



Rin Shin-ji Voices



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Zen in America . . .

Buddhism and Global Warming

~ Bill Devall

We are taught that we have to do something to practice the Buddha's way.

How do we practice during an era of global warming?

For some Buddhists the answer is simple. Practice like we always practice breathing in and breathing out. Living in the present moment. Giving away the merit of our practice.

While many Christian religious teachers advocate nonviolent direct action to change personal and community practices, even presenting teaching materials on global warming for congregations to use, very few Buddhist teachers have presented teaching materials on global warming for local congregations.

A few Buddhists have searched for sources of Buddhist environmentalism. Daily practice and renewing our vows based on the interpenetration of beings is manifest, for example, in the Ecological Precepts of Green Gulch Zen Center. (Kaza and Kraft, 2000)

When I asked our AZG advisor Angie Boissevain how we as Buddhists could address global warming, she drew attention to the three hinderances: delusion, greed, and ignorance. She did not offer specific suggestions for individual or collective action.

When I asked AZG advisor Alan Senauke if we can find guidance in the Pali scriptures, he replied. "...I don't think the Pali Canon is our source for views on climate change, or Dogen, or others. Our ancestors point towards our responsibility for sustaining life. But we are responsible for figuring out what that looks like and means in the world we have to live in and leave for the next generations. Developing such understandings is the real challenge of engaged Buddhism." (email May 17, 2006)

When I asked Alan if his colleagues in the American Soto Zen Buddhist Association or the Buddhist Peace Fellowship will put forth suggestions concerning practice during this era of global warming, he replied "not likely."

Shishi

When I surveyed the actions of the Humboldt Chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship over the past several years, I could



not find any discussions of peaceful adaptation to global warming. I did find some discussion of “economic justice.” Some Buddhists may attempt to place “right action” during an era of global warming in the context of “social justice.” These Buddhists base their call for redistribution of wealth to poor nations on the consensus among scientists that negative effects of global warming, including increasing drought, will be felt by people in the poorest regions of the earth including Africa.

When I asked some of my colleagues in the local Buddhist community for their responses to global warming, they either said that the issue has been exaggerated or that it is a lifestyle issue. They said that Buddhists who practice “right livelihood” or the Buddhist “middle” way will be drawn to buy hybrid vehicles, reduce their personal consumption, eat a vegetarian diet, and invest in mutual funds that specialize in companies offering “alternative energy production.” Some of my Buddhist colleagues encourage “mindfulness” practice and spending more time sitting zazen.

Stephan Batchelor comments on this response. “While ‘Buddhism’ suggests another belief system, ‘dharma practice’ suggests a course of action. The four ennobling truths are not propositions to believe; they are challenges to act.” (Batchelor: 7)

Batchelor concludes, “Dharma practice today faces two primary dangers: through resisting creative interaction, it could end up as a marginalized subculture, a beautifully preserved relic, while through losing its inner integrity and critical edge, it could end up being swallowed by something else, such as psychotherapy or contemplative Christianity.” (Batchelor: 113)

When American Buddhism becomes an extension of individualistic psychology, the interpenetration of social dukkha is diminished. Individuals come together in therapy sessions to address their personal suffering, not the suffering of the world.

Portage Glacier, Alaska 1914 and 2004



In a society that emphasizes individual suffering, how do Buddhists come together as community as we adapt to rapid change during this era of global warming? Batchelor emphasizes the importance of community. “Community is the living link between individuation and social engagement. A culture of awakening simply cannot occur without being rooted in a coherent and vital sense of community, for a matrix of friendships is the very soil in which dharma practice is cultivated.” (Batchelor: 114)

David Loy, a Buddhist scholar, argues that Buddhist teachings can lead to social theory. American Buddhists, are required to develop our own Buddhist social theory of community because we live in a radically different culture from that of the Shakyamuni Buddha, 2,500 years ago.

He argues that “loving the world as our own bodies” enables us to use our cognitive power to develop patterns of behavior that help us adapt to current cultural and environmental conditions. He concludes that “Taoism and Buddhism also emphasize ‘letting things be’ in order for them to flourish: not for our sake, and not even for their own sake, but for no sake at all—because questions of utility and justification no longer apply. That challenges the basic principle of our technological and consumerist society, and it also subverts our sense of ego-self. To admit that natural objects (or natural events) have an inherent value independent of any awareness or appreciation of other beings is to question our commonsense dualism between the conscious self and the objective world. The ecological catastrophes that have now become common make it evident that resolving the duality between ourselves and the natural world is necessary if we—not only humans, but the rich diversity that constitutes the biosphere—are to survive and thrive in the new millennium.” (Loy:51)

Where can Buddhists dwelling in California and across America look for teachers in what Loy calls “the great awakening”? Some Buddhists dwelling in California look to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as a teacher. The Governor brings together people from across the political spectrum, and he signed landmark legislation on global warming in 2006. He has made lifestyle choices confirming his practice of the “middle” way. He changed his large SUVs into alternative energy vehicles. The Governor takes up the Buddha’s “middle” way. He is active in moving energy to encourage “ecological sustainability.”

Dwelling in the Humboldt bioregion of California, we are rich in mountains and rivers and rich in people who are peaceful, active, and creative.

Laypeople dwelling in Humboldt County are actively developing communities of local food production, renewable energy, social organizations that care for members of the community and new organizations continue to emerge. During the next several decades can we envision Buddhist centers in Jacoby Creek watershed, close to a Christian

nunnery and monasteries in the mountains where nuns and monks contribute to the social life of the community through their productive labor raising food, harvesting timber in sustainable ways, living simple lives rich in experience and teaching children the ways of peaceful interrelationship?

We live in an era of challenge and opportunity. We bring forth our positive energy and creativity and live our lives in simple ways but with rich experiences in the Buddha, the Dharma, and Sangha.



Mouth of the Klamath River

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Americanization of Zen

~ Karen Mueller

This article is a continuation of discussion begun by Bill Devall and Gael Hodgkins in an earlier issue of *Rin Shin Ji Voices*. The opinions expressed are mine and, therefore, should not be taken too seriously. I want to acknowledge that this is an attempt to discuss Zen Buddhism as practiced by American converts who are mostly white and highly educated. Many people who were born into Buddhist homes and societies may find only small similarities between their daily experience of Buddhism and Buddhism as practiced in American Zen sanghas.

The development of Zen in America is deeply colored by four issues in my view. These four are: predominance of lay “vs.” monastic practice, the influence of feminism, the way the aesthetics of Zen have permeated (some) popular arts in the West, and the development of Zen in America which begins with the early “Beats” and other rebels.



In the beginning, early American Zen teachers quickly found it necessary to develop forms for lay practice and study outside of monastic structures. They often attempted (successfully or not) to merge monastic practices with their understanding of lay life in America. Early students of Zen in America were interested from the beginning in participating in meditation and Dharma study to an extent that is unprecedented in Asian lay Buddhist communities, although highly developed in Asian monastic settings. Some might say that (convert) Buddhist-Americans want their cake (lay life) and they want to eat it too (zazen practice).

Gold-Coated Buddha Cake

Fortunately, Zen seems to require that methods and forms be practiced with as much attention and diligence as the practitioner can muster, rather than requiring acceptance of specific creeds or allegiances. In this way, Zen finds a resonance with American pragmatism and spirit of experimentation.

However, these early Zen teachers found that many things, which are taken for granted in Japanese Zen Buddhism, do not translate easily to American society. Relationships with temples, abbots, teacher-student relationships, daily ritual and financial support of the temple by the lay sangha are imbedded in Asian Buddhist societies. Forms that frequently seem awkward to American Zen students are based on traditional ways of showing courtesy and respect that seem natural in Japanese society. A major challenge for American Zen is maintaining recognizable, and respectful, identity with Buddhist teachings without necessarily adapting social forms of traditional Japanese society. This is an important “practice edge” for American Zen.

Secondly, American feminism has deeply influenced and modified the development of Zen institutions and teachings in the West. American women developed a potent voice in Zen sanghas following the early scandals that arose due to misuse of sexuality by (male) teachers. American women brought their concerns about exploitation of women, their own desire to study and teach, and their interest in nurturing of future generations into sangha discussions. “Grandmotherly” wisdom acquired a voice and a high value in some American Zen communities. The wave of American teachers developing currently appears to be female by a wide margin. Some examples of women who have become strong leaders

in American (convert) Zen communities include: Joan Halifax, Charlotte Joko Beck, Linda Cutts, Blanche Hartman, Angie Boissevain, and Maylie Kushin Scott. You may think of many other examples.



Linda Cutts, Angie Boissevain, Charlotte Joko Beck, Joan Halifax, Maylie Scott, and Blanche Hartman

The feminist dialogue with Buddhist teaching and practice is not unique to Zen. Women are also influential in other Western Buddhist sanghas. In Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism, Pema Chodron has become an important Western teacher. Tenzin Palmo is an Australian woman who has become a world-wide spokesperson for revival of the tradition of

women adepts that existed in Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion. In the Vipassana movement in America, Sharon Salzberg is one of three co-founders and principal teachers of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA. For more on the topic of women in Buddhism, see "Buddhist Women on the Edge: Contemporary Perspectives from the Western Frontier" edited by Marianne Dresser. For more about Tenzin Palmo, read "Cave in the Snow."

Third, Zen in America is popularly understood as an aesthetic sensibility that emphasizes simplicity and naturalness or spontaneity. Zen aesthetics are especially influential in architecture, landscape design, interior design, textile design, "new music" (e.g. John Cage and Lou Harrison), poetry, painting, photography, and cooking. John Daido Looi is a Zen priest and a well-regarded photographer. Zen themes and archetypes form an underlying structure for many successful films, such as the Star Wars series and "serious" comedies such as "Groundhog Day." Wikipedia says "A Zen film or Zen movie is a motion picture that is said to have a Zen-like undercurrent, or a significant sequence where there is a "Zen moment." Zen movies are often sparse, quiet, observing, with attention to detail and lingering scenes without comment." Many books have been written on "Zen and...." Titles include "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," "Zen and the Art of Making a Living," "Zen And the Art of Happiness," and "Zen in the Art of Archery." There is a "Zen" of golf and a "Zen" of boxing. In fact, Amazon.com currently lists more than 70,000 book titles that included the word "Zen"!

Fourth, no story of American Zen would be complete in my mind without a deep bow to the rebellious generations of Beat and hippie seekers. Their experimentation with altered states of consciousness, natural and chemically induced, propelled many of them into a

spiritual journey in which they turned to Asian traditions; to yoga, Hinduism and to Buddhism. In this process, some developed strong commitments to Zen Buddhism. Alan Watts was an early influential leader who lectured, often brilliantly, on Zen themes and led many to further study. Jack Kerouac flirted with Zen before spiraling down into his demons of alcohol and depression. Philip Whalen, Lew Welch and Gary Snyder are Beat poets who became Zen priests. Ram Dass studied Western psychology, experimented with LSD, “dropped out” and found a Hindu guru. In the process, he opened the doors to a wide variety of spiritual possibilities for a generation of American young people. Allen Ginsberg tasted everything available before eventually settling on devotion to the teachings of the brilliant and controversial Sogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Amy Waldman remained a Beat poet with zen sensibilities. For an excellent history of the American journey to Buddhism, read Rick Fields “How the Swans Came to the Lake.” For a well-written history of Buddhism and the Beats read “Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation.”



Gary Snyder

Questions about the form of American Zen Buddhism remain. What is Japanese and what is essentially Buddhist? What is skillful means within this time and in this place and with these people? Does it matter? (I think so...)

Books about the development of Zen in American that I have enjoyed:

Awakening of the West: Encounters of Buddhism and Western Culture, by Stephen Batchelor

Big Sky mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation, ed. Carole Tonkinson,

Buddhism in American by Richard Hughes Seager

Buddhist Women on the Edge: Contemporary Perspectives from the Western Frontier, ed, Marianne Dresser

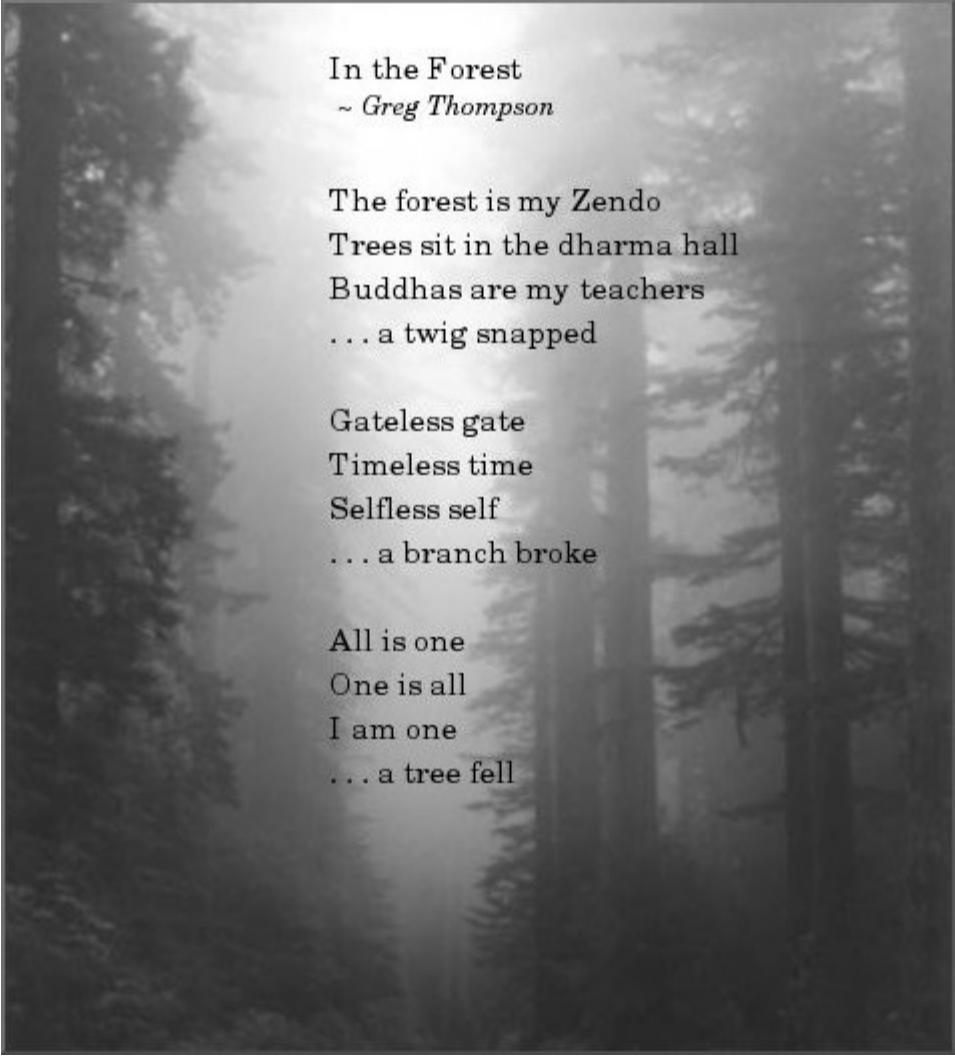
Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki by David Chadwick

How the Swans Came to the Lake, by Rick Fields.

Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream by Jay Stevens

Street Zen: The life and work of Issan Dorsey by David Schneider.

Zen in American: Profiles of Five Teachers: by Helen Tworikov



In the Forest
~ *Greg Thompson*

The forest is my Zendo
Trees sit in the dharma hall
Buddhas are my teachers
... a twig snapped

Gateless gate
Timeless time
Selfless self
... a branch broke

All is one
One is all
I am one
... a tree fell

. . . And Japan

A Four-Day Stay at Eihei-ji

~ June Davis

A familiar recorded female voice of the bus announcer states simply in Japanese, “The next is ‘*Eihei-ji Mae*’ (‘in-front-of-*Eihei-ji*’).” That’s very clear: I have to get off. I disembark, carrying a Japan Rail Pass, *The Lonely Planet Guide Book*, a note of encouragement and tips from Cam Kwong (a



friend from Sonoma Mountain Zen Center), and a Faxed acceptance slip from *Eihei-ji*, all tucked away in my trusty Eagle Creek travel back pack. I’m recalling with trepidation the words of surprise and looks of concern from my aunts and cousins in Tokyo, who tell me that *Eihei-ji* is known to be the most rigorous Zen training center in all of Japan. They could not believe that the little girl who left Japan at the age of 10 has now returned this time to “do Zen” at *Eihei-ji*.

The grounds and the buildings, even from a distance, are stunningly impressive and beautiful. I announce to the staff at the gate that I am here to do the four-day lay monastic practice. They bow deeply towards me as they make a respectful sound like “Ahaaah,” making me wonder what I have gotten into. I bow back just as deeply. They graciously direct me away from the others down a hall to an area with small lockers. I am asked to take my shoes off, put on a pair of slippers, replace my shoes in the locker, and close its door. My mind flashes through movie scenes of someone being taken to jail, and I feel a fleeting sense of panic.

I sit in a designated area in a large foyer with several other people who are obviously in the same situation as I am, all feeling a little insecure. A young *o-bosan* (monk) comes up to me and offers to be my translator, for which I am very grateful, but we both realize that my simple Japanese is better than his English. Thus we decide that he would translate difficult concepts or vocabulary words into a simpler form of Japanese for 10-year-old language skills. Names are called, credentials inspected, and we are escorted up 5 walk-up flights of stairs to a large Japanese-style *tatami* dormitory room for us eight women. The eight men go to another presumably similar room. The only place we are given permission to break silence is in this room. We are given beddings, and directed to change into gray *hakama* (Japanese-style gaucho pants), and a black *jubon* like top. We

wear this outfit throughout our stay, only to change into our own work clothes twice a day during the two one-hour *samu* (work period).

The wake-up bell, rung by a young *o-obosan* running through the hallway, sounds at 3:30a.m., and the last sitting ends at 9:00 p.m. Other than these two times I was uncertain of the hour, since all timepieces were confiscated, and we are not given any written schedule. My estimate is that there are six to eight sessions of 50-minute *zazen*, three services, more than one-hour of Dharma talk, two work-periods of one hour each, three very formalized *oryoki* meals, and one hour of luxurious, silent, somewhat ritualized *ofuro* (hot-tub bath). The *ofuro* time almost compensates for the daily agony of lack of sleep, aching body, and the unruly mind.

Soon after our arrival, we are taken to the *zendo*, the place where we do *zazen* and eat, our individual spots designated by a large plaque with our name. But first we must be instructed how to get on the *tan* (a *tatami* platform about two feet high with a 10 in. forward wooden margin) without touching, sitting, or placing our hands or buttocks on the margin. This practice keeps sacrosanct the margin area where we place our *oryoki* bowls during meals. We each learn to cheat in our own way, as it takes considerable strength, flexibility, and agility to “fly” over the margin without touching it and to land gracefully as close to the *zafu* as possible. The *o-bosan* are kind enough to look the other way, unless someone unthinkingly sits directly on the margin, in which case she is told in a very neutral tone to please not to sit on the margin. One of the first conversation topics we have in our room is about the most effective way of hopping onto the *tan*. We share our respective strategies with giddy enthusiasm.



I must say, *zazen* feels universal whether done in an ancient monastery in Japan, in our beautiful *zendo* at *Rin Shin-ji* and *Genjo-ji* at Sonoma Mountain, or in one’s own home. It truly is simply to “just sit” wherever one is, and it was a welcome respite of familiarity.

Oryoki is undoubtedly another demanding time. The *oryoki* set is like ours except with an additional fourth bowl, smaller than our smallest. An *o-bosan* gives us step-by-step direction at each meal with all the minute details. While my concentration was mostly on

my own action, I must say I was aware of sounds of falling objects and lots of discreet verbal corrections down the line. One of the first things people ask me about my *Eihei-ji* experience is, “How was the food?” My sincere answer is that the food tasted neither good nor bad, but I do remember reminding myself to take my vitamins and calcium, because the diet was strictly vegan with little variety. It struck me as a strange thought to be having. *O-bosan* who are in charge of taking care of us either act as servers or eat with us. At first appearance they seem to eat very fast, but, after few sessions, I realize that they waste not a single movement in their gestures, and they simply just eat, thus saving lots of time wasted by many of us who fumble and fuss over the *oryoki* ritual.



Samu period is well organized. We are instructed to clean the hallways, the *zendo*, or our own dormitory room. We clean them just the way I've seen done in movies, with a meticulously sewn together rag in our hands as we scamper down the runways with our seats in the air like a bunch of frightened beetles. My fellow participants seem to know exactly how to do it -- I do my best to learn quickly.

The morning service is done in the big “Buddha Hall,” with about 350 to 400 *o-bosan*. We walk down the five flights, past the kitchen area, past numerous historically commemorated elaborate rooms, to an enormous Hall already filled with *o-bosan* and priests in their traditional robes. I am embarrassed to report that I thought to myself that they seem to be copying the same chants and rituals as we do here in *Rin Shin-ji* and *Genjoji-ji*. We are instructed to sit *seiza*, directly on the *tatami* mat without any *zafu* or *zabuton*, during the more than one-hour service, an absolutely excruciating experience for the body that even my fellow Japanese practitioners found difficult. Having noticed us squirming around, the *o-obosan* observed to us later, still in a truly neutral non-judgmental tone, that we have become “soft and weak” in this modern 21st century. At the last morning service in the Buddha Hall, we were invited to offer individual incense before the altar. It seemed such a special privileged moment that I made an effort to include everyone in my dedication.

The *o-bosan* and I agree that I will not be able to grasp the difficult vocabulary words and nuanced teachings that take place during the Japanese Dharma teaching sessions;

therefore, I will have a private meeting with an English-speaking teacher. The Rev. Kuroyanagi, who speaks very sophisticated English, is a delightful teacher with a twinkle in his eye, a quick sense of humor, a gentle manner, and a heart and mind rich with wisdom. Our first meeting begins with an introduction, green tea and small morsels of sweets. He then asks me if I have read the book or have seen the movie, *The Da Vinci Code*. I'm taken aback, especially because I have done neither. He suggests that I do so because the story shows us that Jesus was a human being, thus informing Christians and everyone else that all humans have the capacity to do as Jesus lived and taught. I remind myself to rent the DVD when I get home. He spoke of his life process towards becoming a Buddhist priest and teacher and about the need to be careful not to become a "Dharma attachment person." By this he meant not just espousing teachings but rather living the Dharma in one's life.

By the second day, all of us lay practitioners are exhausted and find our selves in the usual "second-day-sesshin" tumultuous state of mind, so much so that even those more polite and cordial among us are no longer speaking or looking at each other in our dormitory room. Possibly because of this, the obviously highly-evolved schedule varies on this afternoon. In place of our afternoon *samu*, we are escorted to a wooded path on the grounds for a long vigorous walk. Our *o-bosan* surprisingly can chat with us. We learn a little about their lives and family. We are taken to an area of large platform where a huge bell is hanging, the only bell we are allowed to ring, as all the other bells give significant signals to the *o-bosan* scattered throughout the temple grounds. We each have a try at it. It brings forth a tremendous sound resonating throughout the entire grounds. In this casual atmosphere, I unthinkingly reveal to one of the *o-bosan* that I am willing to tolerate anything that is demanded of me here if I can only have a cup of coffee. After the hour of brief reprieve, we return to our monastic quietude as though nothing unusual has happened.

The next day, in the midst of my meeting with the Rev. Kuroyanagi, the young *o-bosan* enters the room with a tray of English bone China cups, coffee in a filter coffee maker, and a plate of French *millefeuille* cookies. I am shocked and delighted while Rev. Kuroyanagi seems amused. The *o-bosan* quickly explains about my remark of the previous day. The Rev. Kuroyanagi smiles, invites the *o-bosan* to have some coffee and cookies with us, and returns to the teaching session. He pointed out that the manner in which one places shoes at the door reflects one's working of mind and character. He tells a charming personal story culminating in the teaching that there is no such thing as a single event occurring independently -- that one thing affects another -- and that this is one aspect of *karma*.

On the third day of my stay, I am singled out of the herd (more anxiety) and escorted down to a room on the lower floor where I have the privilege of meeting Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi, who is the son of Shunryu Suzuki and who gave Dharma transmission to Jakusho Kwong-roshi and Sojun Mel Weitsman, among others. He is presently the *Tanto* (head practice teacher) at *Eihei-ji*. His wife, Chitose, informed him that I would be coming to do the four-day stay at *Eihei-ji*, that I practice in Arcata and at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, and that Kwong-roshi is my teacher. I had met Chitose and their daughters, Narumi and Kayoko, the week before at *Rinso-in* temple in *Yaizu*, the home temple of Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi. I felt some concern that I would become an exemplar of “American lay practitioner” and a reflection on the places I practice in California. As it turned out, I felt no judgment, no scrutiny: simply the presence of a kind and warm-hearted person who took the time in the midst of his demanding schedule to meet with me. He was on his way home that very afternoon to his temple, and consequently we had only a brief visit.

By the third and the fourth day I am surprised to find I actually sort of like this place and feel at ease with the demands placed on us. At the same time, I start to look forward to exiting the gate I had entered only a few days earlier. The routine for the fourth day is the same until about the last hour before the departure. We hear deeply caring and encouraging speeches by the *o-obosan*, wishing us well in our journeys. The Rev. Kuroyanagi and the Dharma teacher encourage us to carry into the householder life the same kind of attention and clarity that we cultivated during the four days at *Eihei-ji*.



We re-trace our steps down the staircase, stop at the ground floor for a little souvenir shopping, retrieve our shoes from the lockers, and go out the front gate, once again bowing deeply to the gatekeepers. I make a phone call to my aunt in Tokyo, to reassure her that I survived *Eihei-ji*, and get on the bus back to the train station. As I look through *The Lonely Planet Guide Book*, attempting to figure out where to go next, I realize I

don't want any more challenges for the moment. It had to be someplace quiet and beautiful: I was clear about that.

Editor's Note: The photos inside Eihei-Ji were taken by Tomiyama Haruo and are from his book, Zen: 750th Anniversary of Dougen Zenji's Memory, found at <http://www.tomiyaamaruo.com/zen.htm>

Columns

Dharma Gates are Boundless

~ Michael Quam

In this latest edition of “Gates,” we discover the dharma in the writings of two authors, one English and the other American, neither of whom identified themselves as Buddhist. Our first selection was contributed by Lynda McDevitt, who is reading George Eliot’s masterpiece, *Middlemarch*:

Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by that which is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind, and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrels heart beat and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.

Even in the 19th century, Eliot sensed a malaise that has only grown more dire over the ensuing century. Now, in the 21st century, surrounded as we are by 24-hour news cycles endlessly repeating the shocking and the lurid, we seem to have lost touch with the “roar that lies on the other side of silence.” Is “hearing the grass grow and the squirrels heart beat” something to be feared, something that “we should die of,” as Eliot seems to say, or is it another kind of “death” that she is alluding to? Is the “stupidity” she speaks of another version of our “ignorance” or “delusion,” as the dharma teaches? Do we use silence in our dharma practice so we can hear “that roar that lies on the other side”?

Rather than fearing that roar, we might experience it as the heartbeat of the world. On the eve of World War II, as Europe was spiraling down into violence and chaos once again, Henry Miller left Paris for a long sojourn in Greece. He was utterly entranced by that part of the world, and wrote about his experiences in *The Colossus of Maroussi*. On a visit to Epidaurus, Miller felt a deep peace settle within him. This experience led him to one of his finest reflections, a soliloquy that is a teaching for our own times:

Peace is not the opposite of war any more than death is the opposite of life. The poverty of language, which is to say the poverty of man’s imagination or the poverty of his inner life, has created an ambivalence which is absolutely false. I am talking of course of the peace which passeth all understanding. There is no

other kind. The peace which most of us know is merely a cessation of hostilities, a truce, an interregnum, a lull, a respite, which is negative. The peace of the heart is positive and invincible, demanding no conditions, requiring no protection. It just is. If it is a victory it is a peculiar one because it is based entirely on surrender, a voluntary surrender, to be sure...

What man wants is peace so that he may live.... Man doesn't begin to live through triumphing over his enemy nor does he begin to acquire health through endless cures.... Whatever we cling to, even if it be hope or faith, can be the disease which carries us off. Surrender is absolute: if you cling to even the tiniest crumb you nourish the germ which will devour you.... I hear people talking about peace and their faces are clouded with anger or with hatred or with scorn and disdain, with pride and arrogance. There are people who want to fight to bring about peace—the most deluded souls of all. There will be no peace until murder is eliminated from the heart and mind. Murder is the apex of the broad pyramid whose base is the self.... In every realm our conquests bring only death. We have turned our backs on the one realm wherein freedom lies. At Epidaurus, in the stillness, in the great peace that came over me, I heard the heart of the world beat. I know what the cure is: it is to give up, to relinquish, to surrender, so that our little hearts may beat in unison with the great heart of the world.



Branching Streams

One of the great aspects of the AZG sangha is the number of opportunities it offers in time and space to practice zazen: Sunday mornings at the Aikido center, early weekday mornings at Rin Shin-ji, Eureka, Fortuna, Pelican Bay, etc. This is the first article in a series on the different sittings / locations of the AZG. If you run or attend an AZG-related sit, please consider writing an article for this column.

Westhaven Zendo

~ Lynda McDevitt

Looking at the Westhaven zendo one would not assume that this was an abode for enlightenment, but the large corrugated metal workshop on a dirt road deep in Westhaven supports a small but dedicated sangha. Every Monday and Wednesday morning at a reasonable hour 3 to 6 members of the AZG gather to sit zazen. Suzanne, our intrepid webmistress, opens up and turns on the heat in the workshop that Mark P. has generously made available to the group. In the southwest corner of the building a simple sitting area has been created including an altar made of artfully stacked lumber. This place provides the basic necessities for the maintenance of practice and the building of kalyanaimitta.



Two Pun Haiku

In Buddha's wood shop
Thoughts settle gently down
Shavings on the floor

Zazen in winter
Each step on cold cement floor
Awakens my soles

Sound Map of Westhaven Zendo

(with gratitude to Denise H. for sharing the concept of sound maps)

whoosh of raven wing

winter rain on metal roof sparrow song

romping dogs snorting horses truck passing
on dirt road

spring frog talk o barking dogs

bird chatter

trees in wind sangha breath bell sound leaves in wind

In Memoria

Rev. Donald Gilbert

August 9, 1909 – December 6, 2006

Don Gilbert was one of the early visiting teachers of the AZG; following his obituary, sangha members share their stories. There will be a Celebration of his Life in Tracy, CA on June 2, 2007. If you are interested in attending, please contact Paula Yoon at 822-3577.

Born in Oakland, Rev. Gilbert was gifted with incredible strength and concentration. In his teens, he teamed with a partner to form an acrobatic and equilibrist act, "The Gilbert Brothers". After he graduated from Roosevelt High School in Oakland, the team concentrated for a year developing extremely difficult hand-to-hand tricks and high bar routines at the Oakland Athletic Club—amazing maneuvers that no one had ever seen before.

Their act was totally original—all of the acrobatic/equilibrist tricks were envisioned and created by Rev. Gilbert. His strength, concentration and balance were so focused that he could pull himself over the high bar with one hand. After a few years of playing many small vaudeville theaters, their big break came. Their act was seen in a small theater by a booking agent—and they were immediately booked at the highest and most prestigious vaudeville theater in the United States—the Palace Theater in New York City when he was only 20 years old. From their first performance at the Palace Theater, they went from being "extras" to become instant stars. They performed for 13 years on the Orpheum circuit including three years in Europe and performances in Australia. While in England, The Gilbert Brothers were requested to perform at a garden party for a birthday celebration for a member of the royal family—a party attended by the King and Queen of England.

His acrobatic career came to end when the United States entered World War II. He joined the Marine Corps in 1942. At first, the Marines would not accept him due to his "old" age of 32. However, he managed to convince them of his strength and physical abilities and they finally enlisted him.

After the war, Rev. Gilbert had several careers which included being a booking agent (including being the West Coast regional agent for the "You Asked For It" television show) and worked for the Actors Union. He finally created his own advertising



agency, "Don Gilbert Enterprises" in Stockton, CA from which he retired in 1972.

Most importantly, beginning at age 14 and continuing throughout his various careers, he developed intense concentrative abilities through meditation and pranayama yoga.

Rev. Gilbert became a student and practitioner of Buddhism and over the years was a member of several different Buddhist organizations including the American Buddhist Society, the Tibetan Buddhist School and the Cho Ke Order of Korean Zen Buddhism.

Rev. Gilbert received the "Mind to Mind" transmission from the Venerable Dr. Seo Kyung-Bo of the Cho Ke Order on July 13, 1973 becoming a Dharma Successor to Dr. Seo in the United States. This authorized him to teach Zen under the Korean Cho Ke lineage and

enabled him to found his own Zen Buddhist organization in the United States with the freedom to teach Zen in a manner he felt was suited to Westerners. Rev. Gilbert was given the titles of Zen Master and "Daishi" (Great Monk) and given the Dharma name, "Ta Hui" by Dr. Seo.



Since the mid-1970's, Rev. Gilbert has given Dharma talks, taught meditation classes and conducted numerous meditation retreats in various cities across the United States including the Internal School in Arcata, CA, the Il Bung Zen Buddhist Association in Huntsville, AL and Sambosa Buddhist Temple in Carmel Valley, CA. Rev. Gilbert founded the Blue Dragon Buddhist Order in 1979 from which he taught for many years.

He also formed local meditation groups in Northern California in Oakland, Walnut Creek and Tracy. Rev. Gilbert also served as the president of the Oakland Theosophical Society.

Artwork was one of Rev. Gilbert's creative passions. Drawing since he was a child, he developed his art talent using pen and ink from which he drew both cartooning and extremely intricate landscapes. In later years, he taught Zen in a humorous way by using cartooning in his two Zen books: "Jellyfish Bones" and "The Upside Down Circle". Because Rev. Gilbert loved animals, especially dogs, much of his cartooning featured little dogs and animals.



Rev. Gilbert also loved to read and speak the Spanish language and always kept his Spanish dictionary close to him. He was always happy when he had an opportunity to speak Spanish with local residents.

Rev. Gilbert moved to Tracy in 1987 from Oakland, CA and lived there until his passing.

He is the beloved companion and spiritual guide of Dawn Bill. Rev. Gilbert is survived by

his nephew, Richard Hoisington and many great-nieces and great-nephew Kimberly McLellan, Dennis McLellan, Carolyn McHugh, Lee Ann De Poyster, Joann De Poyster, Karen Christiansen and Jill Rozek and their children. He is the adopted grandfather of Karen Parker and Lori Farrar. Rev. Gilbert has a large extended family of friends and students who will truly miss him for his soft-spoken wisdom, loving manner and his humor.

from Sherry Skillwoman:

One of my favorite Rev. Gilbert memories is from the California Street tea house era of AZG, when we had occasional visiting teachers. The sangha was in the midst of The Great Sock Debate - re walking on the tatami mats with bare feet vs socks & if you did wear socks, did they have to be black or white to be Zen Regulation or could they be other colors.

Rev. Gilbert came up from Oakland for a presentation & as far as I know, he was not aware of The Great Sock Debate. He showed up for dharma talk with a great pair of glittery silver socks! Of course, with his personality, it is also possible that someone had tipped him off about the Sock Debate & this was his (intentional) teaching for us.

Bless your Body-Mind-Spirit, Rev. Gilbert! I'm convinced you're still revving up the energy field with a few back flips!

from Gael Hodgkins: Namu Amida Bu: Remembering Zen Master Donald Gilbert



a.k.a. Ta Hui (with gratitude to one of my teachers)

Gilbert, dressed in gray robes, wore a string of beads around his neck. Fingering them one by one, he walked up and down in front of us while we stood chanting "Namu Amida Bu." Nearing the 108th bead, the chanting grew softer and softer and finally stopped.

Once, at my home, he leaned a little too far back in his chair by the French doors. Crash. He went through the glass. Acrobat that he was, he returned to upright sitting, and we resumed our conversation.

Once, as he was leaving town and I was desperate, I asked to speak to him privately. He said he did not have time, but I blurted out my story--dumped by the man in my life. He taught, "It's like having your right arm cut off."

Thus I have heard (from Darrell Gardner): Gilbert came to Arcata and taught at the Internal School held in Arcata's Old Creamery. That was about 1975. It was then he

became Lloyd Fulton's teacher. (Lloyd Fulton, sensei, 1944-2001)

Gilbert called his sangha, "The Green Dragon Zen School," and at the Creamery his students not only did zazen and kinhin but also went out to the dunes. The practice Gilbert taught there was for students to pick up a rock, carry it at their hara, struggle up the sand-dune to the top, and then, with a shout, hurl the rock to the bottom where he stood watching and listening. This practice was repeated two or three times.

Gilbert wrote at least two Zen cartoon books, both of which I recommend: *The Upside Down Circle* and *Jellyfish Bones*.

Maylie Scott *(founding abbess of Rin Shin-ji, home of the Arcata Zen Group.)*

March 29, 1935 - May 10, 2001

Preferring Gold to Silver

~ Lynda McDevitt

Preferring gold to silver

I do not seek for hurried friendships
the easy find of shallow treasure
but depend upon the alchemy of time
to deepen trust and fondness to the desired hue
And so I thought that we had time enough
for further mining of our hearts
discovering veins of sweeter intimacy
But death collapsed the fine potential of your life
and left a rubble of regrets and might-have-beens
for those of us you left behind.

And now another priest has come and gone
a peacemaker who migrated to a more peaceful clime
and tho' distance be the assay of affection
what transmutations could have been
had not the barrier of space altered the relation?
But you were my first teacher of the truth
the hard lesson learned
to live the moment
to seize the day
to discover gold awaiting in each heart
to venture love before it's torn away.



Buddhism in the News

The following is Catherine Cascade's Times-Standard column on the Buddha's birthday:

Birth of the Buddha: Fresh Arising of Awakened Mind—Again!

According to the ancient story, when Shakyamuni Buddha was born flowers burst into bloom and sweet tea rained down from the sky.

The baby Buddha came into the world over 2,500 years ago in an area of northern India that is now part of Nepal. Tradition holds that he was born in the spring, but different Buddhist communities celebrate the birth of the Buddha on different dates.

In China, Korea, Japan and other East Asian countries the date is usually the eighth day of the fourth lunar month—April 8. In Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and other South Asian countries Buddha's birth is usually celebrated along with his enlightenment and his death or entry into nirvana, on the full moon day in the month of Vesak, which falls in early May.

This year, local Soto Zen Buddhists celebrated Buddha's birthday in a traditional flower-filled ceremony on April 9. The sangha (congregation) covered a small pavilion with spring blossoms. Inside the pavilion a simple wood statue of a baby Buddha stood in the



center of a basin of sweet tea. One by one in procession, each person bowed and ladled sweet tea over the statue.

The ritual of Buddha's Birthday affirms and celebrates the birth, the fresh arising, of awakened mind in each one of us. Like spring, it happens again and again.

The word "buddha" means "awakened one," "enlightened being" or "awakened mind." There have been and continue to be many, many Buddhas in this world, including—potentially—us.

Shakyamuni was a human being just like us.

Practicing meditation and compassion he woke up—became enlightened—and we can, too.

We drift off from the alert, open, receptive mind of meditation; we drift off from the ethics of compassionate action. And then—again and again—we wake up, realize, and return to the original mind of Buddha. We begin again to live in our own awakened mind.

It's a baby Buddha we celebrate: a complete human being, fully alive but undeveloped—a beginner. Practicing meditation and compassion through the days of our lives, we develop

the mature, responsible wisdom of adulthood. And over and over through the days of our lives we drift off, wake up, realize and begin again.

Zen teacher Shunryu Suzuki Roshi spoke often of what he called “beginner’s mind,” which he equated with the mind of Buddhist practice. He said, “The beginner’s mind is the mind of compassion. When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless...How important it is to resume our boundless original mind. Then we are always true to ourselves, in sympathy with all beings, and can actually practice.”

Buddha’s Birthday is an affirmation that, yes, awakened mind is alive in the world; boundless, compassionate “beginner’s mind” is arising in us, fresh and full of life. That realization is sweet, and it is what we are enacting and making visible when we ladle sweet tea over the statue of the sweet baby Buddha, the baby Buddha arising in our own lives.

BPF Peace Rally

On Saturday, January 27, 2007, Buddhist Peace Fellowship members joined many others in a peace rally outside the Courthouse in Eureka. A bell, made from a bomb casing from Thailand, was rung during the rally. The full article may be found in the Eureka Reporter at: <http://www.eurekareporter.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?ArticleID=19890>



BPF and AZG member Rose Brewster with the bell from Berkeley

Graphics Sources and Other Credits

Original sources - and often larger versions - of many of the graphics found in this issue of Voices:

Shishi: Ukiyo-e Prints: http://www.printsofjapan.com/Toyokuni_III_Shoki_Lion_small.jpg

2004 Portage Glacier: Gary Braasch: <http://www.worldviewofglobalwarming.org/>

Buddha Cake: hand made cakes: <http://www.handmadecakes.co.uk/budda.htm>

Montage of Women Teachers by Suzanne (photos from all over the internet, except the one of Maylie)

Gary Snyder: <http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/S/SnyderGary/index.htm>

Outside Eihei-ji: Nippon Optical: <http://www.nipponoptical.com/nippon.html>

Inside Eihei-Ji: Tomiyama Haruo, from his book, *Zen: 750th Anniversary of Dougen Zenji's Memory*: <http://www.tomiyamaharuo.com/zen.htm>

Steps of Eihei-ji: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Eihei-ji_Karamon.jpg

Westhaven Zendo photos by Suzanne

The Rev. Gilbert obituary is, I believe, written by Dawn Bill. The photos are from Gael. The drawings are his, from a thank-you card he sent her. Thank you, Gael!

The picture of Maylie is from one of the Big Flat trips.

Buddha statue, Buddha Birthday article: Aspen Country:
http://www.aspencountry.com/aspen/product.asp?dept_id=549&pfid=30112

Photo of Rose from the Eureka Reporter article.

Rin Shin-ji Voices

Arcata Zen Group

740 Park Avenue

Arcata, CA 95521

707-826-1701

arcatazengroup.org