

ARCATA ZEN GROUP NEWSLETTER

Summer, 2002

Rin Shin-ji Temple

740 Park Ave (707) 826-1701

AZG Envisions the Future

Arcata Zen Group Sangha with Sojun at Maylie's Memorial April, 2002.

As suggested by the AZG Board and approved by the AZG Practice Committee, we are embarking on a series of Sangha strengthening activities designed to help guide us over the next several years. Starting from where we are today, the Practice Committee has suggested a 4-step process for Sangha members to help shape our future, including:

- AN OPEN-ENDED SURVEY asking for comments and ideas about our current AZG practices; what we like and what changes we'd like to see come about; suggestions for improvements; and hopes for the future.
- A SPECIAL "HEART CIRCLE" EVENT designed as a safe place to deeply hear and share our feelings about AZG and our practice.
- A BRAIN-STORMING SESSION to elicit the widest possible picture of what AZG might become.
- A PLANNING AND GOAL-SETTING RETREAT to realistically assess our capabilities, establish priorities and to develop a plan of action with funding levels, activities, responsibilities, timelines and desired outcomes.

The Practice Committee and Board intends this Visioning Process to build upon and strengthen the spirit of community in the AZG Sangha to meet the challenges of the next five years and beyond.

DATES TO REMEMBER THIS SUMMER

June 23 4th Sunday-Emelia Student Talk
June 30 5th Sunday- A Flower Does Not Talk

July 7 1st Sunday Practice Committee Meets
July 8 2nd Monday AZG Board Meeting
July 14 2nd Sunday Poetry and Readings
July 12-14 Wilderness Retreat in Siskyou
July 16 3rd Tuesday Breakfast at Zendo
July 21 Alan Senauke Dharma Talk/Brunch
July 28 4th Sun. Sylviane-Way Seeking Mind Talk

August 4 1st Sunday Practice Committee Meets
August 11 2nd Sunday Poetry and Readings
August 12 2nd Monday AZG Board Meeting
August 14 Deadline for Boissevain Retreat
August 18 3rd Sun. Michael-Student Talk Practice Committee
August 20 3rd Tuesday breakfast at Zendo
August 21-24 Angie Boissevain 3-day Sesshin

August 25 4th Sunday Angie Boissevain Talk

Sept. 1 1st Sunday Practice Committee Sept. 4 Wed. First Rivers & Mountains Class

NOTE FROM MOTHER MARY JOHN

Malling Abbey

May, 2002

Pax Very dear Arcata Zen Group-

I have been so very touched to receive your beautiful card with the greetings of many whom I shall long cherish. Thank you so very much for keeping in touch materially in this way. Maylie would be so pleased by the bonds established between us and when I visited the magnolia tree on the East end of our church where her and our mother's ashes lie, I took your card with me!

It's good to know that you're there, together, trying as we do here to be a harmonious community of a many-faceted peace. May we long support one another in that great endeavour.

With my love to you all-
Mother Mary John, O.S.B.A

Maylie Scott Memorial

I wanted to thank Alan Senauke for coming to Arcata to help lead the weekend retreat in May which marked the anniversary of Maylie's death.

Alan worked closely with Maylie for many years in Berkeley both at the Berkeley Zen Center, at B.P.F, and on the front lines of many social actions. They were co-leaders at B.Z.C. , sharing the same seat in the zendo. They received transmission together, working on their lineage documents side by side at Tassajara. They were each other's confidant and advisor through many cycles of discovery - both personal and within zen community.

In sharing his teaching and reflections Alan gave us a chance to remember Maylie in a very intimate way.

Alan's poem read at the memorial service:

One Year Memorial

A year has slipped by
And still you fill this room
The moon has passed its prime,
But it will come again.
It always has.
I know this in my bones.

Yet a cold wind of regret
Reaches through the cracks
Into the cabin of my heart.

Maylie, I miss your steadying hand.

Though you are teaching in another world,
Your body has become the imperishable sangha body.
Your voice is still in this world.
Listen, listen.
As I open my hand
The tall trees play your song:
K u s h i n S e i s h o

Tonight your vast mind clearly shines through all the world
Tonight as the wooden man sings,
Somewhere the stone woman gets up to dance.

Alan Senauke

5.3.02

At the conclusion of the memorial weekend we met with Alan at 740 Park for a question and answer session. After meeting with a series of visiting teachers for such dialogues we are seeing some persistent questions emerge from the sangha, among them: How do we clarify our intentions about teacher selection? How can we find accord at our meetings where the heat of argument and counter argument can create division rather than understanding and acceptance? How do we give consistent expression to the forms that have been introduced by Maylie and yet be open to new forms brought by visiting teachers.

Alan offered a number of suggestions. One of these was to step back from the debate aspect of these discussions and give people a chance to speak from the heart. This might take the form of some kind of council process in which a wide sangha circle is invited to look beyond personal agendas and into our collective heart/mind. Alan has offered to help us set up such a council.

I know I am not alone in feeling deep gratitude for Alan's steadying hand.

Mark P.

Board of Directors

Lynda McDevitt President
Geoffrey Smith Vice President
Michael Twombly Secretary
Gordon Anderson Treasurer
Rose Brewster

Practice Committee

Rose Brewster
Bill Devall
Michael Twombly
Lynda McDevitt
Diana Lynn
Hugh Tinling
Ed Uyeki
Rob Roversi

Pete Kayes
Mark P.
Erika Makino
Sylviane Levy-Boyd

AZG Board News

The AZG Board meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:45 PM at Lynda's office in Arcata. All AZG members and friends are welcome to attend.

Recent Actions:

1. Supported Envisioning the Future process with Practice Committee
 2. Provided zafus and zebutons to Pelican Bay Prison Project
 3. Reviewed annual budget; found sesshin income deficient and adopted new guidelines for pre-payment and teacher support.
 4. Approved funds for zendo road repair
 5. Provided funds for scholarship to Prison Meditation training
 6. Requested dedicated telephone line for AZG use only at 740 Park Avenue
 7. Provided table and sign for Dana contributions at the Aikido Center
 8. Approved increased rent for Aikido Center Sunday zazen.
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AZG Practice Committee News

The AZG Practice Committee is self-nominated, making a 12-month commitment to attend twice monthly meetings (1st and 3rd Sundays) at 11:30 AM at 740 Park Avenue.

Recent Actions:

1. Adopted 3 member quorum rule for PC Actions
 2. Adopted new rule that PC members renew membership each January, but may join PC at any time.
 3. Approved one-day sesshin with Berkeley Zen Center in Berkeley sometime this fall
 4. Approved invitation to SF Zen Center Abbot Blanche Hartman to conduct sesshin in 2003
 5. Approved continuing relationship with Morris Graves retreat site
 6. Approved Envisioning the Future process
 7. Approved Wilderness Retreat July 12-14
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Daily Practice or Practicing Daily

Bill Devall

Many people consider daily practice to mean zazen, both in our homes and at the zendo. Such practice also includes reading sutras in the zendo and ceremonies in the zendo held daily.

However daily practice can also include work practice. At Tassajara, all Zen students, visitors, and guests are expected to attend daily opening circle at 8:30am. Staff from various departments request willing workers to commit to specific types of work.

The morning work period is from 8:30 until 11:00am. Work-study students are expected to work eight hours a day five days in a row as part of their monastic practice. They have one day "off" between work periods and on their off day they are encouraged not even to sit zazen. Take care of your body.

When I am in my home I try to follow monastic practice. Arise, wash face, feed cats, sit zazen, eat breakfast. Morning work period until noon and two-hour afternoon work period. During the summer months the afternoon work period frequently includes work in the garden.

Visitors to my home know that I am not accomplishing tasks just to complete tasks in my garden. Even in the best of conditions my garden looks on the verge of out of control. If I had a professional gardener, he could keep my garden whipped into shape in a few hours each week.

As part of practicing daily I try to go to the beach at least once a day, rain, fog, or sunshine. Even if I have other appointments and do not practice in the garden, I rarely miss my practicing at the beach.

Practicing daily also includes many yoga practices at Healthsport. Body and breath are united in yoga. Formal meditation practice is included at the end of many yoga classes. And sitting in the sauna, after yoga practice, I try to listen as a bodhisattva. Narratives of harsh suffering are told to strangers in the sauna. These narratives are never to be repeated to others, nor gossiped about outside the sauna.

We are taught that taking the bodhisattva's way means opening ourselves with compassion to the suffering of the world, even listening to narratives of serious suffering from strangers on the beach, and even deeply listening to suffering that emerges in the sauna at Healthsport.

DHARMA TALK BY KUSHIN MAYLIE SCOTT

MARCH 25 1990

Our good friend and teacher Maurine Stuart died four weeks ago tomorrow in Cambridge and I wanted to talk about her today. I want to begin by reading a quote from Maurine that heads the chapter that Lenore Friedman wrote about her in *Meetings with Remarkable Women*. "Dogen Zengi said, 'If you cannot find a true teacher, it is better not to practice.' What did he mean by that? ♦ what I feel at this moment is that our practice, whatever it is, is our teacher. Life is our practice. If we listen deeply to what is going on, if we're involved down to the very bottom with our life situation, this is our most venerable teacher, 'Life is Roshi.'" That's very much Maurine's spirit, 'Life is Roshi.'

Maurine, teacher of the Cambridge Buddhist Association (CBA), came out of both the Rinzai and Soto traditions, subtly combining both. I met her for the first time in 1984 when she came out to the Bay Area for the first time and we had our first women's sesshin. She was rather short and kind of square and she had make-up on. She was not at all like what I had expected. Later, when I first saw the Zen Center (CBA), which was also her house, I was surprised. It was brimming with things, extremely comfortable, extremely oriented to making life pleasant for everyone who was in it. I realized that I had all kinds of images to throw away. And that was one of the things that Maurine was wonderful at doing, breaking down images. We are hardly aware sometimes we're carrying them, but they get in the way of our life. In certain ways, she was extremely traditional; in other ways, the way she carried the form was uniquely her own.

That was my first encounter with a gentle sesshin. And for the first time I really understood that you don't have to primarily suffer in sesshin. (Laughter.) And she brought her wonderful ways with her ♦ in kinhin, everybody close-close, same step. It would be like one body, and many feet. All women and this wonderful embrace of her presence and closeness, kept us. She had powerful intuition about who you were and could find and appreciate a person very quickly and just move in, in whatever way was right.

The two things I remember from the talk we had scheduled for after the sesshin were that the women were so surprised at the degree of safety they felt, just women being with women. They hadn't anticipated the feeling of safety that would come from that. Safety and warmth. As Maurine says "Women warm

women." The other aspect was this wonderful example of a woman embodying the form of the tradition in her own shape. That was something that I think all of us felt that we really needed to see. She sat all through this talk, and said nothing, because that's not her style to talk about it, she's very emphatic about that.

Life is to be lived, not to be analyzed, not to be talked about, to be lived. 'Life is Roshi.' That certainly was her teaching.

Her presence was her teaching. Interesting to think about: what is presence? A person's presence has something to do with their roots and what they are rooted in. The Lotus Sutra again and again described the Buddhas that have always existed, always, from beginning to end and have never failed to be there. Shakyumuni perceived that the Buddhas were there, he understood that the Buddhas were there, and he found a way to tune in to what was already there. And that was his great teaching. Another story in the Lotus Sutra is about a poor man who has a rich friend who sews a jewel inside the poor man's coat. And the poor man doesn't know that the jewel is there. So he goes through life, and is very poor, and there are many hardships, and finally he comes again into the presence of this rich friend. The friend says, "Look, what has all the trouble been? Open your shirt. There it is. " Maurine's presence, the way she walked, you understood how she carried the jewel. You never failed to see how she was carrying it, even when she dropped it. It was what her life was about.

The way she began life was not easy. And she had her share of troubles, personal troubles. She really used her difficulties, and the afflictive emotions, and their troubles thoroughly, and used them to really define, as she says, that place of stability, of inner instability, through which to interpret the turbulence of life. So, the turbulence of life was there, but she had this deep place that filtered through. And as it filtered through, that's where you got the warmth. There was anger in her life, she was a passionate woman, and she just kept going through it. She said to somebody, "No matter what comes, good or bad, don't make a move to avoid it." She was very careful about what she did with her anger. I think she used the energy of it to keep herself on a deep kind of plumbing of the depths.

She went in for a routine check up sometime in 1987 and discovered that she had cancer of the liver and of the intestine. Just a little before we'd had a sesshin, around June of '87. In her and my last dokusan, she said suddenly, "Maylie, are you prepared to die?" And I didn't know what to say. It was the kind of question that sometimes the teacher gives you and you know at the moment of the question the enormous impact, and you don't know how it's going to work out. You understand fully that you have been given something. I had no idea, of course, at the time it was given, what the extraordinary teaching would be that followed. She was very determined that she was going to maintain the quality of her life. Not through any kind of denial of illness, but through a very complete acceptance of it.

The sesshins for women had ended in '88 and she began to give Green Gulch sesshins. She gave a lecture in January '89 at Green Gulch where she talked about her illness. I'm going to summarize some of that talk.

"Life, death, health, illness are one. The true face of the universe includes all things in it. There are many healers in the world, but the healers do not heal us. The healing is already there, in the wholeness. The goal of healing is to help the person in need of healing to realize the wholeness. At the deepest level, there is no sickness. The highest use of the human psyche is not for cure but for the transcendence of the conditional events we call health and disease, and birth and death. The state of highest health is beyond harm, beyond all ephemerality; it is the suchness and the "is" ness of every moment, the now that is the only time there is."

She said she felt both sick and not sick, but she had never felt sick except for the aftermath of the major

operation. That her life had been pain-free, energetic, and vital. What she tapped was the realm of beyond conditions of life and death and her goal was beyond health and sickness, nothing to be gained, nothing to become, only the present moment, a state of health-wholeness and oneness-that transcends the problem at hand.

After she died we grieved and we talked. And I realized that there is something about a teacher that just makes the world more comfortable, a more comfortable place. And one doesn't have to see the teacher all that much even, but just knowing that the teacher is there changes the whole landscape in some imperceptible but extremely important way.

The Lotus Sutra talks about Buddha fields in a very baroque description, that where Buddhas are jewels are everywhere and flowers come down from the air. I think it's a kind of metaphor for this wonderful comfort that we feel from somebody whom, at a certain level, we wholly trust, as being a pointer to our heart's desire.

Where there are humans
You'll find flies
and Buddhas.
-Basho

Alan Senauke Visit

Berkeley Zen Center priest and AZG friend Alan Senauke will join the AZG Sangha on Sunday, July 22nd for a Dharma talk at the Aikido Center at 9:15 AM and for brunch at 740 Park Avenue at 11 AM. Alan will also be playing music with his bluegrass band in Humboldt County on Saturday, July 21st.

Empty Nest Swimhin and Retreats

There will be two oppor-tunities at Empty Nest Zendo for summer retreats which include the new American Zen practice silent swimhin (alternating silent swim- ming and meditating throughout the day). July 20th- 1 day meditation retreat. August 9th-11th, 3 day meditation retreat. Please contact 559.877.2400 or email grace@emptynestzendo.org for further details.

Berkeley/Arcata Zen Centers Sesshin

Plans are being readied for a joint Berkeley/Arcata Sangha one-day sesshin in Berkeley later this Fall to strengthen relations between our communities. Please contact Rose for further information and to register.

Three Day Sesshin with Angie Boissevain ***August 21-22-23-24***

AZG's only three day Sesshin this year will be lead by Angie Boissevain on Jane Meyer's land near Arcata beginning on Wednesday evening, August 21st through Saturday afternoon, August 24th. Breakfast and dinner will be served, but registrants will bring their own sack lunches. Registration and pre-payment due by August 14th at the Aikido Center or Zendo. Coordinator: Pete Kayes

Kahaeng Chongjin

Eight-hour Son (Zen) Retreat

Sitting meditation and other elements of Korean Buddhist practice, led by students Yosim Ken Norman and Ken Berman.

Our next monthly day of practice will be on Saturday, July 20 from 9 AM-5 PM, at Rin Shin-ji. All AZG members are welcome.

Please bring a sack lunch and a small donation (suggest \$5 - \$20). Please come for the entire eight hours, and respect silence.

"The body-and-mind of a true Dharma student is the body of ultimate truth or Dharmakaya. Our original body-and-mind is a great liberated being untainted by defilements and the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, cultivate yourself trusting that your original face is no other than the pure and perfect mind. It is a true Dharma student with an awakened heart who trusts in his/her original self and develops faith mind.

Shake off inferior feelings and rise from self-conceit or self-pity with the knowledge that your own original mind is Buddha, and your faith firm in the Buddhist teachings of self-help."

Message from our Sister Sangha in San Francisco

In upcoming issues of the SF Zen Center Newsletter we would like to include news from affiliated sanghas, short articles on practice-related topics, and short profiles of people and places of interest to the Zen Center Sangha. To contribute news or announcements to sangha-e!, email Robert Thomas at secretary@sfzc.org.

Suzuki Roshi's New Book

Not Always So, a new compilation of Suzuki Roshi dharma talks has just this week arrived in bookstores nationwide. The book was edited by Ed Brown and published by HarperCollins.

Spirit Rock Benefit Event

Sunday, August 11, 2pm – 5:30pm

Panel Discussion and Book signing: *Zig Zag Zen* -with Allan Hunt-Badiner, editor and moderator, Jack Kornfield, Ram Dass, Stan Grof, Huston Smith, David Chadwick, Lama Palden, China Galland, and Erik Davis.

The newly-released book, *Zig Zag Zen*, is the first serious inquiry into the moral, ethical, doctrinal, and transcendental considerations created by the intersection of Buddhism and psychedelics. Edited by Allan Hunt-Badiner, *Zig Zag Zen* includes essays by or interviews with over a dozen well-known authors, several participating in this event, and is beautifully illustrated with images that both inspire and provide a visual context.

July Wilderness Retreat

July 12, 13, 14

Plan to leave Arcata by 1pm on Friday for approximately three hour drive to Siskiyou high country.

Except for last three miles, the roads are paved. Bring several gallons of water with you, camping gear, and other personal items. This is a retreat, not a formal sesshin. We plan to sit zazen twice a day, spend time hiking, and discussing sections of Dogen's Mountains and Rivers Sutra. We plan to car camp in a Forest Service camp, no running water and one latrine.

Prison and Jail Sangha News

The AZG Board continues to support our Prison and Jail sangha activities by providing funds for members to travel to Pelican Bay State Prison twice monthly for zazen and services with Buddhist inmates. At the request of Ken Norman and the Pelican Bay sangha, the AZG Board approved the gift of zafus and zebutons for the Pelican Bay sangha.

More AZG members have applied for clearance to support the Pelican Bay sangha.

At the Humboldt County Correctional Facility (HCCF), we are expanding our weekly meditation classes to women inmates as well as men. Thanks to the generosity of several Dharma-related prison groups, over 50 books on Buddhist teachings were donated to the County Jail library in May.

AZG members have been certified as Framework for Recovery trainers at HCCF to assist jail inmates recovering from substance abuse.

For more information on any of these activities, check our website

New Dharma Class Begins In September Dharma Study of Dogen's Mountains and Rivers Sutra.

How do we interpret this sutra in our current situation?

In the context of Dogen's sutra, we reflect on John Muir's question, what is the human part of the mountain destiny? What is the mountain part of the human destiny? Nonduality.

We plan to read several different translations of this sutra as well as current commentaries on the sutra and associated readings. Students will be provided a packet of reading upon request.

Meetings will be held September 4, 11, 18, 25, (Wednesdays) at 740 Park Avenue, from 7pm until 8:30pm.

Facilitator: Bill Devall