

MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 7, Issue 4

Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

August, 2005

Mind Road Zen Master Dae Kwang

"The mind road has no end," says a common Zen teaching phrase. Zen Master Seung Sahn's upcoming collection of kong-ans, *The Whole World Is A Single Flower*, has an instructive case in this regard: number fourteen, "Where does the bell sound come from?"

One day, as the big temple bell was being rung, Buddha asked Ananda, "Where does the bell sound come from?"

"The bell."

Buddha said, "The bell? But if there were no bell stick, how would the sound appear?"

Ananda hastily corrected himself. "The stick! The stick!"

"The stick? If there were no air, how could the sound come here?"

"Yes! Of course! It comes from the air!"

Buddha asked, "Air? But unless you have an ear, you cannot hear the bell sound."

"Yes! I need an ear to hear it. So it comes from there."

Buddha replied, "Your ear? If you have no consciousness, how can you understand the bell sound?"

"My consciousness makes the sound."

"Your consciousness? So, Ananda, if you have no mind, how do you hear the bell sound?"

"It was created by mind alone."

By the time this story is finished, Ananda has traveled far down the mind road. In fact, the bus has come to the last stop. The bus driver has gotten off and is in the diner having a cup of coffee and a cigarette. Ananda is still sitting there.

Unfortunately, much of our life is like this too. We spend much of our time in a world of ideas and their associated emotions rather than waking up to right now.

Zen Master Kyong Ho Sunim, Zen Master Seung Sahn's great-grandteacher, concluded one of his most famous dharma speeches by saying, "My only wish for you is that you free yourselves of all conceptual understanding." This is Zen. If you are thinking, then everything in life is a problem. If you cut off all thinking, then your every action is the truth. You and the whole universe have already become one. This is clear mind, non-attachment thinking, the true way.

Kong-an practice is such a powerful meditation tool because it brings us to the end of our mind road. It allows us to directly experience this moment, not just an idea! The kong-an is not special; it is our everyday life, moment to moment. So, where does the sound of the bell come from? Will you get off the bus?

Join us at GLZC on September 23rd for a public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang. See details later in the newsletter.

Many Paths up the #@%@ Mountain

Andy Yench, DT

At the public talk preceding our July YMJJ, our guiding teacher, Zen Master Dae Kwang, took a question from a visitor about Zen and religion. I don't recall the exact exchange, but it went something like this: Visitor: Is zen a religion? ZMDK: No. Visitor: Is Zen a philosophy then? ZMDK: No. Zen is not religion or philosophy. Zen is just a word that means what are you doing right now? Like he often does, ZMDK followed his answer with a story to shed more light on the topic.

A ship was tossed off course and came upon a small island. Approaching the island, the crew spied three huts. Expecting a group of people on the beach the would-be rescuers could only find a single individual. They asked the lone cast-away where his companions were and he explained he was the only person on the island. Thinking he misunderstood the question they asked him again, "where are the other people on the island," and he told them again he was alone. Slightly frustrated at this point the sailors blurted out a direct question, "If you are alone on this island who lives in that other hut?" "No one," replied the cast-away, "that's my church." "Your church!" exclaimed the surprised sailors. "Well if that hut is your church, who lives in the third hut?" came their next question. "No one," the cast-away said again, "that was my other church."

I love this story because I understand how that cast away feels. Kwan Um style Zen is my second "church". My first, like a surprising number of folks at the Great Lake Zen Center, was Catholicism. I can't think of anyone I've met at GLZC who claims Zen Buddhism as their faith growing up. Most of us view Zen as our second or third church, or, as we often refer to it, our current "path" up the "mountain." I like to call this familiar metaphor the "path-mountain" metaphor. It means Zen is just one way up a universal mountain on which other faiths have also staked out climbing routes. Christianity, Islam and other religions are simply other trails that, despite crossing different terrain, eventually converge on a common summit. It's a lovely feel-good answer for religious intolerance and it helps me understand the "path" part of the metaphor. But what about the mountain part?

When ever I think about the "mountain" part, I visualize myself on a steep, icy slope, struggling through wind driven snow toward a hidden summit. When I get past this mountaineering fantasy and think a little deeper about the mountain, my next mental exercise involves coming up with new names for the word "mountain". Instead of "mountain" I substitute "enlightenment" or "heaven" or "love" or "compassion" or _____. You can probably fill in the blank. Until now, this is where I stopped analyzing the metaphor. I was content, or at least mostly content, to understand Zen as one of many "intellectual constructs" that help people achieve a common, higher realization.

But now, as I write this article, I am stuck trying to clearly describe the mountain and wrap this up. What the hell is this damn mountain we keep talking about? This metaphor is now starting to remind me of a kong-an, and I don't like kong-an practice. (Whoops, there goes my like-dislike mind popping into my writing.) I suppose kong-an aversion is why I don't think very hard about the mountain. Which is a good thing, right? After all, experienced Zen practitioners tell us not to think about Kong-ans to attain a correct answer. Not-thinking has never been a problem for me. Those who know me well can vouch for this. But, come to think of it, my way of not-thinking is not really the not-thinking mind the Zen Masters talk about. If it were, I'd probably have better success with kong-an practice.

Anyway, let's get back to the path and the mountain and the cast-away. The cast away is really an expression for being human. Ultimately, we might as well be on a deserted island when we make the meaningful decision about which church or path to practice and follow. Whatever path we choose, we alone dedicate ourselves to the journey, and when the going gets tough, the decision to leave or stay the course becomes a private choice as well. It's a sobering thought, but this human life is really a solo journey. But where are we going? Towards "ultimate reality" I guess. But that's a hard mental image. Mountain is a better visual.

We use a powerful word like "mountain" to describe something that is really not describable because, let's face it, ultimate reality demands a really powerful word. You can't substitute the term "grassy park" for mountain and pack the same punch. Beside its linguistic heft, mountain is also a good word because most everyone understands, via hard earned experience, that travel through the hills is harder than the flats. Mountain journeys are tough. The path-mountain metaphor hints up-front our adventure towards ultimate truth will be hard, which is where the metaphor starts to steer us down a side trail.

Easy and hard are relative terms. The journey up the mountain is not always arduous because life is not always arduous. Walking through a flat grassy park can be fantastic Zen practice. Just as good as an epic struggle through blizzard conditions at high altitude in fact. It turns out you don't need an actually church or path or mountain to really attain the path-mountain metaphor. All you need is clear action this moment. We like to say it's simple. But it's simple like reading the plans for a project is simple. Intellectually you might grasp how a, b and c fit together, but to really internalize it, to actually put something together, is not so easy. At least it's not easy for me. I often need help which is one reason why I go to the Zen center. At GLZC I get help through together action.

But, like you fellow cast-away, I also get help on the path up the mountain even when it's not winding through the Zen Center. While sitting meditation may often feel like the

steep icy slope I described earlier as my image of the path up the mountain, our lives are one continuous journey that varies in intensity. When you go to the Zen center you are picking up the trail pace, (And I certainly encourage you to join me for these faster walks at GLZC more often.) but outside the Zen center you are still traveling the path. You are still on course up a mountain, across a river, through your family room or over to the east side of town for a business meeting. It's all what-you-are-doing-right-now. What else is there?

number, and so do you. Moment to moment there will always be another experience ready to open up the doors, welcome you in, and fill you up with a little wisdom at the very least, and maybe, if you get lucky and don't think too hard about it, inspire some moment-to-moment clear-action. Happy trails.

So I think the cast-away was wrong when he said he only had two churches on the island. He really had an infinite

Precepts Information

On Sunday, September 25th we will hold our annual Precepts ceremony at the conclusion of the regular YMJJ. To clarify the requirements for taking precepts, the pre-requisites for several levels are listed below. These pre-requisites are established by the Kwan Um School and are followed by the Great Lake Zen Center. If you have any questions pertaining to the taking of precepts that are not answered here, please feel free to ask any of the Dharma Teachers for further information.

Taking 5 Precepts:

Taking the five precepts means recognizing the importance of practicing and making it part of your everyday life. It means joining a family of other people who have made the same decision, practicing with them when you can. You must also agree to become a member of the Kwan Um School and pay membership dues quarterly. The requirements are:

1. It is appropriate to support the Zen Center by being a member of the Kwan Um School.
2. You must have attended a minimum of 4 days of retreat during the year preceding the ceremony.
3. Your application must be received by the Kwan Um School in Cumberland, RI 10 days prior to the ceremony date. If it is not received 10 days prior to the ceremony, a \$25 late fee will be applied.
4. You must buy a short gray bowing robe and kasa, the robe is \$85 and the kasa is \$40.

Dharma Teacher in Training (DTT):

The DTT program is an opportunity to deepen your commitment to your practice and your vow to help others. It encourages you to widen your focus from being largely a questioner and receiver, to also being able to guide, inspire, and teach others. During this training period, your relationship to your teacher and your Zen Center will have the opportunity to mature. The requirements are:

1. You must have taken the 5 precepts 2 years prior to the current precepts ceremony.
2. You must write a 1,000 word paper on "Motivations for Practice".
3. You must have the recommendation of your Guiding Teacher.
4. You must attend at least four regular YMJJ's each year. If not enough group retreats are available in your location, solo retreats are permissible.
5. Kwan Um School dues must be current.
6. You must pay a \$60 initiation fee.

Taking the precepts is not a requirement for your Zen practice, it is an individual decision. Each step, from 5 precepts to Bodhisattva Dharma Teacher is taken when the practitioner feels they are ready to take the steps. Once started, there is no pressure to continue along, for example, taking 5 precepts does not mean you have to become a Dharma Teacher in Training 2 years later. Being a Dharma Teacher in Training does not mean you have to become a Dharma Teacher. You progress through the precepts as you feel comfortable.

"Beginner's Mind" Retreat, Sunday, August 21, 9 AM - 2 PM

If you have ever hesitated to do a retreat, join us for this introductory "Beginner's Mind" one-day retreat. Newcomers are especially welcome. We will walk you through our retreat forms step-by-step. The retreat will include a formal meal, chanting, and sitting and walking meditation. You may register for this retreat by signing up at GLZC or email us at info@glzc.org. The Beginner's Mind retreat offers the opportunity to experience what a YMJJ is like without the stress. During the Beginner's Mind retreat instruction is offered on meditation, chanting, forms, and the 4 bowl meal process. The atmosphere is much more relaxed and geared toward learning. It is a good introduction to the formal YMJJ practice.

Consulting Interviews

During August the Sr. Dharma Teachers at GLZC will start offering consulting interviews for anyone interested. Consulting interviews will be held on the second Wednesday and the third Monday of the month. Laura, Peter, and Mike will rotate the interview duties. Consulting interviews offer an opportunity to discuss your practice, ask questions on Zen or Buddhism, specifics on forms, and questions on life in general. The Sr. Dharma Teachers rely on their years of practice to respond to your questions. Please feel free to take advantage of this opportunity. The form for the consulting interview is similar to the regular interview process with the exception of full prostrations. The form is as follows:

1. The bell is rung twice
2. Do a sitting bow and stand up behind your cushion
3. Walk to the Dharma room door and do a standing bow
4. Open the door and walk thru, leaving it open for the person returning to close (If you are the first person, close the Dharma Room door).
5. Walk directly to the interview room, open the door and do a standing bow to the teacher, who will do a sitting bow in return, shut the door behind you.
6. Step forward and sit on the cushion and have your interview.
7. When the interview is completed, do a sitting bow and stand up.
8. Move towards the door, being careful to not turn your back on the teacher. Open the door and stand in it facing the Teacher.
9. Do a standing bow to the Teacher and close the door, leaving it slightly ajar.
10. Return to the Dharma Room. Allow the person leaving to go ahead of you and after you enter, close the Dharma Room door.
11. Do a standing bow to the Buddha
12. Return to your seat, walking behind everyone.
13. Do a standing bow to your mat and sit down.

Consulting interviews are voluntary interviews only. Prior to the start of practice the Head Dharma Teacher will ask if anyone would like a consulting interview. When consulting interviews are held and you do not wish to go to the interview, simply do a sitting bow when the bell is rung for your turn at interview. This will signal the next person to go instead of you.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask a Dharma Teacher prior to the start of practice for clarification.

Possible Move

GLZC is considering a move to a new location. The landlord for our current location has not been receptive to fixing the problems we have found here even though he has been notified several times. If anyone knows of or hears of a facility that may be appropriate, please bring it to our attention. We are simply in the investigative stage right now, There are no solid plans for a move right now and will continue to be in our current location for the foreseeable future.

YMJJ Retreat
With Zen Master Dae Kwang
Sept. 24 - 25

A YMJJ retreat has been scheduled with Zen Master Dae Kwang for September 24 - 25, 2005. The retreat will be held at GLZC. Zen Master Dae Kwang will be leading the retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat is \$70 for both days, or \$40 for one day. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space can be arranged if required at no extra charge. Those needing sleep space should notify Peter or Laura and should bring a sleeping bag, pillow, and washcloth/towel.

The retreat will begin with a free public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang at 7:30 PM on Friday, September 23rd and will conclude with a precepts ceremony on Sunday, September 25th. Please plan on joining us for some very strong practice. **You may register for this YMJJ by signing up at GLZC or by contacting Peter or Laura.**

Calendar of Upcoming Events

August, 2005

Sunday, August 21: Beginner's Mind Retreat. GLZC, 9am - 4pm.

September, 2005

No Practice or Introduction to Zen, Monday, September 5

Sunday, September 18: Sangha Picnic.

Friday, September 23: Public Talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang. GLZC 7:30

Saturday, September 24 and Sunday September 25: YMJJ. With Zen Master Dae Kwang. GLZC, 6:00am – 9:40pm on Saturday and 6:00am to 2:30pm on Sunday. Precepts ceremony following the end of the YMJJ.

November, 2005

Saturday, November 12: Kido One-Day Retreat, GLZC, 10am to 4pm.

No Practice, Wednesday, November 23

December, 2005

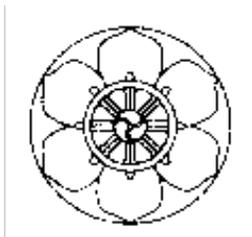
Monday, December 5: Buddha's Enlightenment Day. GLZC, 7:30. Join us as we celebrate Buddha's Enlightenment Day. Friends and family are welcome to attend, also.

Monday, December 26: No Practice.

January, 2006

Monday, January 9: Heart Kyol Che Opening Ceremony. GLZC, 7:30. Join us as we open the 90 day period of intense practice corresponding to the 90 day Kyol Che retreat.

Great Lake Zen Center
828 E. Locust St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212



MOON ON THE WATER

is published by the

Great Lake Zen Center
828 East Locust Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
414-771-2490 (Peter) or
414-380-9215 (Laura)

e-mail: info@glzc.org

Web-Site: www.glzc.org

Kwan Um Web-Site: www.kwanumzen.org

The Great Lake Zen Center is affiliated with the Kwan Um School of Zen.

Founder: Zen Master Seung Sahn
Guiding Teacher: Zen Master Dae Kwang
Co-Director: Laura Otto-Salaj, SDT
Co-Director: Peter Neuwald, SDT
Treasurer: Dee Schwaiger, DTT
Secretary/Publicity: Andy Yench, DT
Editor: Michael Zinke, SDT

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.

