

MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 13, Issue 1 Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI February 2011

Mountain Dew

Zen Master Dae Kwang

Question: Besides the meditation practice we're doing here in this retreat, is there any other way we can save the world?

Zen Master Dae Kwang: Yes, do something. The practice of meditation isn't special: it means, whenever you do something, do it. If somebody appears in front of you who needs help, then help them. That is meditation. We all know the story of the good Samaritan from the Bible. Two different religious functionaries hurriedly walk right by a man who has been beaten and robbed lying beside the road. They ignore him and go on about their business. Then a Samaritan, a foreigner, comes by, helps the man and takes him to an inn. The meaning of that is: when somebody needs help, you help them. If you are attached to the thought, "well, they're not like us, we're not going to help them," you are already dead. But, if you just help, you've awakened from the dream of this and that, like and dislike. Then your mind is like a mirror. When somebody comes who needs help, help them. Red comes red, white comes white, your mind just reflects.

Meditation is not special. It means whenever you do something, just do it. Our practice is the Great Way--just do it! When we eat, just eat. When we sleep, just sleep. When someone needs help, help them. That has a direction to it. It isn't aimless just doing it. It's "just do it" to help our world. That's true meditation. We don't practice to put ourselves into a special state of mind but to make our minds clear, the original mind. Then we are in harmony with any situation.

Several hundred years ago there was a Taoist master in Korea who had attained many special powers. He had been alive for hundreds of years and could even fly--very high class. Even though his attainment was high, still every hundred years or so he had to drink a few drops of dew or he'd run out of gas and die.

Living in the same area was a bodhisattva. She knew that every hundred years the Taoist master would fly down to one special pine tree and drink a few drops of dew from its needles. She waited for the day. She put some salt in her pocket and climbed the tree. Taking a few grains of salt she sprinkled them on the dew; slowly they dissolved. She then climbed back down the tree and hid. Soon the Taoist master appeared soaring high in the sky. He circled the

tree once and landed to drink the dew. But this time when he sipped the dew he tasted salt. A momentary desire for the good taste passed through his mind... then BAAAM! he fell to the ground, crumpled. Slowly he stirred, somewhat dazed; the bodhisattva crouching nearby pointed to him and said, "See! That's human suffering. So now you have to wake up to your true self. You've been flying around here for hundreds of years--what for? What did you ever do to help anybody? You too will die. Now you understand human beings' suffering." By tasting the salt, human desire and suffering had become truly palatable to the master.

We all suffer too. Out of this suffering our compassion grows, if we have direction. Suffering is just the result of cause and effect. Suffering is a kind of compost out of which compassion grows if we practice. In Buddhism it is said: no suffering, no Buddha. That's why Buddhism uses the lotus flower as a symbol. The lotus flower grows out of a stinky, icky mess--the swamp--which is human suffering. At any moment a wonderful pure and clear thing can emerge from the slime, the flower of compassion. That flower is your original mind, the seed of which everybody has inside. Perhaps a little salt has appeared in the dew of your life--use that! If you practice, then you make the seed grow and grow. That's how you help the world when you're practicing. Just now, do it!

Keeping the Stopper in the Bottle Public Talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang Friday, February 18, 2011

Please join us for a Dharma Talk by Bodhisattva Teacher Susi Childress, titled *Keeping the Stopper in the Bottle*, followed by Q&A with Zen Master Dae Kwang, guiding teacher of the Great Lake Zen Center. This is a free talk, open to everyone. It will start at 7:30 pm at Great Lake Zen Center, 828 East Locust St.

The above talk is a kick-off for our winter **YMJJ Retreat** that will be held **February 19 and 20th, 2011**. The retreat will be held at GLZC with Zen Master Dae Kwang leading the retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat cost varies for DT/DTT, members of Kwan Um School, and non-members. See the enclosed registration form for complete details. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space can be arranged if required at no extra charge. Those needing sleep space should notify us by email and bring a sleeping bag, pillow, washcloth, and towel. For more information, email us at info@glzc.org.

Where the Heck Have I Been?

Peter Neuwald, Abbot

You may have noticed that I have been MIA from the Zen Center for the past several weeks. If you haven't noticed, then you've probably been missing practice too! Likely, I will continue to be out of action for several more weeks.

Last November I was diagnosed with prostate cancer, a disease that I knew hardly anything about.

In my typical "let's get to work and see what I'm facing mode," I did a lot of research and reading, checking out all the treatment options, including doing nothing. I got my share of horror stories, heroic stories, and well-intentioned alternative treatment stories. It all got to be too much information! Given my situation and the apparent aggressiveness of the cancer, I decided on the radical prostatectomy procedure as my best bet for treatment.

Quite honestly, up to that decision-making point, I was not the most centered person around, to say the least. The big "C" was constantly on my mind as well as all the various gruesome post-treatment contraptions and conditions I would face - catheters, incontinence, diapers (although they call them "Depends Men's Underwear"), a cane, dependence on others, pain, sexual side effects, etc. At the same time, I didn't try to show too much of this churn to others. After all, my situation was not so bad.

The cancer was caught early (thanks Dr. Bower!) and it was treatable. So many others have conditions so much worse. I never felt "Why me?" Indeed, someday each one of us will have to face something similar, including our own mortality. Such is being a human, so, why not me?

Once I set the surgery date, I felt a great release; a just do it mind took over. I decided to let people in my life know about my situation -- they would have found out soon enough after all. I let my coworkers know and was glad I did. Not only was there great support, but my situation convinced a number of men at work to schedule their Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) tests. Support and understanding came from so many people; I was truly touched by how connected we all are, as others shared their own stories.

So, after going through the surgery, it was not difficult to let go of my idea of what all the terrible post-op conditions would be. I do my daily walking (Kwan Seum Bosal meditation works well during that), resting, eating, sleeping, reading and personal care with no judgement.

It's not always easy. (Percocet works too well; quite a bit of pain came back when that was gone!) I try to deal with each moment as it comes. While there may be pain, there is not suffering when my mind is clear.

Last week, Gretchen and I did an excursion to Mayfair shopping center to get me out walking (and pick up Packers NFC Championship t-shirts!). It seemed that with my cane people were so much more friendly and

accommodating, and I think I felt more compassionate in turn. Or maybe I just noticed it more.

I do want to thank all of you in our Sangha for your thoughts, support and Kwan Seum Bosal chanting. I especially want to thank all of the Dharma Teachers and Dharma Teachers in Training who have stepped in to pick up any practice slack caused by my absence. To all of you, know that, although I am not physically present at the Center, I am practicing with you each day. I look forward to returning to practice with our Sangha soon.

Listening

Chris Rundblad

Listening 1: Wednesday

My music teacher, Raymond, talks about listening. If you use your ears, he says, you won't need to worry about your fingers. Listen first. I am playing a piece on my classical guitar, a lovely lamenting melody, but under my fingers it sounds like a funeral march, Dum-dum-Dum-dum. Ugh. The problem is that I am thinking about that 2/2 time signature and not listening to the melody. Hear the rise and fall, the direction, the internal unfolding of the piece, Ray says. The answer is all in the listening. First, before anything. Before thinking.

Kwan Seum Bosal, "One who hears the cries of the universe." Not, "One who thinks about the needs of the universe" or even "One who brings food and peace." But One who listens. First. We are told that thinking will not ever solve a kong-an, or attain its teaching, but that the answer will appear. Through the stillness of our practice, we listen for our direction. Music appears.

Listening II: Friday

The field is white and the sky is white. Black tree tops trace the lines of coulees cutting through the bare ridge tops, but there are no houses, people, cars, or barns to add color to this blank canvas. The quiet is as stark as the landscape. I can hear the snowflakes landing on my jacket. The noisiest thing around is the chatter inside my head. It is a bit unnerving, so I want to go to the cabin and turn on the radio or grab my mystery novel to drown out all that loud thinking. This is a familiar restlessness that often appears during sitting practice especially during retreats. Judgments, worries, reviews, and plans bully their way to the front. They drown out all those "cries of the universe" called to mind by Kwan Seum Bosal and hinder the effort to help and to find a correct direction. Even here in solitude, finding "before thinking" is difficult. How much more so it is back in the city with the demands and opinions of other people add to the mental racket.

The city, however, has something I miss out here in the driftless hills, and that makes all the difference. Our

sangha. Practicing with others gives the silence focus and strength and makes for good "hard practice." Listening deeply is not hindered by the sound of traffic on Locust Street or our off pitch chanting or the neighbors feet thumping on the stairs. Listening ultimately has nothing to do with sound. Thanks for listening.

Does "Don't Know Mind" Actually Work?

Frank Pauc

On Friday I was at the Quaker Meeting House to help train new facilitators for the nurturing program for teens and their families. The nurturing program is run by the Walker's Point Youth and Family Center in Milwaukee. The training is designed to teach people how to work with troubled adolescents and help their families. The folks at Walker's Point asked me to help with the training; maybe they figured that I had plenty of experience dealing with the troubled teens in my own house. Actually, I have been involved with the program as a volunteer since 1994, so I am of some use to them.

In any case, part of the training dealt with learning how to make good life choices, and there was an emphasis on having the individual develop a positive self-concept. "Self-concept" was defined as how a person thinks of themselves. The idea is that if someone, say a teenager, thinks of himself or herself as being a good person, that individual will be more likely to make healthy choices. So far, so good.

It was at this point that I decided to talk about " don't know

" mind. I have the tendency to bring up Buddhist concepts in unusual situations. I figure that when I do that, it makes up for all the times I bring up weird stuff during our practice at the Zen Center. I mentioned the mantra that we sometimes use: you know, the question "What am I?", and then the answer "Don't know.". I suggested that perhaps encouraging a person to have a positive self-concept wasn't always a good idea, especially if that concept is clearly wrong (e.g. A guy is working as a pimp, but still maintains a positive self-concept. Maybe he sees himself as an entrepreneur). I put out the idea that not having any particular self-concept might be better than having a false one. Even if a person's self-concept is currently accurate, that person is always in the process of change, so the concept will soon be outdated.

This did not go over well. There was an awkward silence and a lot of stares. Definitely a WTF moment. The group politely ignored my comments, and went back to the original program. The party line was still to encourage people to maintain a positive self-concept. Maybe that is the correct method.

This makes me wonder. I know that we talk during practice about how, deep inside, everybody has Buddha nature. We talk about becoming awake to our Buddha nature, our inherent goodness. For some people this inner goodness is buried really deep, but maybe this sort of talk is the same as telling somebody to look for that elusive positive self-concept. It seems that our emphasis in Zen is always on having a clear mind, so that we can see things as they are. To me that means we see ourselves with both our good and bad aspects (Yeah, I know there really isn't any such thing as good or bad. Just bear with me), and then we are able to change ourselves.

So, what actually works? Don't know.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

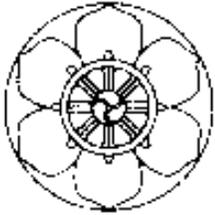
February 2011

- Introduction to Zen, Monday, February 7, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM
- Intensive Practice, Monday, February 14 thru Thursday, February 17, 7:00 PM -9:00 PM
- Public Talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang, Friday, February 18, 7:30 PM
- YMJJ Retreat, Saturday, February 19 - Sunday, February 20

March 2011

- Introduction to Zen, Monday, March 7, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM
- Annual Sangha Meeting, Saturday, March 12, 9:30 – 11:00 AM
- Dharma Talk, Wednesday, March 23, 7:30 PM

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The Great Lake Zen Center is affiliated with the
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DoGam: Susi Childress, BDT, Do Gam
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Secretary/Publicity: Andy Yencha, DT
Editor: Gretchen Neuwald, DTT

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.

