

ARCATA ZEN GROUP NEWSLETTER
September, 1999

SESSHIN COORDINATOR(S) NEEDED FOR OCTOBER
For Information on How to Volunteer, Please See Below

WEEKLY SITTING

SUNDAYS the AZG meets at 8:10 AM at the Northcoast Aikido Center, located off the public parking lot at 8th & F Streets, Arcata. There are two half-hour periods (the second begins at 8:50) with kinhin in between; reading and discussion follow. Maylie Scott, Soto Zen priest and teacher, will give dharma talks on the first and third Sundays of the month. On the second Sunday, the sangha shares poetry and other readings brought in by individuals.

WEEKDAY SITTINGS are held at Maylie's house (740 Park, Arcata) Monday through Friday beginning at 5:30 AM. There are two periods - a 40 minute followed, after kinhin, at 6:20 AM by a 35 minute. A short service ends the sitting at approximately 7:05 AM.

MEDITATION ORIENTATION at Maylie's will be on Tuesday evenings beginning September 7 from 7:30 to 8:30 PM. Maylie will offer orientation to Zen meditation through instruction, guided meditation, and a question-and-answer period. This is open to experienced students as well as beginners.

The above events are all free and open to the public; everyone is welcome. If you have questions, please call Maylie or Suzanne. Remember when you park at Maylie's to use the areas in front or Fickle Hill Road; do not park across the street (see enclosed map). Also please remember to not use anything scented (perfumes, soaps, deodorants, hair and shaving products, moisturizers, etc.) before AZG events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

COORDINATORS NEEDED

The October sesshin is currently without coordinators. If you would like to coordinate this sesshin, please call Rob.

CLASSES STARTING IN SEPTEMBER: HEART SUTRA, DOGEN

The Heart Sutra class will meet Wednesday evenings, September 8, 15, 22, and 29 from 7 to 8:30 PM. The fee will be on a sliding scale of \$5 to \$20 for the series. Recommended reading: The Heart of Understanding by Thich Nhat Hanh. On Monday, September 13 at 7:30 PM, Steve Jenkins, Professor of Asian Religions at HSU, will give a supplementary class on the Heart Sutra's historical setting and on its impact and power over the course of centuries.

The Dogen Study Group is open to students who have practiced five years or more, or who have spoken with Maylie Scott. It will begin Sunday, September 12, and continues on the second and fourth Sundays after zazen from 11 AM to 12:30 PM. The fee will be on a sliding scale of \$5 to \$20 every other month. Maylie will provide reading materials at cost.

Both classes will be held at Maylie's home at 740 Park in Arcata. Please contact Maylie for further info.

SEPTEMBER SATURDAY SIT

On the second Saturday of every other month (alternating with longer sesshin), a daylong sit is held at Maylie's home from 9 AM to 5 PM. The next Saturday sesshin is scheduled for September 11. Please bring a bag lunch and sitting equipment. For more information, call Maylie.

OCTOBER SESSHIN

There will be a retreat with Maylie Scott from October 20 through 23 at her home. The retreat will begin at 7 PM Wednesday; daily sitting will be from 6:30 AM to 9 PM. Maylie will give a talk each day at approximately 10:50 AM. The retreat and meals will be in silence. Sesshin meals will be oryoki style; bring three nesting bowls, chopsticks, spoon, towel, and napkin. We have three oryoki sets for guests. Both oryoki and sitting instruction will be available. There will be sign-up sheets for the jobs at sesshin as well as for dokusan. On Saturday, the retreat will end about 5 PM, followed by clean-up. On Sunday, the group will meet as usual at the Aikido Center at 8:10 AM.

Please fill out and return the reservation form by October 6 to help us estimate the quantity of food needed for each meal. The cost of the sesshin is \$20 a day; as always, scholarships are available. For more information and/or to volunteer as coordinator, please call Rob.

NOVEMBER SATURDAY SIT

The November Saturday sit is scheduled for the 20th at Maylie's home, 9 AM to 5 PM. Please bring a bag lunch

and sitting equipment. For more info, call Maylie.

LETTERS

NOTE FROM MAYLIE

Dear Friends,

With your help and support, I'm moved in and am quite settled in this beautiful house. If you haven't seen it, I invite you to come by and have tea. The schedule of up-coming classes and zazen periods is in this newsletter and also circulating in the community. I am interested in talking to anyone who has comments or ideas about what else the group might do. I'm also inviting people to call me for practice discussions. It is not necessary to have a grand question, but just to have an opportunity to describe your practice and for us to begin or continue a dharma relationship.

Maylie

from Mark P.

You never know what might be found that has faded or been lost or misplaced - something that might shed some light.

There once was an old monk who, among his other duties, kept the relics of the monastery: the tooth of Christ, the Buddha's jaw bone, Crazy Horse's medicine. He liked his job but there was one object that was so sacred it gave off a smell like attar of roses, vibrated, and radiated light - too much original nature for the Christians, too mystical for the Buddhists, and no native person in the surrounding area would risk touching it. So the relic keeper buried it, figuring it would be safe in the ground of his little garden. That was a long time ago.

Now, if you drive up into the hills above Pasadena in dream time and travel through a forest of big sycamores and maples and alder, you come to a place where the road narrows and becomes a dirt track. Then the road ends and there is a clearing. Park here and walk over to the place where people go. If you look at the ground here you see lights coming out of a small circle on the ground. The lights are like beams transmitted by a submarine oscilloscope, only brighter and in different colors. It's good to find this place and see the lights but I don't know what would happen if somebody dug it up - probably they would get in trouble for tampering with a natural phenomenon.

Don't forget to check out the thrift stores in Pasadena before driving up into the hills. They have some good ones. In fact, the story goes that one of them once sold a white wool knit hat with ear flaps that used to belong to God.

Letter From Erwin Cornstuble

Mr. Cornstuble, a prisoner in Arizona, wrote this letter to Mark P., the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF) contact person for this area. If you want info on the BPF Prison Project, you can write c/o BPF, POBx 4650 Berkeley CA 94704; www.bpf.org/bpf; or 510-655-6169. Mr. Cornstuble would welcome correspondence from members of the sangha.

Good Morning,
Welcome to Sankei*, my rock garden.
BPF's prison ministry brought hope . . .
your zendo will find interest in
my karma's paths and pebbles:
male, 52 yrs, 5' 11", 130#, green eyes, dark hair;
Rinzai meditation for 2 years
(self-taught - no guidance available);
"Practice," meditation and haiku are my paths;
Captive of Arizona since '78, one armed robbery
conviction, no prior criminal history,
no history of sexual abuse, mandatory release
in 2001.

Before the Hall of
Zenkoji Temple

This willow tree
That looks like a white cat
Is also a votive flower.

Issa (1763-1827)

Coiled barbs glisten
Sparrows spiral flight
Nights dawn - prison dusk

Your Zendo members' letters are most welcome.
Sankei loves citizen sunshine. Everyone will receive
a spirited answer. Relocation to genuine training is my next step.

Me (now)

(cont.)

Remember, drive carefully, please!
Mr. Erwin Cornstuble

*Japanese colloquialism meaning "3 paths" and "hermit's garden."

Lama Lessons

Erika Makino

Shortly before my backpacking trip, my llama Shandy suddenly refused to accept his saddle and saddle bags. He bucked and jumped and spat and growled. There was no time to work on his attitude. I had to change my plans. But give up my dream? No!

Dancer, my other llama, would have to carry everything and Shandy would go as his companion. I practiced "letting go" and left behind luxuries like camping chair, fresh food, books.

I was nervous and excited as I drove the animals to the trailhead in my pick-up. Soon I discovered that I hadn't brought enough water. I decided to share my water with the llamas. Wasn't I noble and kind-hearted? I set the bowl in front of Shandy: he turned his head away. I put it next to Dancer: he knocked it over immediately as if refusing my self-serving and condescending generosity. Thank you for the lesson!

At first, everything went well and Dancer pushed ahead. He was full of energy in spite of his load. But after a few minutes, he fell back, then stopped. I had to pull him. He walked, then stopped. He wanted to taste the sorrel, the ferns, and whatever else was growing under the canopy of redwoods and firs. But I wanted him to walk. I tried a compromise. I let him browse, but not as long and not as often as he wanted. He disagreed, bent his head sideways, arranged his ears in a coquettish way, and looked at me with his big, long-lashed eyes. "How could you do this to me?"

"We are in the Six Rivers National Forest," I told him. "We are heading toward Patterson Meadow, where you'll find the greenest and juiciest grass you have ever tasted." If only he could understand.

I was glad when we reached a spring and I could fill up my bottles with filtered water. Dancer took long draughts, chewing the water between each. Shandy just stood there. It occurred to me that I should lead him away from the spring and tie him up. It seemed like too much trouble. A moment later it happened: he spread his hind legs and let black beans drop into the glass-clear water. (It takes four or five strong men to move a pooping llama.) I watched helplessly and felt polluters all over the world come and shake hands with me.

Dancer walked well for awhile until his habit of stopping began once more. Shandy waited patiently for his slower friend. I wanted to arrive at the meadow at a decent time. It would be impossible to pitch a tent and spend the night on this steep mountain. Again and again I consulted my watch.

Dancer sat down and wouldn't move. I pulled him up by his woolly coat but after a few steps he sat down again. I looked at my wrist. It was bare. There was no watch! I remembered that the strap of my pack had caught on my watch, and in a fit of impatience I had yanked it loose without looking . . .

Something inside me shifted and I let go of my itinerary. From now on when Dancer sat down, I sat down too, and soon Shandy would do the same. So we just sat, then walked a little and sat again.

Gradually, I began to see. Not only see but also feel what was going on around me. For a moment I knew that the fir in front of me was breathing and emanating infinite kindness and benevolence. The little pink flower next to me was so open to the world, giving itself with such joy and without the slightest reserve, that I felt deeply moved.

Finally we arrived at the ridge and before us lay the meadow drenched in sunlight. Corn lilies lined a creek that meandered down the slope. Shandy surveyed the scene, but Dancer stuck his head in the grass, then rushed forward, running from clump to clump too excited to eat. I tied both to long ropes, and let them eat for the next few days. Even at night I could hear their "rip, rip" and could see on the meadow - now milky white - their black silhouettes always turned toward the moon.

Thoughts for My Journey

Michaela Vargas

On the pilgrims path
To the house of my mother's birth
There is a secret room.
To discover it
I must knock on walls,
Listen to the echoes
That portend the secret passage.
Let the doors swing open
To reveal the hidden places
Long forgotten.
I must find that secret room,
If I am to understand
The reason
I am here.

Guide for the Traveler
submitted by Michaela Vargas

Practice the arts of attention and listening
Practice renewing yourself each day.
Practice meandering toward
the center of every place.
Practice the ritual of reading sacred texts.
Practice gratitude and praise singing.

Zizhang
from The Art of Pilgrimage

CURRENT AZG DISCUSSIONS

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Toward the end of September, letters will be sent to AZG members to begin the nomination and voting process to elect new members for the Board of Directors. To renew your membership (which at this time must be done yearly), or to become a member in time for the nomination process, please fill out and return the enclosed card by September 15.

PRACTICE COMMITTEE

The July 11 meeting, attended by Rob, Erika, and Pete, covered a lot of ground. The candle snuffer offered by Ken Berman has been accepted and will be kept in the altar box. Erika, who volunteered to help with newsletter production, is working on ways to create more opportunities for people to participate in discussions after Sunday zazen readings. Rob volunteered to be the contact person for the PC. A modified retreat schedule, based on changes engendered by the current schedule and Maylie's move here, was decided upon (see previous announcements). Specifics for the December retreat will be addressed at the August meeting.

The August 1 meeting also ranged far, covering the above schedule changes and class offerings, as well as furnishings for the temporary zendo, which Gael volunteered to provide; timing in the zendo; and the December retreat. The 72-hour meditation for peace, a united religious initiative to mark the millennium, was discussed. A 15-minute tape will be viewed in September by the practice committee. On December 5 annual business for electing new board members will be conducted.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The August 18 meeting, attended by Lynda, Monique, and Pete, covered a number of areas. One issue raised is that the September board meeting is scheduled for the fourth Wednesday, September 22. There is a scheduling conflict with Maylie's Heart Sutra class. The date was not changed; this issue will be brought up again before the meeting date. Please call Gordie to find out the rescheduled time and/or date. Other issues raised and discussed were:

Outside support: Suzanne, Lynda, and Maylie will make up subcommittee to organize support from outside the group. Letter to people who have promised to contribute to ask them to send in their money. Wording was agreed upon; to be checked out with Maylie.

Promissory notes: We looked at a sample promissory note from the North Coast Co-Op. Monique will work up a loan form for AZG and bring it to next meeting.

Election of new board members: Notes for newsletter about annual membership renewal and reminder that, in order to vote for board members, one must be an AZG member. Somewhere near the end of September there will be a letter to members asking for nominations for board members.

By-laws: We discussed the by-laws and focused on seven areas where we think changes are needed.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter deadline is November 1. Mail your comments, letters, articles, announcements, reflections &/ or zen poetry to Suzanne at the above address or e-mail her. Please note on your enclosure that it is for inclusion in the newsletter.

EDITOR'S NOTES

I came like water, and like wind I go.

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

trans. Edward FitzGerald

Vast emptiness, nothing holy.

Bodidharma, as quoted by
Robert Aitkin

- - - - - CUT HERE AND RETURN - - - - -

RESERVATION FORM FOR OCTOBER SESSHIN

Return by October 6

NAME PHONE

ADDRESS

What meals do you plan to attend? (Please circle)

Thursday: Breakfast Lunch Dinner

Friday: Breakfast Lunch Dinner

Saturday: Breakfast Lunch

Do you need a ride? yes no Can you provide a ride? yes no

Do you need a scholarship? yes no If yes, partial \$ full

Make checks payable to: Arcata Zen Group

DATES TO REMEMBER

SEPTEMBER: 8 - Heart Sutra Class Begins
11 - Saturday Sit
12 - Dogen Class Begins
15 - Return Membership Renewal Card
*22- Board of Directors Meeting - *Note: This will change -
See inside for Details

OCTOBER: 3 - Practice Committee Meeting
6 - Return Sesshin Reservation Form
20-23 - October Sesshin
27 - Board of Directors Meeting

NOVEMBER: 1 - Next Newsletter Daedline
7 - Practice Committee Meeting
20 - Saturday Sit
24 - Board of Directors Meeting