge that we may never have had the nerve to assign ourselves.

Prostrations were just the beginning of the

many ways in which I was confronted with the opportunity to dive into the challenges of retreat. There was the matter of waking up at 4:15 a.m. every morning. The alarm would go off, and I'd have a split second to decide how to react. I could moan and roll over for just five more minutes of sleep, or I could force my eyes open and bolt out of bed. When I decided to wake up instantly and willingly, tiredness was never a problem.

Then there was the matter of my encounters with cold water. Part of the daily retreat schedule was a quick cold shower followed by the cold rub-down, in which you slowly and carefully clean your entire body three times with a washcloth soaked in cold water. The dreaded shock of immersing my body in cold water returned. It is true that I had been taking cold showers all summer while in residence at the Chicago temple. Yet, somehow it seemed the water in Toronto was even colder. But there was no time in the retreat schedule for any hesitant tiptoeing into the shower. So, every morning, I'd throw my clothes off, count to three, and step squarely into the cold shower. Part of my practice was to force a big, toothy smile on my face at the moment my body recoiled in shock. I imagined the thrill I had once felt as a child diving into the swimming pool. I didn't have to fear the shock. I could actually enjoy the way the cold water stunned me into fully being in the moment.

Of course, there were also many hours of sitting meditation. Being distracted during sitting has always been particularly frustrating to me. However, Sunim's words were encouraging. We did not have to be perfect in our practice. We simply had to commit ourselves repeatedly to our practice. Courage meant trying over and over

again, in the face of distraction and exasperation, to focus on what was important—the practice—and not on what was unimportant—everything else. I just had to try, and when that didn't work, maybe I could try a little harder.

My retreat experience may sound tiring, but it actually wasn't. I was shocked to discover that by day three and four of the retreat my energy abounded. I found great inspiration in my fellow retreatants. Their persistent practice and steadfastness bolstered me. Many of them slept less, ate less, worked harder, and practiced longer than I even dared. Looking to them encouraged me.

I began the retreat weeping over my failings and weaknesses. I ended the retreat teary that the experience was drawing to a close. Yongmaeng Chongjin helped me realize that I am capable of so much more than I often believe. It has become clear to me that I chronically fall into a slump in which I tiptoe around my practice. I become satisfied with comfortable, lukewarm practice that doesn't take too much of my time, effort, or energy. It certainly doesn't present much of a challenge. That is my complacent practice, and for me, Yongmaeng Chongjin revealed the fear that resides beneath complacency.

In her book *The Places That Scare You*, Pema Chödrön writes about the tendency for us to practice “like timid birds who don't dare leave the nest.” Despite having outgrown our nest, we remain comfortably stagnant, terrified of taking the risk of flying into the unknown. Eventually, Chödrön explains, we simply have to grow up and push ourselves into the next step. Yongmaeng Chongjin forced me to grow up a little. I had to acknowledge the many ways in which I had been creating my own obstacles and excuses.

I returned from retreat determined and elated in the practice. Yet, it only took a few days before my resolve began to weaken. Being back in the “real” world was difficult. Distractions soared, and I easily got caught up in the minutiae and anxieties of daily work and life. I began to invent creative reasons for not practicing as hard as I

could. Complacency began to rear its head.

At least now I can recognize my tendency to become complacent. I know my excuses and complaints. Perhaps my greatest lesson is that Dharma courage becomes all the more important in the midst of this non-retreat, the so-called real world. This is the realm of our everyday lives and the place in which our practice is most needed and also most difficult to carry out. But, we have to try, over and over again. Then we have to try harder, believing that we are capable of more. We may not be perfect, but we can strive to be wholehearted and a little daring in our efforts. Ultimately, I know that I am fully capable of diving into freezing water and being thrilled by every shocking minute of it.

* *Konghwa Elizabeth Enciso has just begun the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary as a full-time resident Dharma student.*



Manora Katy Fischer

homemade

Spring Wind invites readers to share the joy of creativity and a non-consumer lifestyle in this special section.

Temple Morning Rice

Rev. Sanha

Sujata offered a bowl of sweet milk rice to the ascetic Gautama. He ate and sat in meditation under the Bodhi tree and became the Buddha.

★

It was a cold January evening. We gathered to celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment Day. We sat in meditation throughout the night. Even though I tried to stay awake and concentrate, I was often overwhelmed by heavy drowsiness. So, it was a nice break from sitting to go down to the kitchen and prepare rice gruel for breakfast. Cooking meditation! I was wide awake in the temple kitchen, cooking brown rice with nuts.

★

The "temple morning rice" grew out of that Buddha's Enlightenment Day rice gruel. It is delicious and nutritious.

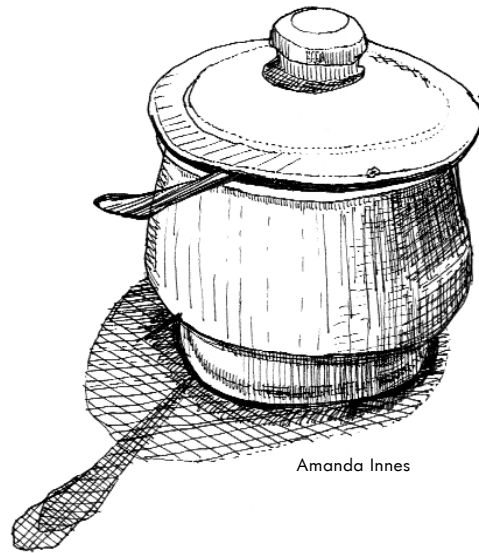
You need:

- 2 cups of brown rice (short-grained preferred)
- 1/2 cup each of 4 different kinds of beans (garbanzo, black, pink, navy, kidney, pinto, black-eyed, etc.)
- 1 cup of mixed nuts
- 1 cup of dried fruit (raisins, cranberries, etc.)
- Vanilla soy milk
- Sea salt, Honey
- Toppings: fresh cut fruit, yogurt

1. Rinse rice and beans.
2. Cook rice and beans with a pinch of sea salt in a big pot of 6 cups of water.

3. As the water boils, turn the heat down, and add nuts and dried fruit and cook about 20 minutes.
4. Turn the heat to low and cook about 30 minutes.
5. Check if the rice and beans are almost cooked. Turn off the heat, and leave the pot with the lid on.

You can freeze the almost-done morning rice in small containers. To prepare breakfast, microwave the frozen rice for a couple of minutes and then cook with soymilk. Serve the rice topped with fresh cut fruit and yogurt. Add honey when you cook the rice if you like it sweet.



Amanda Innes

building practice

Tamara Dean

Last year my partner, David, and I fell in love with a large piece of property in southwestern Wisconsin. We first saw it on a late January day when the snowflakes were falling fat and wet. The valley was hushed, insulated by hills and clouds and accumulating snow—our own enchanted meadow. We scuffed along while tiny brown voles darted between us. We caught snowflakes on our tongues. We climbed the path that led up one of the steep hills, our boots slipping occasionally to send us tumbling onto our backsides, giggling, and sliding downhill like otters. At the top of the ridge, the forest ended to reveal a domed field, open and vast. In the center of the field we found the remains of an old homestead: a cluster of savannah oaks, a limestone foundation, a windmill tower rusted and overgrown with vines. We explored like the Hardy Boys for hours.

Because we were in love with the land, we did what every real estate expert warns against—we made an offer without stipulating a survey, per cent test, water-quality test, or even a guarantee of no

buried dumps or fuel tanks. (“This is crazy. We can’t simply—But we love the place! We must!”) The offer was accepted immediately. And then, although we lived and worked hours away, we wanted to spend as much time at the property as we could. We had a dream, inspired by Helen and Scott Nearing’s *The Good Life* and similar accounts of back-to-the-landers, that someday we could live on the land and from the land, that we could lead a simple life there.

Now, more than a year later, we have moved to the area permanently and begun building on the property, and nothing has turned out as we expected. Of course! But truly, nothing is even close to what we imagined. We cannot plan our days. The tractor breaks. A faraway neighbor’s horses appear in our yard and need to be returned home. We discover a wild edible plant and spend the afternoon collecting enough of it to make a dinner. Last week a tornado formed at the top of our ridge and headed southeast, destroying acres of trees and the yurt we erected

We had a dream, inspired by Helen and Scott Nearing's *The Good Life* and similar accounts of back-to-the-landers, that someday we could live on the land and from the land, that we could lead a simple life there.

last summer for temporary shelter. Now our southernmost hill looks as if a giant plopped down on it. To the south and east of us people lost their homes. In minutes, the landscape was transformed.

I've come to accept and even welcome the variability and unpredictability of our new life here. Instead, it is the sameness, the days uninterrupted by passersby, severe weather, or remarkable encounters with nature, that have challenged me most.

"Miserable drudgery! Stupid f—ing way to build a building!" It was sameness that led me to yell and throw down my tools after weeks of plastering the walls of our straw bale building in the mid-summer heat. Even after recalling various Buddhist recommendations—"Just this," "Only this moment," "Abandon all hope of fruition"—on that day I hated plastering and couldn't bear to be performing such a worthless, mindless, futile task. In fact, the more I repeated these recommendations, the more restless and irritated I became.

In our straw bale building it is the bales, which are 3' x 8' x 3', that make up the walls and support the roof. To guard against weather and pests, it's necessary to cover the bales with plaster. We chose to use an earthen plaster, which is a mix of sand, clay, and water, because, although more fragile, it's more earth-friendly than the alternative, lime-based plaster. Every surface, inside and out, requires three one-inch layers of plaster, and there is no effective mechanical means of applying it. We apply the plaster by hand, sometimes using a trowel. Along with occasional crews of

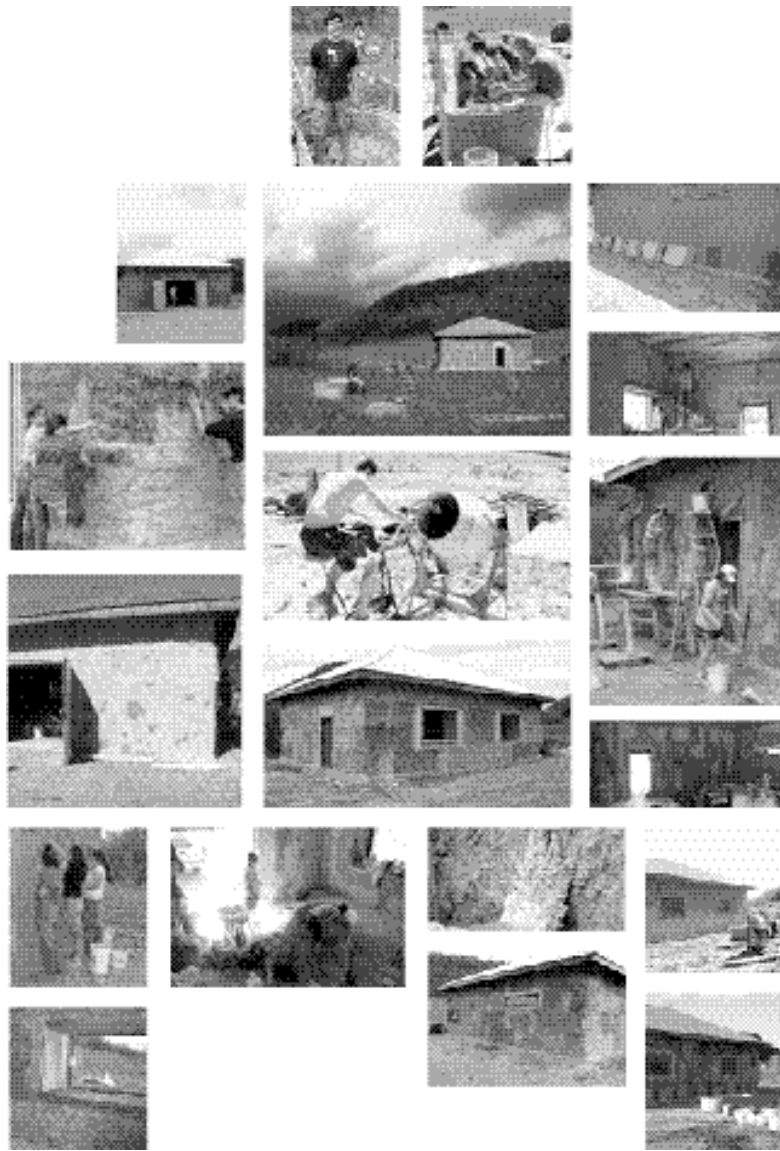
helpers we have put in nearly 1,000 hours of plastering since spring. And we are still plastering.

It was fun at first. We began with a two-day plastering party in mid May. Dozens of friends and acquaintances from the community signed up to help us mix and apply the first coat of plaster to the exterior. We enlisted a few more friends to cater meals on site. Our builder, Aaron, brought a large metal trough in which to mix the plaster. Starting early on Saturday morning, we and our guests took turns blending the clay, sand, and water by foot. Children and adults alike enjoyed stomping in the "mud." Applying plaster to the bales took some practice, but in our photos from that weekend everyone is smiling, some showing off their plaster-coated hands or feet for the camera. Many compared plastering to sculpting; they found it soothing.

The plaster is gray and feels like gruel. It doesn't stick readily to the straw, in the case of the first coat, or to the previous layers of dried plaster, and so it requires coaxing, smoothing, and patting to stay put. I typically scoop a big handful from the bucket with my left hand, tilt the trowel against the wall, slap the plaster onto the trowel, then spread upward, pushing the plaster into the surface while cupping my left hand below the trowel to catch what falls. Sometimes the whole handful falls to the ground. Sometimes it stays on the wall.

Smoothing the plaster is trickier. For the best weather protection, the final coat should contain no marks, lines, indentations, or gouges. But straw-bale walls are not flat—they undulate with the contours of the bales—and so smoothing one

Photographs by Tamara Dean and friends during construction of the straw bale building.



curved patch with the square blade of a trowel inevitably leaves lines and creases in the surrounding area. And if you don't push hard enough while applying the plaster, the surface will be grainy and vulnerable to the elements when it dries. If the trowel's face is too dry, the plaster sticks to it, and what you've just applied peels off. If the mixture is too wet, the clay and sand will separate. If the layers are too thick, the plaster will crack when it dries. There are other variables having to do with application, temperature, proportion of ingredients, and even, I suspect, the mental state of the plasterer.

Thanks to our friends at the plastering party, we completed most of the exterior's first coat in May. But we still had the second and third exterior coats, plus the interior, left to finish. Because the straw bales must be kept dry, we were anxious to finish plastering and apply some type of sealant before rain fell. With only the two of us working and curious visitors interrupting frequently, progress was slow. In June, we decided to hire some high-school students to help. They were bright, strong, hard-working kids, and with their help we finished the first coat on the interior and the second and third coats on the exterior in weeks.

For the final exterior layer of plaster we used a thinner mix, which contained four parts sand to one part clay and had the consistency of butter frosting. To this mix we added a pigment so that the building's exterior would not be simply gray. We had chosen a buff color, which we thought would blend in well with the grasses surrounding the building. But when we opened the first bag of pigment, we discovered that what we'd received was not a light gold but a dark orange, the color of Willy Wonka's Oompa-Loompas. We used it anyway, in sparse quantities, and it made the walls a pale terracotta. After a week, our skin, fingernails, clothes, and the porcelain tub in our rented farmhouse were stained orange, and our exterior was complete.

We admired and photographed our building and posted the photos on our website for friends

and relatives to view. Our neighbor, Kevin, an Italian-American construction worker from Chicago, stopped haying to come over and show our building to his friend, Luigi, who was also a construction worker. I walked in from the garden, feet covered in dirt and straw, shirt soaked with sweat and river water, to meet them. Luigi introduced himself, then said, "When Kev told me, 'There's this guy building a house of straw down the road,' I said, 'Naw, you're messin' with me! I gotta see this!'"

We explained the straw-bale building process and, because it was our latest preoccupation, described the difficulty of plastering. "We figure we'll have put something like 700 hours into the plastering when it's over," I told him.

"That's a lotta hard work, baby doll," Luigi said.

Days later, after our long and dry early summer, the rains began. In late June, a storm from the south battered that wall of the building, removing most of its final coat of plaster. Our exterior became sandy, orange mud pooled along the foundation. We were astonished that the plaster was so weak and worried about the straw bales underneath, but we didn't feel defeated. At the farmer's market the next Saturday we ran into a few of our teenage friends, who expressed sympathy and sadness when we mentioned the rain damage. "Aren't you, like, so pissed off?" one asked. We shrugged and said, "It's all a learning experience."

We were hurriedly re-plastering the damaged south wall when, a week later, another storm, this one from the west, brought torrents of rain and gusting wind that scoured the final coat of plaster off the west wall. Also, our rain barrels overflowed and sprayed the corners of the building. We ran out during the storm, barefoot, wearing our long yellow slickers, and tried to divert the rain barrel runoff with sheets of plywood, but it was too late. The corners of the building were scrubbed down to the second coat of plaster, too. This time the rain did piss me off. Or rather, the fact that we hadn't yet selected and applied a sealant pissed me off. So much effort wasted! But

by the end of the day I'd reconciled myself to the impermanence of our walls. We decided to work on the interior second coat until we received the sealant we'd finally selected, potassium silicate-based paint from an eco-friendly building supply company in Canada. It would take weeks to get through customs.

And then a third storm came, with sixty-mile-per-hour winds and blinding rain, from out of the north. David went outside and tried madly to prevent the rain barrels (which were now rigged with makeshift overflow mechanisms) from gushing water against the building again. When he came home long after dark, his hair and clothes were full of sand—sand that had been washed and blown off the north wall. By late July, the final coat of plaster from a third wall lay in small mounds at the base of the building. Only the east wall's plaster remained intact, though that had suffered some rain damage, too.

Our builder, Aaron, who had never liked the exterior surface—it wasn't as smooth as he thought it should have been—said, after inspecting the damage, "Excellent. The storms perfectly sandblasted off the bad coat."

Before the storms, plastering had not seemed like an entirely unpleasant task, just something to check off our list. After the storms, it felt like punishment. Temperatures in July exceeded ninety degrees for many days. David and I would aim to get to the building site early, sift sand through a window screen, mix a batch of plaster in the trough, apply it for the next four hours, and then begin the process again, staying and working until dark. At the end of the day our hands were cramped, our skin was dry and rough from handling the clay, and our muscles were sore.

Sometimes while we worked we listened to NPR. We rarely spoke. If I asked David what he was thinking about, he usually said something like, "Oh, plastering." Meanwhile, my mind had been far off, dreaming about novels, friendships, or plans for next year's garden. Intermittently I would interrupt my daydreams and bring myself

back to the present. I tried to appreciate the texture and sight of the plaster and its scent, which reminded me of earthworms and old wine casks. Weeks of plastering in July and early August passed this way, like a long, restless meditation session. I could pay attention to my work and the immediate environment for a few moments, but soon my concentration would falter and I was anywhere but there.

Then, sometime in August, I relaxed. Plastering stopped being the enemy. Plastering was just plastering. I was not striving for perfect walls, and yet my trowel moved deftly. In fact, the keys to a smooth finish seemed to be in not trying so hard, not overworking the surface, backing off and letting it dry a bit before the final swipes. Plastering was okay. With a steady, less frantic pace we have re-surfaced much of the exterior and covered the final layer with sealant.

Recently some friends visited us at the property. They had been unable to attend our plastering party in May, much to the dismay of their five- and nine-year-old daughters. After the girls jumped out of the family's van and hugged us, they shouted, "Plaster! Plaster! We want to plaster!" They ran into the building and found the ingredients, and before we could catch up, they had plunged their hands into the bag of soft, dried clay and then into the orange pigment. We put enough sand, clay, and water for a small batch of plaster into a black plastic tub; then they took off their sandals and marched in circles through the gray mud for almost an hour, occasionally pausing to inspect it on their palms or spread it all over their arms and legs. The older girl found a stick and drew our initials in the plaster. Then she walked through the initials and next drew the setup for a hangman game. "Okay guys, guess some letters!"

Later, we brought inside the buckets of plaster they'd mixed, and the girls began tossing it against the wall, slapping it down, and swiping it back and forth. Much of it landed on the floor. When they asked, we offered tips for getting the plaster to

stick and for making it smooth.

“This is hard,” they said.

They kept at it for a short while. And then the younger girl cried, “Hey! Let’s go to the river!”

And so we left the plaster where it lay and went to the river. We watched minnows dart past our toes, discovered rocks that looked like peoples’ faces, splashed in the cold water, and washed most of the plaster off our arms and legs.

* *Tamara Dean is a writer and teaches English literature and writing to high school students in Viroqua, Wisconsin.*



Manora Katy Fischer

Sitting in the Forest

Charyu Christina Wall

Friday night was pizza night. I remember walking in the door with my mom, who had pizza and Coke in hand. I raced to the top of the back stairs, “Hurry, Mom. I’m hungry!” Only, this demand didn’t get the usual “Be patient, Chicky” response. Instead, I watched the pizza fly through the moonlight pouring in the window and hit against the wall and saw the Coke spill down the stairs. My mother now lay flat on the stairs, convulsing violently and making horrifying noises that echoed throughout our dark home.

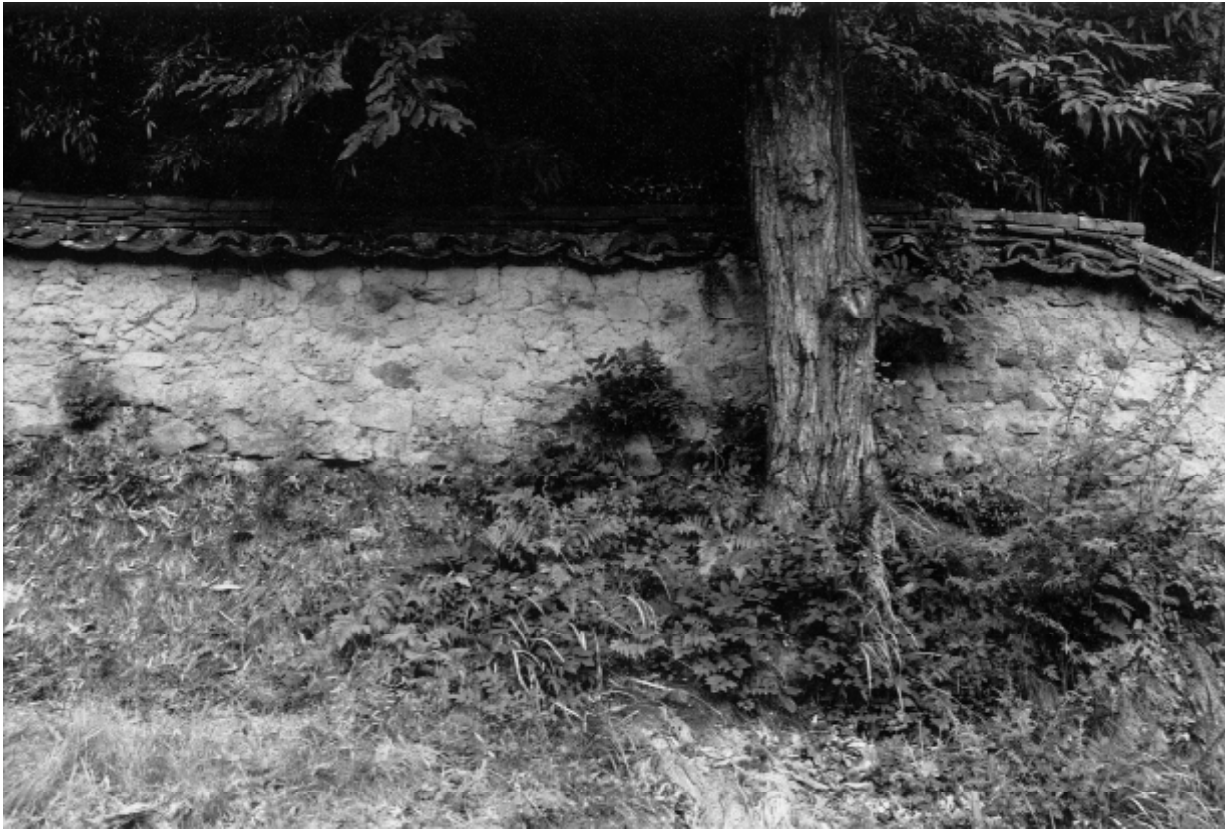
I immediately shrunk back to a corner of the kitchen, close enough to continue to hear but far enough away to protect myself from having to watch my mother’s convulsions. I remember sobbing, in the dark, and repeating over and over, “I don’t want my mommy to die. I don’t want my mommy to die.” My father, an alcoholic and

workaholic, was not yet home from work. I was alone with the terror.

This was my first memory of my mother’s grand mal seizures. I was three. When the noises subsided, I summoned all the courage that a three-year-old can have and peeked down the stairs. My mom, out of breath and disoriented, managed to remind me of the task at hand.

“Honey, stop crying. I’m okay. Now go get a towel. We have to clean up this mess. Your father will be home soon.”

My terror of what I believed to be my mother’s imminent death was diminished by my terror of my father coming home to find Coke spilled on the back stairs. I remembered an incident that occurred the week before. Someone left a door open that should have been shut. Most likely, it was me. My father took his deep anger triggered



Anjali Jacques Oule

by this open door out on my mother. After the usual exchange of dialogue—my father telling my mother how stupid she was, my mother calling my father a drunken psychopath—there was a physical struggle. He hit my mom in the eye. She beat him on the shoulder. I tried to call someone, but the phone was ripped out of the wall. I never feared that I would be physically harmed; nobody ever laid a hand on me. I did, however, fear for the safety of my mother.

I got a towel and, as quickly as I could, helped Mom clean up. My father came home drunk. My mom made pancakes. Nobody said a word.

This incident was one of the many times I was a lone with my mother when she had a grand mal seizure. These seizures happened frequently over a span of about ten years. One time my mother and I were at the grocery store. Another time it

happened in a restaurant. On most occasions, it happened at home. Sometimes my father would be home.

“Dad, come quick! It’s happening to Mom again.”

My father, in his drunken state, would usually hold down my mother’s feet and yell, “Calm down!” as if she could comprehend his words. Then he would look at me and tell me to stop crying. If my mother was going to die, the last thing I wanted was a father who was upset with me.

Starting at the age of three, I learned to always keep on guard, to never relax. I learned to recognize an imminent seizure a minute or two before it actually happened, and I found myself constantly looking in my mom’s eyes for the indications. I would take a good look at the surroundings whenever we went out together.

Where would be a safe place for my mom to lie down if she had a seizure at this moment? Would anything here hurt her if she fell?

I also learned how to clean up the messes. It's 6 p.m. Dad's home at 6:30. Is everything in its place? I walked through the house to make sure. And I learned to stop my tears in the presence of others.

So, here I sit—a cleaning maniac who has problems relaxing and being vulnerable. And I am angry. Why was I, a small child, left alone with a parent who had grand mal seizures? Why was something out of place a reason for violence?

I find it humorous that I would stumble upon the Ann Arbor Zen Buddhist Temple and immerse myself in a practice based on meditation, transparency, and peace. After a little more than two years of practice, I'm only now beginning to realize the intense challenges on the path to discovering my true nature.

I remember the first time I sat at a public service. I spent the whole time worrying about sitting perfectly still. I focused my eyes on a speck in the carpet and realized it was actually a speck of dirt. I reminded myself to pick it up as soon as the sitting was over.

The temple maintains a level of tidiness, but I soon discovered there was always a "mess" to clean, somewhere. Weeds could always be pulled; the shop could always be a little better organized; the altar could always be dusted. A match made in heaven for this cleaning maniac.

After attending public services for a few months and volunteering for work in the garden, I took the meditation course and became a member. I started showing up on Friday mornings for service and work practice. I wanted to experience living at the temple, so I moved in for a month. The month of residency was my first taste of the struggles on this path, which for me would always occur at night after evening practice. After I had worked around the temple for most of the day, this down time was an opportunity to relax. The problem was I didn't know how. The temple at

that time of night was so peaceful, but I had seldom experienced peace. I tried to be on guard, but there was no reason to be on guard. I learned that there was no need in this peaceful environment to survey the surroundings for safe places or to feel terror over spilled Coke. Yet, I found this environment so unfamiliar that I became fearful of it. After evening practice I would often retire to my room, stare at the ceiling, and cry.

I often thought of fleeing the peace of the temple by plotting a 3 a.m. escape down the back stairs, but I managed to stick out the month. It was ironic that I feared peace, and although my fear never disappeared, it did diminish. I got tired of waking up for morning practice, having a headache, and feeling dehydrated from crying the night before. Instead of retreating to my room, I learned out of desperation to go to the third-floor yoga room and watch the creatures in the garden. I quickly discovered that while I dreaded nightfall, the squirrels became overjoyed as the sun went down, chasing each other wildly along the paths. As I watched those squirrels, I slowly realized that it didn't matter if I experienced the fear of a child or the joy of the squirrels as darkness approached. Being stuck with either of these would prevent me from seeing night simply as night. By staying with and immersing myself in my fear, delusion faded, and night clearly became night; nothing more. Fear would still come, and, on occasion, I would still go to my room and cry. But instead of crying myself asleep, I would eventually get up and go watch the squirrels. This was my first experience of transforming fear from something paralyzing to something empowering.

Inspired by this transforming process and eager to share it with others, I decided to enroll in the seminary. I attended my second *Yongmaeng Chongjin* the fall of my first semester as a seminary student. These three days were hellish. My *hwadu* practice vanished during the extended sittings. I had only images of my mother's convulsions. I felt horrible and cried most of the time. I even cried in front of people, and, to my surprise,

no one told me to stop. On the evening of the second night, I slipped Ha ju Sunim a note: “I have to leave now.” She encouraged me to stay. I did. I tried to sneak out on the third night and ran into Ha ju Sunim on the stairs. Again, she encouraged me to stay. Again, I stayed. The rest of the retreat was not enjoyable, but I experienced some gratification for completing the entire retreat. I convinced myself that after only a year and a half of practice I had pushed through my struggles. From now on my practice would be smooth sailing.

My experience during the retreat wasn't the last of my difficulties on this path, of course—it was but a small glimpse of what was to come. Since then, I have cried for hours at a time; not just tears, but the hard crying when catching your breath is difficult. This is not surprising: I have thirty years to make up for. I often feel alone with the terror, like the three-year-old girl in the corner. Meditation can still be painful. Sometimes situations trigger deep anger, and I say things that hurt the ones I love. This practice seems to have opened up a whole can of worms. Through all of these struggles I try to remember that worms, if given the chance to do their work, make rich soil for growing beautiful things.

I am at a crossroads in my practice. I've decided to take a break from the rigors of the seminary, use this time to sort through these deep-seated feelings of fear and anger, and learn how to relax. I find myself wanting to make that “3 a.m. escape” from my practice altogether. My most intense fears are now right in front of me. Do I, like the Buddha, sit in the forest amidst the unnerving noises and wild animals until these fears become subdued, or do I continue to allow my fears to roam freely in my mind? If I want my actions to benefit others, I have no other choice: I must sit in the forest until the fears are subdued. The process may be longer for me than it was for the Buddha. That's okay. I am just thankful I have forests to sit in. How would I grow otherwise? ❀





Anjali Jacques Oule

Instant Dharma

William Ace Remas

A Buddhist nun, who I was privileged to know, stood behind me as we prepared to cross the street together. I was hit by a truck, knocked in the air, and came crashing down on my right shoulder. A great gouge was ripped into my left arm. The wind was smacked clean out of me.

Though I stayed conscious, I couldn't talk because there was no air in my lungs. The nun knelt beside me and clutched my right hand to her heart. She murmured a mantra into my ear. "Say the mantra," she commanded gently, "It will change your karma."

I tried a few turns of the mantra but was dazzled by the brilliant blue sky above. White streaks of clouds filtered by. The sky and clouds seemed the picture of truth. Beautiful! I smiled with delight.

Another practitioner laid her hands on my left arm to stop the bleeding. She smiled down at me. I saw serene faces and the doud-rippled sky. Still, I couldn't breathe; I was still, like death. It was a very pleasant feeling, to be so still. Though there

must have been a hubbub of activity around me, its movement and sound had dissolved into the stillness. There was only the great emptiness of the sky and my wish that all my friends standing nearby were having the same experience.

I tried to lift my head to see what world I had passed from—the truck that hit me, still idling; the traffic passing by in a far lane, impatient to get through the jam; the Buddhist center toward which the nun and I were headed across the street; my friends murmuring concern; and the truck driver who had clipped me. He looked irritated.

Then my breath came back. I returned from the stillness, easily and without gasping. The noisy world resumed. I tried speaking to let everyone know that here I was. The nun and friend held me to the pavement. I heard someone say that 911 had been called. Someone else said my wife was coming. She had been across the street in the Buddhist center when the accident happened.

I tried to get to my feet so my wife wouldn't

think something terrible had happened, but couldn't. My new world was filled with pain in my shoulder and back. The nun ripped my watch, a remnant of the past before the accident, from my left arm. I was faintly aware that the gouge in my arm was probably caused by the watch being jammed into the arm by the collision.

I heard my wife's quavering voice, near tears. She stood behind me, and I tilted my head back to see her. She said she loved me. I was concerned for her and looked to the nun and friend to take care of her. I decided to just rest on the pavement.

Soon the emergency medical professionals arrived in their ambulance. They poked here and there asking me to identify where I felt pain. Though it was not quite true, I said there was no pain to speak of and insisted I could stand. They smiled as if they had heard this a thousand times before and considered it foolish each time. So, I stopped pretending I wasn't hurt and let myself be taken care of by these wonderfully kind and efficient people.

Everything was pleasant, even the pain in my back and shoulder. The pain and stiffness were reminders that life changes moment by moment. One moment I'm crossing the street, the next lying on it. One moment pain here, then there, then none. Mantras flowed in my ears, and I saw in the blue sky the holy beings who protect all of us. Death would be like this. In an instant I would be alone. Everything around me quieted down, the people and activity around me dimmed and blurred, the sensations of pain and my body mellowed and dissipated, my thoughts slowly wound inward to just the empty sky rife with clouds, eternal, true, still. In that moment I thought I knew what death, a good death, could be like. Smiling, gentle, quiet, empty, alone.

The emergency team gently installed a neck brace. The brace was more uncomfortable than the pain in the back or arm. They rolled me on to a backboard and loaded me into the ambulance. The blue sky was replaced by the lights and the metal roof of the ambulance. We rolled this way

and that. I began to get car sick. The emergency medical technician in the truck with me asked if I was okay and I told him I was getting sick. He said it would be over in a minute.

I was moved from the ambulance through the hallways of the hospital. Doctors and nurses looked me over briefly. No visible broken bones. No excessive bleeding. No unbearable pain. No emotional reaction. I just lay there smiling, so they left me alone so they could tend to more urgent cases in the emergency ward.

I had no sky to look at. No friends to hold me. I lay like a lost ghost stranded on a cold slab in a beige room flooded by dreary fluorescent light. This was worse than lying in the street with traffic whizzing by a few feet away. Maybe this is what death becomes. No sky, no fresh air, no friends, no excitement, no bother. Still, it didn't matter. In some way that is difficult to explain, even the hospital emergency ward was as beautiful as the sky. I was patient to see what world would happen next.

Next was my wife, blubbering but brave. She held my hand and told me she loved me, which was her mantra (one that works, by the way). She assured me everything would be okay. She had already called our son so he wouldn't be surprised and worried about the news. My son! Oh, then I missed him. I wanted him beside me too. I was happy he wasn't distressed and worried.

Later, I was x-rayed and sewn up, then released back to ordinary life into the early evening air, under my own power with my right arm in a sling and my left bandaged heavily. Friends were waiting to help my wife and me. We chatted about the thrilling time. I was most touched when the five-year-old son of a fellow practitioner came marching toward me with a determined but frightened look on his face. He didn't say anything; he just walked up and hugged my leg. I knelt to reassure him I was okay and to thank him for coming. He nodded his understanding and then marched away with his father.

My wife and I drove home recounting the day, trying to piece together the events of the last few

hours. She was at once exhilarated that I appeared to be safe and concerned about the unknown consequences of the accident. What would my new post-accident life be like? Would some worse injury appear later? A ruptured spleen? Internal bleeding? Infection? I tried to laugh it all off and said I would be at work the next morning. My wife knows me well and scoffed at such a notion. I realized then that it might be pleasant to be cared for over the next few days.

My son met us at the house. He was gruff and monosyllabic as usual, but I understood that was his way of handling a situation that at one time appeared to be worse than it turned out to be. His hug, however, was bigger and warmer than any we had recently shared. I kissed him on the cheek and reminded him he was the love of his mother's and my life.

That night in bed, after taking pain pills for the shoulder and back, staring at yet another ceiling, the one in our bedroom, I reflected on the day. My world had changed in an instant. I had observed a meaningful empty sky. I had contemplated death and what happens afterward. I had been separated from family, friends, and ordinary life. Then I returned to them all, wiser. It seemed worth it.

✿ *William Ace Remas, age 60, lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with his wife Marsha and son Eli. He is active in Dharma and in his business and family life.*



Rev. Toan José Castelao

LITTLE PILGRIM

A NOVEL BY KO UN

From South Korea's greatest living poet and nominee for the Nobel Prize in Literature comes a tale of adventure and self-discovery in the tradition of Hermann Hesse's *SIDDHARTHA*. Based on the last chapter of the Avatamsaka Sutra, *LITTLE PILGRIM* is a lyrical and passionate meditation on spirituality and the nature of existence.



ISBN: 1-888375-43-5 • \$18.95 • 400 pages • Paperback

AVAILABLE AT BOOKSTORES OR FROM



PARALLAX PRESS
PO BOX 7355, BERKELEY, CA 94707
800-863-5290, FAX 510-525-7129
WWW.PARALLAX.ORG

NEKO-CHAN TRADING CO.



books • incense • meditation tools
free full-color catalog 1-888-635-6242

www.neko-chan.com



The Buddha In Me

Six original, practice-inspired songs by singer/songwriter Joe Reilly including "The Buddha in Me," "Monkey Mind" and "The Michigan Song." Available at Zen Buddhist Temple in Ann Arbor, Chicago and Toronto. Proceeds from this release benefit the temples' Dharma work for peace and justice. Learn more about Joe Reilly at www.spiritboy.org



Frank T. Karall, CPA
www.ftkcpa.com
773.404.8484

Dear Readers,

Spring Wind needs your support to continue sending wonderful Dharma into your everyday life. Please be generous. All donations are tax-deductible. Please see the insert. We thank you in advance.

Thank you for your kind support.

Patrons

- Sanbang Maryellen Friedman, Uptown Sweets (Chicago, IL)
- Wonyong Sunim, Bodhi Mind Zen Center (Teaneck, NJ)

Sponsors

- Adina & Kevin Henderson (Crowder, OK)



Sandam Tammy Nakashima
Back cover: Calligraphy by Rev. Toan José Castelao



constantly question your true nature



Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom

We are happy, energetic, helpful Buddhists!

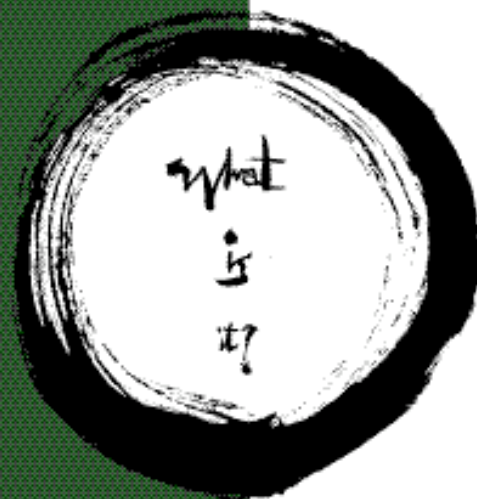
Zen Buddhist Temple

1214 Packard Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 761-6520
a2buddha@provide.net

1710 W. Cornelia Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657
(773) 528-8685
chicagobuddha@rcn.com

297 College Street
Toronto, ON M5T 1S2
(416) 658-0137
buddhisttemple@colosseum.com

Actopán 30 Colonia Roma Sur.
Delegación Cuauhtemoc
Mexico D. F. C. P. 06760
(52) 55 5584-3382
templo@socbudista.org



Sunday Public Meditation Services 9:30 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.
Meditation Courses, Retreats, Visitor's Program,
Maitreya Buddhist Seminary, and more...

Please visit our website or call your local temple.
www.ZenBuddhistTemple.org

Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom is a North American Buddhist order founded in 1967 by Venerable Samu Sunim, a Korean Zen master. The Society's Dharma work promotes the non-dual gate of awakening in everyday life.

ALL WELCOME!