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Watercolor by Mark

Daigaku Rumme

Bill Devall

Daigaku Rumme is a zen priest who visited the AZG on the weekend of October 18-19, 2008, as part of his duties at the Soto Zen International Center in San Francisco. He has visited over 70 lay sanghas in America since he returned to the United States in 2003.

Daigaku was born in Iowa and went to Japan as a child with his parents, who were Lutheran missionaries. He spent 27 years in the Hosshinji monastery studying with his master, Sekkei Harada. Daigaku currently works as a translator at the Soto Zen International Center in San Francisco.

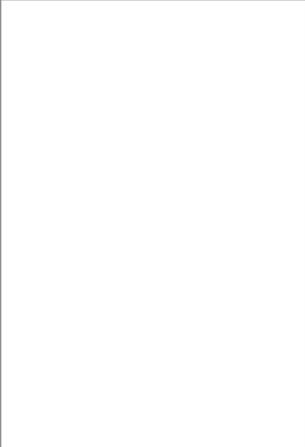
He might not be a translator except that he became extremely ill after he entered the monastery. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent a year in a Japanese hospital. He spent that year learning Japanese. He translated into English the dharma talks of his Master, Sekkei Harada, published in 1998 as *The Essence of Zen*. (Our first abbot, Maylie, read the book in 1999. Her copy of the book with her written comments is in the AZG library.) Daigaku is also an accomplished calligrapher who teaches classes at Green Gulch.

He has written, in an essay called "Stepping off a 100 Foot Pole," that he "was drawn to Zen because of a deep question about how a person ought to live. How, I wondered, could one person possibly bring about any change in the immense problems which face the world: war, poverty, various forms of discrimination, the destruction of the environment and so on. Like many who came of age in the 1960's, I was seeking an alternative to the materialistic lifestyle which we perceived to be the main cause of these problems. However, in the course of seeking, reflecting, and asking what could be done to resolve these problems, I realized that in order to change the the world I had to change myself. I saw that the root cause of suffering is the greed, anger, and folly arising from the ego-self. Zen seemed the most direct and down-to-earth practice to achieve freedom from an egocentric viewpoint. Once that liberation is realized it would then be possible to 'return to the marketplace' to aid in imparting that peace and freedom to others. To die and be reborn in this manner is certainly no easy task, and many years have passed since I began this journey. Yet I am still very much dedicated to this way of liberation."

During his dharma talk to the AZG on October 19, Daigaku Rumme told how his Master, Sekkei Harada, opened long practice periods at Hosshinji monastery. He lined the monks up in two rows, facing each other. He said they were beginning a long voyage, like on a ship, and he made the assignments for the long practice period. Of particular importance was the appointment of the cook.

Daigaku's dharma talk was primarily his reflections on Dogen's *Instructions to the Cook*. In Daigaku's opinion, the cook should be calm even in the chaos of the

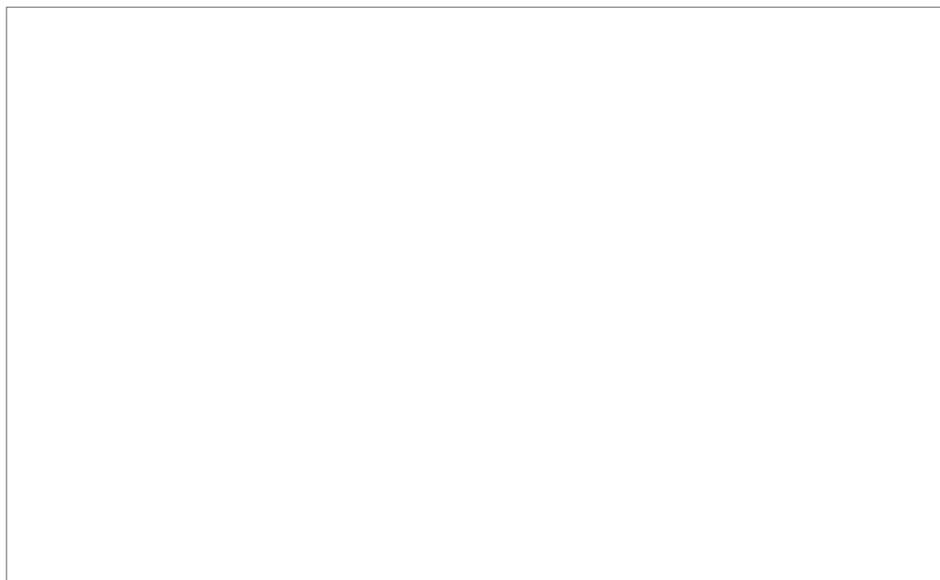
kitchen. A cook who is demanding or emotional engages in emotional indulgence. That is not the objective of zen practice. To study the self is to forget the self.



In the revised edition of *The Essence of Zen; The Teachings of Sekkei Harada* (published in 2008 by Wisdom Publications, Somerville MA), Daigaku quotes his teacher as saying, “The task of a Zen master has been described as 'stealing the farmer's cow' or 'snatching the beggar's bowl,' that is, taking away a person's most important possession. The thought of Zen, the Dharma, the Way of Buddha, your zazen practice, and the idea of your self—it means taking away all these things. If the farmer's cow or the beggar's bowl is taken away, there is nothing left for them to do. As long as someone is desperately clinging to such things, it is impossible to die the great death, that is, to truly give up your ego-self” (p 105).

For Daigaku's visit, the AZG took the opportunity to organize the weekend in the way of forest monks since the time of the Sakiymuna. We walked in the forest, and the Arcata marsh, talked together, ate together, and allowed space for questions to arise. We had many questions and Daigaku had questions of us. What is the purpose of zazen? Does everyone realize their enlightenment in this lifetime? What is the objective of practice? Daigaku says there is an objective in zen. Some members of the AZG objected. There is no objective. We just sit in zazen.

Those of us who took the opportunity to walk with Daigaku were inspired by his willingness to listen to our questions, walk in the forest, and listen to birds with us. We hope that he will return to Arcata, perhaps to teach a workshop for the community on calligraphy and continue asking questions and walking in the forest with us. (*An interview with Daigaku, "Letting Go of Ego," can be found in [Kyoto Journal #57](#).*)



Maylie Scott in Japan, 1992

What Is It?

An e-mail exchange between three old students . . .

From: Mark

To: Gael

I was imagining a conversation with you in which you asked (and I think you have asked this very question) if I find myself thinking of Maylie. My answer would be yes, quite frequently. I'm not sure why she made such a big impact on me but I have a sense that we shared some kind of very penetrating and intimate common ground/ mutual understanding. Something inherent in the dharma that came to life in some of our interactions.

I know you have an abiding sense of her importance and influence. Can you say something about this or, as Maylie liked to ask: What is it?

From:Gael

To: Mark

Like you, I have always been puzzled about my deep attraction to Maylie; I often thought of her as a sister. Once, though, I read a passage about transmigration, and I really felt maybe the attraction did have to do with previous lives--now you are implicated too!! However, unlike Maylie, I have never taken transmigration seriously--OR I do not "believe in" transmigration. Of course, I also think Maylie was an exceptional person--looks, daring, fearlessness, wisdom, intelligence, articulate, sympathetic, rigorously honest (e.g. relationship with her mother and ex-husband). I also know some found her harsh, and I have seen that part of her too. However, I know she was honest enough with herself and with others to publicly acknowledge that part of herself.

What is it? An inexplicable attraction to another sentient being--outlasting death.

To be continued.

From: Suzanne

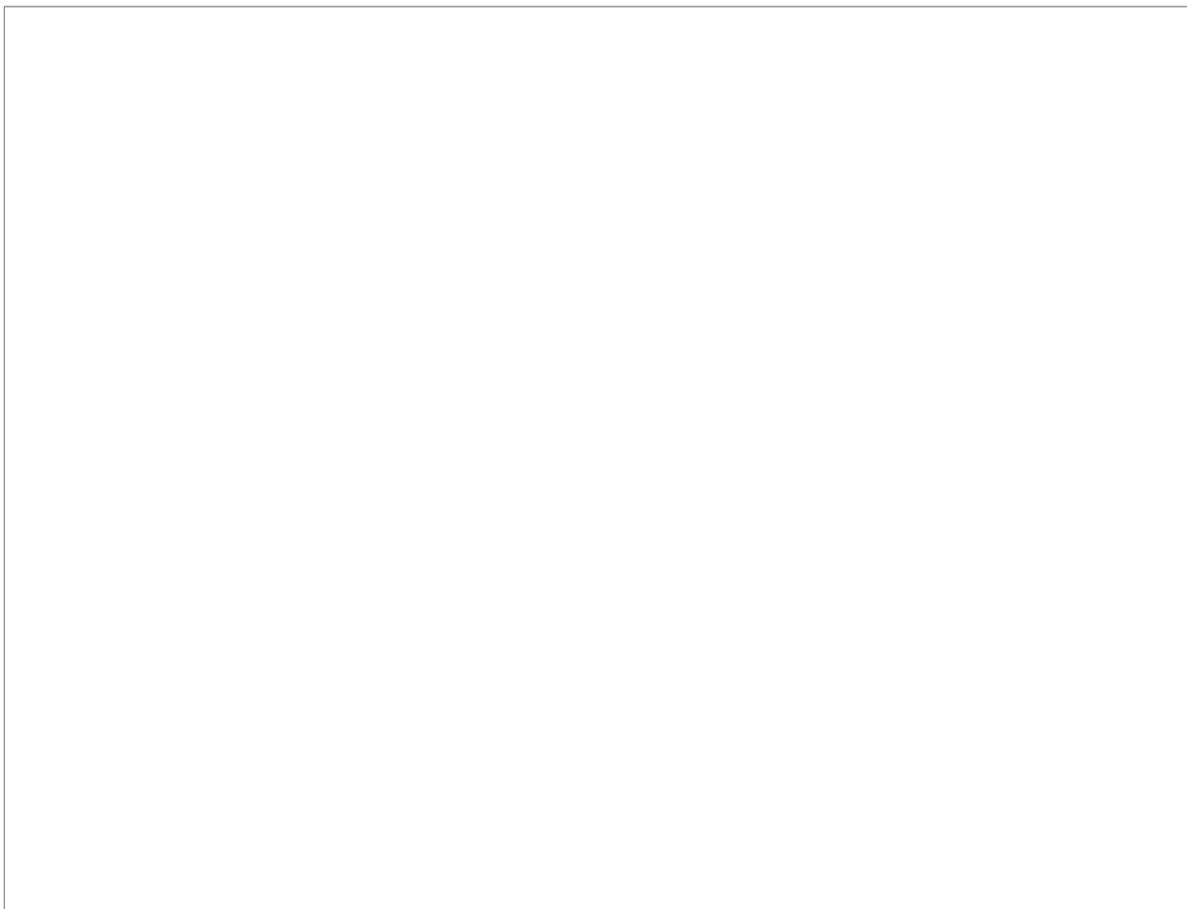
To: Mark & Gael

I feel Maylie physically, both now and when we practiced together. Two particular times stand out. The first Big Flat retreat, on the long outdoor kinhin, I was right behind Maylie and fell without thought into the pattern of her walking. I felt a sweeping flow of energy, determination, strength, and calm with every step. 'Course, the moment I consciously noted it, it melted away. The second time I felt her so strongly was when she was in the hospital before she died. I felt her round

about my diaphragm - very solid. It was some months after her death until that feeling, too, dissolved. Since then, I just feel her in general - as though whatever "Maylie" is suffuses being.

This morning, as I sometimes do when I open up the zendo, I said, "Morning, Glory!" to her picture. I think she likes that, but kinda shakes her head at me the way she used to. I grin, and turn on the heaters. That's what it is for me.

. . . and an invitation to others to share what their relationship with Maylie is now. If you would like to send your stories in, please see the [guidelines](#).



One
Tobias Griggs

*The space between what was,
And what will be,
Is filled with everything,
That is,
Infinite,
One.*

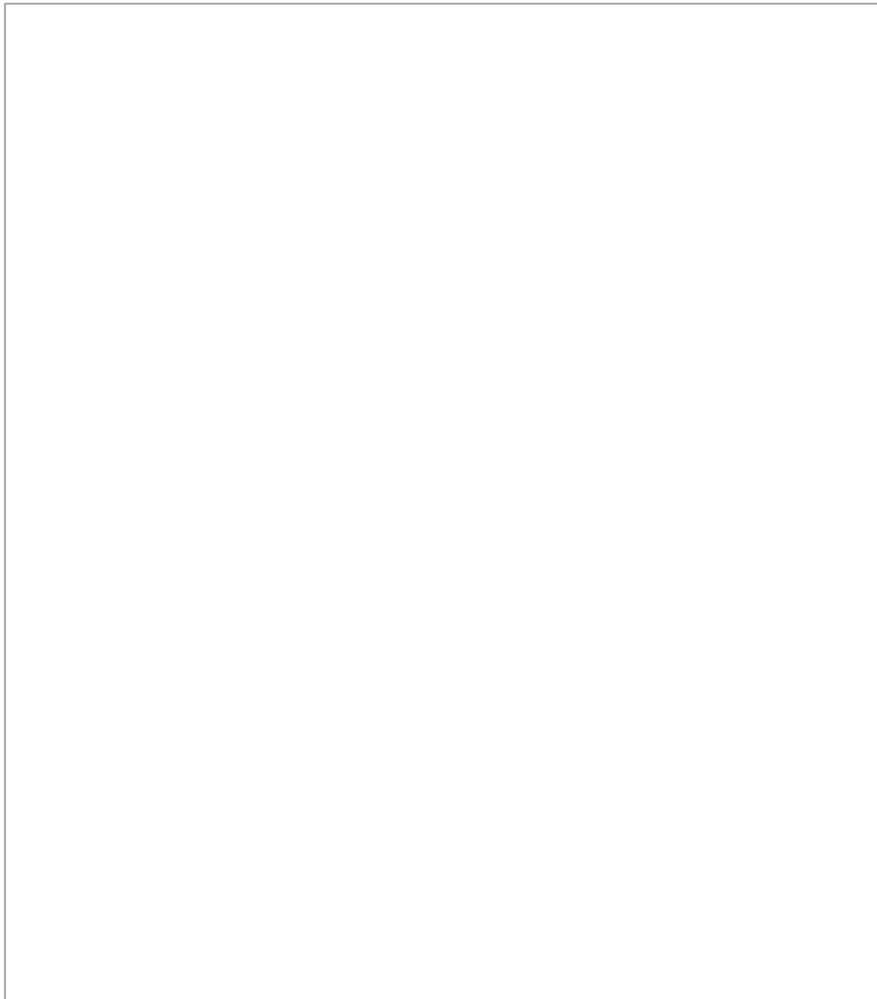
*Every moment is inextricably woven,
In to,
Next.
One after another.
One innumerable number at once.
One nevereverending moment.
One lets go of the concept of time,
The past,
Future,
Dissolve,
In to,
One,
Moment.*

*So then what will be is,
If it ever will be,
Considering things as if they are,
Can be,
What really can be,
What is,
May be,
Too.*

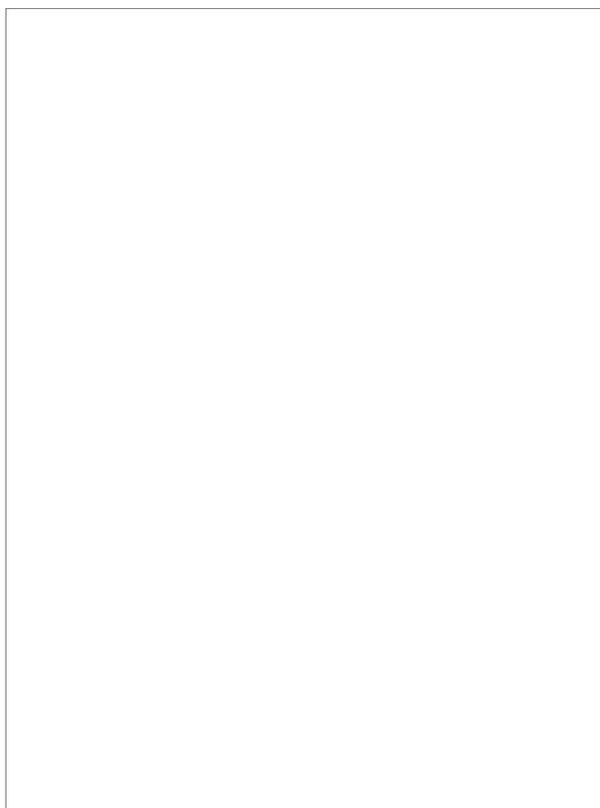
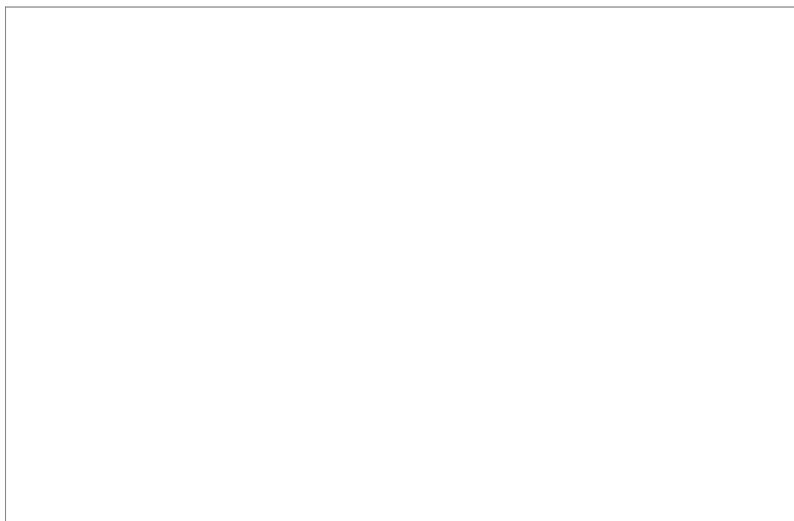
*Emptiness is openness.
Accept,
To let go.
Accept,
To live,
Desire exists and isn't.
Desire is embracing.
Holding on,
Is letting,
Go*

*Like waves upon the ocean it will be.
We can ride them,
Less intensely,
More,
Reality.
In this moment we are,
There is immeasurable possibility.*

*On this day many things may happen.
Like how those waves are all made of water,
We are all made of atoms,
Part of one reality.
One person in a world of 6.7 billion,
One world in ten million, billion,
One universe.
One infinitely small,
Yet your consciousness holds it all,
In your minds eye.
Whole.
The space between what was,
And what will be,
Is filled with everything,
That is,
Infinite,
One.*



Untitled
Joanna R.



Dogen

Guidelines for submitting things to Rin Shin-ji Voices can be found [here](#). We welcome members' poetry, art, articles, photos, quotes for the Dharma Gates column, etc.