
MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 17, Issue 3

Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

Fall 2015

Not For Me

Zen Master Bon Hae

Excerpted from Inka Speech, Sep 1, 1998

On October 6, 1976, on Yom Kippur, twenty-one years and six months minus one day ago, I first came to the Cambridge Zen Center.

Yom Kippur is really special, really holy. It's the day when God decides who will live or die. We fast—no food or water—for over twenty four hours. We are reminded of how much suffering there is in the world, and recite long lists of sins over and over. Very impressive.

Even when I had essentially stopped practicing Judaism, I still tried to honor Yom Kippur. So, on October 6, 1976, I thought I'd check out Zen.

I expected a bunch of solemn folks with shaved heads. Instead, Mark and Dyan were in full dharma teacher robes, chasing each other around the house squirting water at each other from plant sprayers. Paul asked me if I practiced any form of meditation,

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Abbot's Corner

Life IS Short

Pete Neuwald, Abbot



As I get older, it seems that the years, the months, the hours, and the minutes seem to be accelerating. Sure, my sense of time varies – it's not an absolute; it's relative. But it does seem that, largely, time is speeding up. Even in the time that I've spent writing this column, I find that the evening is slipping away quickly. Maybe that's because of my editorial deadline! So, what's going on? I already know that life is short, but it seems to get shorter as I trudge upward in age. I can't help thinking sometimes, "Hey, you might not have that much time left." Ha ha, of course, I might not, nobody does. Consider the mayfly. Adult mayflies live less than a day. And, as a teacher once said, sometimes it rains all day.

I recently read an article on "The Conversation" website (<http://theconversation.com>) that discussed our perception of time. The article talked about how our perception of time can indeed vary depending on our focus, physical state, and mood, as well as age. I think we all have experienced moments where time passes very quickly – usually when we are doing something we enjoy. Likewise, we all have probably experienced those moments where time seems to last extraordinarily long. I remember the first time that I sat in a class on Zen meditation. The initial sitting was only five minutes, but it felt like an hour.

According to the article, time becomes more "variable" as we age, especially as we surpass the age of 60. They mention something called "proportional theory" whereby, as we age, our sense of "present" time feels relatively short compared to our entire life. This kind of makes sense. When I was ten, a

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and when I proudly said I'd been counting breaths for the last two years, Peter whirled around from the sink where he was washing dishes and said "how many have you counted?" There was a big temple bell, and during the first chant we did full prostrations like my father the cantor did every Yom Kippur.

It was like coming home.

Nice little story, that, but, you know, it's really completely bullshit. Whenever things are that comfortable, you know something's coming up.

So a month or so later I've been practicing pretty regularly and Mark tells me that this Korean Zen Master is going to give a talk a couple of days before a retreat. Wow! A Zen Master! (although since he's Korean I'm not really sure of that). So I go, ready to be enlightened. At any minute, in fact. And two things happen.

The first I've told a lot of people: I didn't understand anything he said. Not just the English pronunciation (although there were places where this was a problem) but even when I knew the words they didn't make sense. "Is this a watch or not a watch?" "It's 8:15." What was going on? For the first time in my life I couldn't understand a thing.

The second I'm pretty ashamed of, so I'll tell it. There was this woman in the front row who asked a question and Zen Master Seung Sahn said "You are a very good Zen student. You must come to this retreat." And I thought: No! I am a very good Zen student, you want me to come to this retreat.

Call on me! Recognize me! Me me me!

Between the two things I just flipped out. I called a friend and said "come meet me right away, I'm flipping out." So she met me somewhere and we walked the streets of Cambridge, my arm chopping the air while I said "I don't know anything. I just don't know anything." She got this bemused expression on her face and said "I had a friend who was hospitalized in Tangiers with a diagnosis of existential confusion."

So one type of sin we list on Yom Kippur—these are communal sins, no one can wiggle out of any of them—it's kind of hidden in the long lists, not in italics and boldface like it ought to be, is "the sins we commit by confusion of mind." This is very much like the first link in the chain of co-dependent origination: ignorance.

But this existential confusion, this is something else. We touch truth and it hurts. But once we've touched it we can't avoid it.

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Gardens Reveal the Gardener

Suzanne Stone, DT-In Training

I started gardening out of necessity to escape the chaos of life with 8 other siblings. The constant wailing of my younger sibling, verbal jabs from older siblings, drug-infused music of the 60s and 70s blasting from my brother's third floor attic bedroom literally forced me out into the backyard wherein I discovered a calling that satisfied my need for order. Pulling weeds, turning the soil, and transplanting perennials in more orderly fashion, more in accordance with their specific needs for more sun or less was the antidote to chaos.

Throughout my life no matter where I lived, I always seemed to gravitate toward any plot of dirt that contained some form of garden in need of tending.

At one particular low-point in my 20s, after a traumatizing divorce, stripped of all I owned up to that point in life except my books and 3-yr old daughter, I somehow stumbled into the most perfect situation I could have – an older woman, a school psychologist at MPS, looking for a border. I rented two bedrooms and had access to the entire furnished flat. The bonus was that I was able to reduce my rent by caring for the lawn and garden. The bigger bonus, which I did not realize until many years later, was the opportunity to establish a relationship with someone so comfortable with her own identity and selfhood, she allowed me the space to work through the previous 5 years of hell.

After 3 years I moved on with my daughter, went back to school to finish my BA, then MA, then eventually began teaching after too many dead-end jobs. Teaching was very much a part of my identity, even though I didn't officially begin teaching until my early 40s.

You might rightly wonder what all this has to do with gardening... Everything. The planned garden usually prefigures some ideal the gardener has in mind from Japanese Zen to English to wildflower, and the many others in between.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

August 2015

□ Introduction to Zen
Tuesday, August 4
7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

□ Dharma Talk
Saturday, August 22
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

September 2015

□ Introduction to Zen
Tuesday, September 1
7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

□ Moving Days
Saturday - Sunday
September 26 – 27

October 2015

□ Introduction to Zen
Tuesday, October 6
7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

□ Kido One-Day Retreat (Tentative)
Saturday, October 24
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Coming and Going: New Zen Center Location Needed

Time for change again! After fifteen years of Zen practice in our little center in Riverwest, we have just received a notice to vacate from our landlord. It seems he wants to rent the space to a business next door. So, once again, it's time to find a new place. We need to vacate by the end of September. We have cancelled the retreat that was scheduled for September 26 – 27. In lieu of attending that retreat, we will be taking those two days to move. Where that will be is yet unknown. If you were planning on attending that YMJJ retreat, we ask that you consider joining us to help move.

While our landlord offered a space on the same block, the space is not really suitable. We would like kitchen facilities for retreats, a Dharma room, an interview room, bathroom, and a library/robe rack room. If you happen to know of any suitable spaces, please let us know. In the meantime, we will keep you posted as we progress in our search for a new location.

The last time we had to move, we ended up getting a better space. We see this move as another opportunity to find a space where we can continue to provide practice and Dharma to our community.

Peter Neuwald, Abbot

WHAT IS A KIDO RETREAT?

The word *kido* is Korean for *energy way*. Kido is a Zen practice dating back to ancient China in which nonstop chanting is accompanied by percussion instruments. During the retreat, which typically lasts a half or whole day, each participant chooses from a variety of percussion instruments. These may include moktaks, drums of various sizes, tambourines, triangles, sticks, small cymbals, etc. During chanting participants follow the leading teacher who is responsible for setting the pace and deciding whether to sit, stand, or walk. The din and intensive together-action of this kind of retreat is an excellent way to cut off all thinking.

Unfortunately, because we are currently searching for a new space for our center, the time and place for our Kido is up in the air. Hopefully we will be moved into our new center by the Kido's scheduled date of Saturday, October 24. What a great way to experience our new space! If we don't have our new space by then, we may rent a space to hold the Kido, as we have done in the past, or reschedule. We will announce the specifics at a closer date on our website: <http://glzc.org>.



year was 10 percent of my life, which was a pretty good chunk. Now, a year is about 1.6 percent of my life. That's not very much at all. Of course, this doesn't explain why sometimes hour by hour, minute-by-minute, my perception of time can change, even as I get older. The authors ask, "Can we slow down the ever-quickenning pace of life?"

I think this is the wrong question. The authors posit that meditation and mindfulness might help slow down time by helping "anchor our awareness in the here and now." Do we want to slow down time? What does that even mean?

If we are present in this moment, what is time? The past is already gone; the future is only a dream. All we really have is this moment. The Buddha told us that life is very short, and admonished us to investigate it closely. That can't be done unless we are indeed right here in this moment, without the desire to slow down, or speed up, our lives. When I start feeling like time is buzzing by, I stop; and I ask myself "What am I doing right now?" I then try to be present where I am without worrying about the past zipping by, or the future arriving too quickly only to become more of the past zipping by, and, thereby, missing what is right now, right in front of us, being present for and engaged with others. This is a constant practice for me, especially when facing a newsletter deadline.

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Because we really do know nothing, absolutely nothing. But who wants to admit that? So you taste that and freak out. And when that me me me mind becomes so strong, somehow there is a taste of: wait a minute, this doesn't make sense, who is this "me" anyway? And when that question appears—well, that's it, you might as well spend the rest of your life practicing because it won't let you alone no matter how hard you try to avoid it.

Then what?

I know a man who is ninety-one years old. His goal is to live as long as possible. Why do that?

But when Su Bong Zen Master asked "What is the short-cut to Zen?" Zen Master Seung Sahn said "Not for me."

This "not for me" is very important. Why are we in this world? What is our purpose? Not for me.



"Thus shall you think of all
 this fleeting world: a star at
 dawn, a bubble
 in a stream, a flash of
 lightening in a summer
 cloud,
 a flickering lamp, a
 phantom,
 and a dream."

From the Diamond Sutra

Each aligns with a certain form (or lack of form), but there is usually some human imprint. In fact, landscape architecture is as much a discipline as philosophy, literature, or any other academic pursuit.

I teach composition and survey literature at the technical college level and more and more I am questioning myself at the end of each spring semester-- questions about what I know or am attempting to instruct that could possibly be of value. I question whether writing can even be taught.

This past semester was no different with one exception: I found myself needing to get back to the soil in a way I never before experienced. It was completely absent of the usual ambition each gardener anticipates sometime around the end of February – the itch to plan the garden(s) for the upcoming season. Instead, *I needed* to sink my hands in the soil and weed, just weed. No thought was expended on planning and design. All I wanted was a clean pallet upon which to deposit the seeds of all my cluttered thoughts in order to attain some version of a clear don't-know mind.

I spent, it seems, a lifetime attaining what I thought was all the knowledge I would need to succeed and then pass on to others, and what I finally realized is that all my degrees that give proof to my academic pursuits add up to nothing. Is this some faint realization or awareness or proof of having attained a don't-know mind? Don't know.

A poem by Zen Master Seung Sahn reads

If you want to understand,

You don't understand.

If you attain don't-know,

That is your true nature.

Maybe that is what my gardens now reveal of me as I look inward for answers that cannot be found in books. Indeed, the *dirt* that provides the space for my unruly patch of a garden holds more potential than all the books on Amazon.com, and this gardener is happiest amidst chaos.

(Poem from *The Whole World is a Single Flower*, Zen Master Seung Sahn)

What We Cannot Change

Frank Pauc

Two weeks ago, our oldest son called to let my wife and me know that his National Guard unit might get sent to Iraq next year. Hans was in Iraq back in 2011, and we had hoped that he was done with war. Hans spoke at length about the soldiers in his company, and about what challenges they could expect if they were deployed. I didn't talk very much. Mostly, I just listened to what Hans had to say. Afterward, I tried to sort through conflicting emotions.

I told a number of people about my conversation with our son. One friend, who is long time peace activist, replied to me and was rather harsh in his comments concerning Hans. My friend seems to see Hans mostly as a killer. He's technically right about that; Hans did kill a man in a firefight. However, Hans is more than that. My friend can only see the part of our son that his narrow viewpoint allows him to see. My friend's ideas and beliefs serve as his lens for viewing the world. In some ways, he is blind and deaf. In some ways, so am I.

With Hans, I see and hear other things. When I listened to our son talk, I heard the voice of a man who is competent, courageous, and loyal. I could also hear the killer. It's a strange combination of attributes that makes me both proud and sad. Sometimes I wish that things were different, and that our son was different. However, he is who he is. I can't change that. Maybe nobody can, not even Hans.

My choice in this matter is simple. I can love our son as he is, or I can yearn to love somebody who does not exist. I prefer to love Hans for who he is right now, and to focus on what is lovable. If I look and listen, I find that there is much to love.

Pope Francis once said, "People are more important than ideas." That's a very Zen notion, and it's very true. The most persistent attachments are not physical things. They are ideas. My ideas are not as important as loving my son for who he is. If my beliefs keep me from seeing the person that Hans really is, then I need to let go of those beliefs.

In order to love, I need a clear mind. Red is just red. Clouds are just clouds. Hans is just Hans.

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is published by the
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Milwaukee, WI 53212

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

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Regular Practice Schedule of the Great Lake Zen Center

Tuesday 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 Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM. *Dharma Talks* are offered on the fourth Saturday of each month at 9:00 AM.



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