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# MOON ON THE WATER

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## Buddha's Birthday

Opening Talk, Providence Zen Center, 2011  
Zen Master Bon Soeng

I was asked to give this talk and I started to wonder what are we talking about. I'm supposed to give the opening speech for Buddha's Birthday Celebration but we are a school that works with kong-ans and questions, so I started to wonder, well, what is this Buddha thing? Who is it? What is it? Are we here celebrating the birth of this thing over here? [points to Baby Buddha statue] What are we actually doing here? The legend has it that this Buddha was born somewhere between twenty-five and twenty-six hundred years ago. And, the legend says that he popped out of his mother's side and just like this one's doing, one hand up, one hand down, and he spoke a line that said, "Heaven above, earth below, only I am holy." What's that? Who's this "I"? What is holy?

The myth goes on and it talks about how this young baby grew up to be a very important person in the world. His father was afraid he was going to be a religious figure as the prophecy said he might, so he decided to lie to him, to hide the truth of the world from him, and basically raised him in a cocoon. He didn't know there was death; he didn't know there was poverty; he didn't know there was sickness. Think about it. How do you

See *Buddha's Birthday*

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Abbot's Corner

## So, What Am I Doing Now?

Pete Neuwald, Abbot

"The foolish reject what they see and not what they think; the wise reject what they think and not what they see."

— Huang Po



Huang Po (Huangbo), who died around 850, was the teacher of the famous Zen Master Lin Chi. We are fortunate that P'ei Hsiu, a scholar, official and student of sorts of Huang Po, transcribed many of Huang Po's teachings. Lately, I've been reading *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po* as translated by John Blofeld and *Zen's Chinese Heritage* by Andy Ferguson. The former is a much more comprehensive translation of P'ei Hsiu's writings than Andy Ferguson's, although I think the latter's translations are closer to the heart of the teaching. But then again, I'm not a Chinese scholar or translator at all, so what do I know?

I searched and searched for the tidbit from Huang Po that I wanted to focus on for this article. This was difficult since there was so much that struck me from Huang Po's teaching. While Ferguson's translations were clearer to me, I'd like to throw out Blofeld's last attribution to Huang Po.

Huang Po was asked:

"But how can we prevent ourselves from falling into the error of making distinctions between this and that?"

Huang Po answered:

See *So, What Am I Doing Now?* *continued page 4*

live twenty-nine years of your life and not know that people age? What happened to his grandparents? How did this happen? Yet somehow his father was so worried that he [his son] would have a spiritual inclination that he lied to him and hid the truth of the world. When I hear this story, I think it's preposterous. But then I think again and I realize that that's true for all of us also. We're basically lied to. We're socialized to believe certain things. We are schooled and groomed to be good citizens and good people, whatever that means, and, more and more, we lose contact with who we are. Just like this little baby did. So the myth of the Buddha's story brings us back to ourselves. Are we celebrating the birth of a man or are we celebrating something else?

So if we skip forward a little bit in China, Zen Master Ma-jo was asked, "What is Buddha?" He said that Buddha is mind. So are we here celebrating the birth of mind? When is mind born? When does mind die? What is mind? Buddha is mind; mind is Buddha, so is this mind? We don't know. So maybe what we're doing here is celebrating the birth of "don't know." Maybe that's the point. This thing here [pointing to Baby Buddha] is standing in for "don't know." Just as this thing here [pointing to himself] is standing in for "don't know." All of us are "don't know."

So maybe we're here celebrating the birth of this very moment. So Buddha's Birthday is not this particular day; it's every moment of every day. And what is it that's being born? You decide. Moment to moment to moment we're celebrating Buddha's Birthday. What kind of birth are we making? That's the point of our practice. What kind of world do we give birth to? So as we sit here today listening to these lovely speeches, it's not about the lovely speech. It's about what kind of world do I make.

So as we celebrate Buddha's Birthday, look right back inward and ask, "What is Buddha?" And really, really, really generate this "don't know." And if we can follow this "don't know," when we give meaning to the Buddha's Birthday, and we can actually create a world which represents the values and the life energy that this little baby over here represents. So, thank you all for coming and Happy Birthday to all of you.



## How Accurate is Your Temperature Gauge?

Laura Otto-Salaj, SDT

In my car, there is a gauge that is supposed to reflect the outside temperature. However, several years ago, something happened, and since that time the gauge has been off; it usually states that the outside temperature is anywhere from 40 to 70 degrees warmer than it actually is. One day during this exceptionally cold winter, one of the passengers in my car was amused to see that even though schools were closed due to the cold, the gauge in my car stated that it was 65 degrees outside. It isn't clear what this gauge is reflecting at any particular time - it might be the warmth of some other part of the engine, or the inside temperature of the car, or even different things at different times. However, it is really clear that this monitor is not clearly perceiving the outside temperature; it is not doing its job.

I could take my car to a mechanic to have the gauge repaired or replaced, but haven't done it; using the car, knowing what the temperature is outside is somewhat helpful, but not really necessary - the car can still do its job without this piece of equipment working correctly. On the other hand, as human beings, perceiving situation clearly is necessary for us if we are going to do our job, and help this world. Not seeing our situation clearly from moment to moment, we become rather like this temperature gauge: sometimes we might reflect our own internal temperature - hot, lukewarm, or cold - and the reading may be accurate for the situation, or not. Sometimes we might reflect what our friends, family or co-workers are experiencing - whether *others'* assessments of temperature are accurate or not. Not seeing situation clearly from moment to moment, our faulty temperature gauge can lead us to all sorts of conclusions and actions, which may not be particularly helpful, or may even make situations worse than they already are.

We're really lucky, though; we have a way of helping ourselves clearly see this moment, which is the first step in helping this world. Practice is like the mechanic for our temperature gauge, and primary point - *don't know* - is our baseline. When we practice, it helps us to calibrate how we perceive situation, function, and relationship from moment to moment. We have a repair station in our Zen Center, and all sorts of tools in our toolbox to help with this calibration: sitting, chanting, bowing, kong-an interviews, silent meditation retreats, mantra work, and together action with the sangha all work to help us get back to baseline, to primary point, to *don't know*. Regular practice helps us extend the time in which we can clearly perceive this moment. Then, we can use our Buddha nature - our great love and great compassion - for only help this world action.

So, please come to GLZC, where we can all help one another calibrate our temperature gauges, and use that clarity to help others and end suffering.

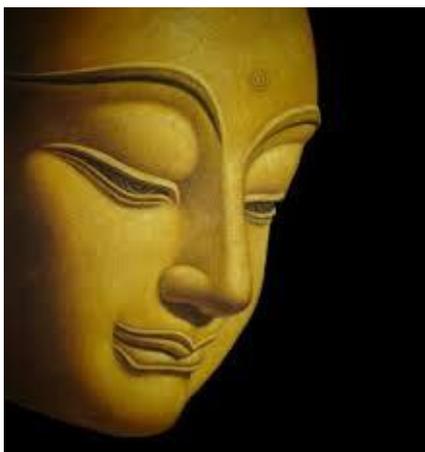
## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### April 2014

- **Buddha's Birthday Celebration**  
Monday, April 7  
7:30 – 9:00 PM
- **Dharma Talk**  
Wednesday, April 23  
7:30 – 9:00 PM
- **Extended Practice**  
Saturday, April 26  
9:00 – 11:00 AM

### May 2014

- **Introduction to Zen**  
Monday, May 5  
7:30 PM - 9:00 PM
- **GLZC Rummage Sale**  
Saturday, May 10  
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
- **Dharma Talk**  
Wednesday, May 28  
7:30 – 9:00 PM
- **No Practice**  
Wednesday, May 26  
Enjoy Memorial Day



## Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Monday, April 7<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 Dharma Teacher Gretchen Neuwald. Family, friends and newcomers are encouraged to attend. Following the celebration, cake, cookies, and tea will be served.

## Rummage Sale Returns to GLZC!

Believe it or not, **spring is coming!** That means the time is fast approaching for the return of our **GLZC Rummage Sale**. The sale will take place at our center on **Saturday, May 10 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm**. Start saving items now for donation to the sale. We accept almost everything (except clothes, large seasonal items, aquariums, humidifiers, vaporizers and computer components.) The rummage sale is the only fundraising event that GLZC will have this year. It provides critical funds for the rental/maintenance of the center and support for retreats and other events.

The fun starts on Friday night with the setup and pricing of all donations. Pizza will be provided for all those who help. While you are there you can spot those extra special items and get there early Saturday to buy them. If you need help transporting items, please email us at [info@glzc.org](mailto:info@glzc.org) and we'll arrange a pick up. Remember, donations are tax deductible and receipts for your donations will be available.

Now is the time to start scouring your closets, attics, and basements for things to donate. **Our last rummage sale was 2 years ago, so we know you must have some stuff!** Remember, this is great opportunity to simplify your life, "let go" of your attachments, and, at the same time, help the Great Lake Zen Center.

# Buddha's Birthday Poem, April 2012

Zen Master Bon Hae

Siddhartha!  
It's not too late!  
Don't do it!  
Demons wait.  
Heavens wait.  
Arhats lose weight from anticipation, and  
Rats race from their ships  
Towards what?  
Have you thought  
About what comes next?

Go to the fortune-tellers.  
Ask them. They  
Utter: Prince or Holy Man.  
This is what you're in for,  
And your father doesn't forget.  
Meanwhile your mother,  
Away from home, clings to a branch.

Shakyamuni,  
Her death comes soon,  
Almost as soon as you're born. Nobody owns this  
Karma.  
You could stop the wheel right now. But  
Already you've forgotten the future.  
Maya reaches  
Upward, the tree supports  
No one and somehow  
In its shadow you are

Born.  
Unleashed ocean of  
Dharma! Un Mun would have thrown you to a hungry  
Dog. "Only I am  
Holy." KATZ! The tree in front of you is already 100%  
Awake.

Notes:

*This is an acrostic. The first letters of each line spell out Buddha's given names followed by his clan name followed by his title: Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni Buddha.*

References are made to the following:

*Before his birth, Siddhartha's father, King Suddhodana, consulted fortune-tellers (aka "wise men") who said that the new baby would grow up to be either a great king or a holy renunciant. (The fortune-tellers were called in because*

*Siddhartha's mother, Queen Maya, dreamed that an elephant pierced her side; this is not in the poem.) Towards the end of her pregnancy, Queen Maya decided to return to her parents' house to give birth, and while on the road she went into labor, giving birth while standing under a sal tree, holding on to a branch. (Supposedly, Siddhartha was born from her right side, another detail not in the poem.) Queen Maya died 10, or maybe 7, days after Buddha's birth.*

*Upon being born, baby Siddhartha took seven steps in each of the four directions; under each step a lotus flower appeared. He then proclaimed "In heaven above and earth below, only I am holy."*

*About 1,500 years later, Un Mun referred to Buddha's birth by saying, "If I had been there I would have fed him to a hungry dog." About 750 years after Un Mun, So Sahn spoke of how Ananda "unleashed this ocean of sutra teachings" derived from the Buddha's words.*

*So, What Am I Doing Now? continued from page 1*

"By realizing that, though you eat the whole day through, no single grain has passed your lips; and that a day's journey has not taken you a single step forward – also by uniformly abstaining from such notions as 'self' and 'other.' DO NOT PERMIT THE EVENTS OF YOUR DAILY LIVES TO BIND YOU, BUT NEVER WITHDRAW YOURSELVES FROM THEM. [Blofeld's emphasis] Only by acting thus can you earn the title of 'A Liberated One.'

Never allow yourselves to mistake outward appearance for reality. Avoid the error of thinking in terms of past, present and future. The past has not gone; the present is a fleeting moment; the future is not yet to come."

There is more to his answer, but this is probably enough to chew on.

I think Huang Po is basically saying, "Don't make this or that; don't make anything." It's interesting that he tells us to not let our daily lives bind us, but also, very importantly, to not withdraw from our daily lives as well. We are not shutting ourselves off from life; we are engaged in life – but we are not controlled hither and thither by the moment to moment events of our lives. He then goes on to entreat us to not make the mistake of making past, present and future. I have to say that I'm not sure about Blofeld's translation of "the past has not gone." I would think that "the past is already gone" might be a more apropos translation. That is the reality for me – the past is already gone, the present is . . . whoops! That's gone too! And the future is always the future, never attained, by definition. So, what am I doing now? So, what are you doing now?

# Forgiveness

Frank Pauc

Does forgiveness have anything to do with Zen? I think it does, for a number of reasons. Zen promotes compassion, and forgiveness is intimately connected with that. Forgiveness also depends on a person having a clear mind. Zen helps us to achieve that state. Forgiveness is a process that is rife with paradox, and paradox seems to be integral to Zen.

The opposite of forgiveness is holding a grudge against another person. Holding a grudge is a form of attachment, perhaps the most perverse form of it. Other types of attachment at least have some sort of short-lived upside to them. A person who is attached to money or power or sex or food or whatever, gets some kind of thrill from the attachment. Holding a grudge only allows the person to wallow in anger and bitterness. The person may derive a certain twisted satisfaction from that anger, but it is profoundly negative.

Forgiveness is necessary to heal emotional and spiritual wounds. The paradox here is that, the deeper the wound, the more essential it is that forgiveness occur, and the more difficult it is for forgiveness to take place. When a person is deeply hurt by the actions of another person, the victim often becomes stuck in that event. That trauma becomes a frozen moment in time, and for the wounded individual, the world stops moving. For that person, life stops moving.

The reality is that the world does keep moving. Zen teaches us that things change. Holding a grudge fools a person into thinking that the world is a static place. It makes a person blind to what is really happening. For many years, perhaps even decades, I was very angry with my father. I kept a grudge in my heart, and I held on to it dearly. Then one day, it was gone. One day, I looked at my father and I saw him clearly for the first time in a long time. I saw a tired, old man who was lonely, and who was grieving for his wife, who though living, could no longer recognize the man she had married fifty years ago. When I saw my father, I could only feel his sorrow and pain. There was no more room for my anger. I suddenly realized that the man who had hurt me many years ago no longer existed. A stranger had taken his place.

It is a paradox that forgiveness cannot be forced. My experience is that a person must have the desire to forgive another, but it cannot be accomplished through

sheer force of will. I believe there is a Zen adage about dropping something like a rotten piece of wood. I think that phrase is appropriate. A person cannot throw away anger and bitterness. A person can only let those things go. I don't know how or why or even exactly when I forgave my father, but it happened. When I wasn't paying attention, I dropped my anger like a rotten piece of wood.

It is also paradox that although forgiveness is beneficial to others, but it is ultimately a selfish act. A person forgives in order to heal themselves. Any idea that the act is doing somebody else a favor poisons the intention. A person forgives another because it allows the forgiver to move on and re-enter the stream of life. Actively rejoining the world benefits everyone else. It's a win-win.

When we sit, we often have to re-focus. A clear mind is something that has to be regained over and over again. It is similar with forgiveness. Forgiveness is usually not a one-shot deal. Especially when forgiving something very hurtful, it is often necessary to forgive the person repeatedly. Like sitting, this gets easier with practice.

Forgiveness is a difficult thing. There might be nothing that is more so. However, Zen helps a person to forgive. It helps a person because it puts the person in the present moment. If I can be in the here and now, then any wound from my past no longer exists. It happened, but it no longer has power over me. Then I can forgive.



# MOON ON THE WATER

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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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