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# MOON ON THE WATER

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Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

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## Do Not Paint Legs on a Snake

Zen Master Su Bong

When you see the sky, only blue. When you see the tree, just green. When you see the wall, only white. When you see the floor during meditation time, eyes half open and only meditating, only brown. That name is “seeing something, mind is clear.”

Zen means “don’t make anything.” Don’t make “behind” meaning. If you make “behind” meaning, then you are checking, checking, checking... your whole life. So even if you attain something, you cannot believe it.

We have in Zen one saying, “Don’t paint legs on a snake”. That’s No.1 important speech. Trust that the snake is enough. Why do we need to put our idea on the snake? “Snake you don’t have legs, so I put on you legs because you should walk. Now you have legs, so of course you need socks and shoes.” So you make a snake with legs and socks and shoes.

If you cannot believe that the snake is enough, that means, we cannot believe in ourselves. We cannot believe our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, so we cannot believe anything. And we always think about great love, great compassion, great

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Abbot’s Corner

## Inner Attitude

Pete Neuwald, Abbot



Zen Master Wu Kwang writes in his book, *Don’t-Know Mind – The Spirit of Korean Zen*, about Zen Master Seung Sahn’s great Grand-Teacher, Kyong Ho. Kyong Ho had started a diverse “community movement” of practitioners that, not only included monks, nuns, lay people, old, young, educated and uneducated, but also included different practice styles. In this community movement, Kyong Ho emphasized a distinction between the outer, spatial aspect of practice and inner attitude. The spatial aspects of practice refer to coming together to practice in a particular physical space at a particular time. Inner attitude is not limited by time and space. According to Kyong Ho, if the inner attitude of a person is sincere it doesn’t matter whether the person is in a specific place at the correct time. If we have the inner realization that we are practicing together then we are one community, unhindered by time and space.

Zen Master Wu Kwang describes a story about Zen Master Su Bong and Zen Master Ji Bong that illustrates this inner attitude. Zen Master Su Bong was a free-spirited monk and Zen Master Ji Bong (Bob Moore) was a family person with children, a job and other responsibilities. Su Bong was able to do many long retreats including long solo retreats, while Bob Moore was unable to ever do so due to his many responsibilities. In a talk once, he said, “Whenever Su Bong

See *Inner Attitude*

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bodhisattvas' way – only help somebody.

Our intention is good, we want to help this snake, we want to make it have feet and socks and shoes and give it some style. But our good intention only hinders everything around us. Because the basis of all human relationships is trust. If you trust something and trust someone and they make a mistake, that is no problem. Because you trust them, soon they will begin to trust themselves. They will slowly, slowly, slowly... everything becomes independent.

We also have one saying: "Great love and great compassion are wonderful but sometimes too much compassion turns to shit." So our practicing means put it all down, "my idea, my condition, my situation." Somebody said: "You never listen

## Hand Whispers

Susi Childress, Bodhisava Teacher

One of the first practices we teach to new Zen students is the practice of bowing. We bow when we enter the Dharma room and when we leave it; we bow when we sit and when we get up; we bow when we approach the altar and when we leave the altar; we bow entering and leaving the interview room; we bow to our teacher before and after interview; we bow following recitation of the Four Great Vows; we perform 108 prostrations in the morning at retreats. For Americans all this bowing may seem strange at first since it is not part of our culture. Some students have told me that they are uncomfortable prostrating themselves before a teacher because they feel like doing this means that they recognize the teacher as a god or superior being. Others have expressed concern about bowing to the statue of the Buddha because of the second commandment in the Bible warning not to worship idols. Many new students bring with them past experience with other religions, and they struggle to come to terms with how past and present experience can be reconciled and brought together in a practice with which they are comfortable.

When I am greeting someone new to our Zen Center and to our practice, I show them the proper form for doing a

standing bow and ask them to bow as they enter and exit the Dharma room. I explain to them that we are bowing out of respect for the Buddha, the Buddha's teachings and Buddhist path, and to the people who have gathered to practice. We are also bowing to ourselves in recognition of our decision to practice. Most people are OK with this explanation because showing respect is different from worshipping. Bowing is an outward demonstration of our gratitude for this practice and the people who support us. Every time I bow, I remind myself to be grateful.

Bowing to our teacher is also a demonstration of respect. The full prostration bow is a way for us to show how deep our gratitude and respect are for the efforts of the teacher to help us along our path. Many American Zen students struggle to let go of their egos and to completely open themselves up to their teachers. Many of us are anxious about interviews with our teachers because we want our teachers to see how much we have attained and not how mistaken we are. We habitually hide our true selves from others, fearing that others will find fault with us. Allowing our Zen teachers to see our own lack of clarity can be unnerving, but it is important if we are ever to clear away the clouds and see that which is always shining. In my anxiety, I used to enter the interview room and concentrate on performing the prostrations with correct form, never really connecting with the experience. As I bowed, I worried about if I was going to be able to give good answers to the Zen Master's questions. Bowing was just something I did when I came to interview. But as I became more comfortable with my teacher, I was able to relax and start bowing with intention. Now I always try to remind myself when I bow to my teacher, that I am demonstrating my gratitude for his guidance and efforts to help me. When I bow with this intention, I find that I am more able to open up and connect with him without trying to hide.

I have been reading the book *Hunger Mountain* by David Hinton. The fifth chapter of this book is titled "Bow". The author, in describing the Chinese character for the word bow, says this: "The pictographic image on the left of this character is a hand with five fingers; and on the right is an image meaning 'to whisper' composed of a mouth close by an ear. A bow is one of those elemental movements that can only be called dance, as it so perfectly expresses a spiritual gesture offering the center of identity to something beyond. And the Chinese graph renders that as a gesture verging on the linguistic silence shared by mountain peaks and empty minds: *hand-whispers*." Wow! How beautiful is that? When we bow, are hands are whispering the silence of our true selves to that which we bow.

So now when you come to the Zen center and bow, try to truly connect to the experience of bowing. Don't think that bowing is just a form we follow in the Kwan Um School of Zen. Truly connect with the act of bowing. Bow deeply with great respect and gratitude. Bow with intention. Let your hands whisper the silence of your true self to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Offer yourself to others.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### April 10 2012

- **Buddha's Birthday Celebration**  
Wednesday, April 10  
7:30 – 9:00 PM
- **Extended Practice**  
Saturday, April 20  
9:00 – 11:00 AM
- **Sutra Talk**  
Wednesday, April 24  
7:30 – 9:00 PM

### May 2013

- **Introduction to Zen**  
Monday, May 6  
7:30 PM - 9:00 PM
- **Dharma Talk**  
Wednesday, May 22  
7:30 – 9:00 PM

would go to do a long solo retreat, I would say to myself, 'I'm going to do the retreat with Su Bong.'" Whenever Su Bong would do retreats, Bob Moore would tell himself, "I'm practicing along with Su Bong in retreat." This is the inner aspect of community, which is not hindered by time and space.

As Zen Master Wu Kwang points out, this "inner attitude" is an important point for those of us in certain situations. Right now, our School's three month Winter Kyol Che is underway in Providence. Kyol Che means "tight dharma" or "coming together." For many of us in the school, we have commitments and situations— family, jobs, illness — that may prevent us from participating in Kyol Che. With Kyong Ho's sincere inner attitude we can still practice together as one community. The Providence Zen Center institutionalized this inner attitude Kyol Che as the "Heart Kyol Che" and our Center has followed suit. A number of us have already made a commitment to intensify our practice as best we are

### **Buddha's Birthday Celebration** Wednesday April 10<sup>th</sup> 7:30 PM

Please join us for celebration of Buddha's birthday with special chanting, meditation, the traditional reading of a poem, followed by a dharma talk and a flower offering. The poem will be given by Senior Dharma Teacher Sonia Alexander. Family, friends and newcomers are encouraged to attend. Following the celebration, cake, cookies, and tea will be served.

### **Lumbini Garden** (*Buddha's Birthplace*)

In the heaven above and the heaven below  
Only I am holy.  
Brighter than the sun.  
Bigger than the universe.  
Swallowed time and space.  
Everything is meticulous and perfectly complete.

Someone said, before Buddha was born,  
Already saved all beings.  
But why so many suffering people here?  
All the pagodas are broken.  
Old Buddha's statue defaced.  
No eyes, no ears, no nose, no hands.  
Grass grows wild. No flowers.  
Is this Buddhism's primary point?

Thailand, Hong kong, Japan, Korea—big temples.  
Many yellow monks, gray monks, dark monks.  
How do they know Buddha's nose?  
They only rub their own stomachs.  
Un Mun's shit stick has already broken  
All temples, killed all monks.  
HA! HA! HA! AIGO! AIGO!  
No cloths. No shoes. No food.

Zen Master Seung Sahn

# Hand Whispers

Susi Childress, Bodhisava Teacher

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See *Immoko*

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Regular Practice Schedule of the Great Lake Zen Center

Monday and Wednesday at 7:30PM;  
Saturday at 8:00AM

Other special events as described elsewhere in the newsletter. Unless otherwise noted, all events are held at the Great Lake Zen Center.

### *Beginners Always Welcome!*

Unless noted otherwise, *Introductions to Zen* are offered on the first Monday of each month. Dharma Talks are offered on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Both are at 7:30PM.



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