

MOON ON THE WATER

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Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

June, 2003

Taking A Crazy Ride

Andy Yencha, DTT

We made it! Forty-eight lengthy hours after leaving Wisconsin, and two years after the trip idea was hatched, our 20 person team was halfway around the world on the ground at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal. Tired, stiff, and slightly hung-over (at least this last one was true for some of us) we walked off the stuffy plane into the cool Nepalese night. We were here! We were really here. . . without a clue for the culture shock about to ambush us.

Beyond the airport gate (guarded by soldiers to defend against potential civil unrest) Kathmandu was pulsing like a sprawling insect hive. Our travel fatigue was gone in a flash when our driver miraculously merged into an endless stream of traffic and started to routinely use both sides of the road to jockey for position with speeding motorcycles, flatbed trucks, the smallest cars I have ever seen, cows, dogs, goats, bicycles and pedestrians. Time after time we came within inches of a collision without prompting any alarm beyond a few hurried horn blasts. Through the bus's large open windows traffic noises mixed with thumping Asian rock music while a thick haze of exhaust fumes and dust filled our noses with soot and made our eyes and throats itch. "How do people breathe in this place?" I wanted to yell.

The bumpy road was a mix of asphalt, dirt and oil. Assorted two- and three-story brick buildings lined both sides with very little space between each dwelling except at the bustling intersections that beckoned our imaginations. Every building seemed to have its own small shop occupying the ground level and a street vendor out in front. Business appeared to be booming all around. Twenty minutes later, on the outskirts of the "tourist" district, the streets got too narrow for the bus to go on. With collected relief we got off and started to organize a walk to our hotel. Within seconds of stepping onto the sidewalk, a local man brushed against me. "Hashish?" he asked. Awkwardly, I mumbled something like "No, thanks," or "Not tonight." I checked for my money belt and fell into the single file line that was taking us deeper down medieval streets toward our hotel. The man disappeared, but, like taxi cabs in downtown Chicago, other "sellers" of legal and illicit goods were always nearby.

No other experience on the trip matched the exhilaration I felt on that first night in Nepal. By the next day we were already adjusting to our new surroundings, and at the end of our trek, when we returned to Kathmandu for two short days, the city was surprisingly manageable. Somehow we got good at brushing off the beggars, haggling with the vendors, and ignoring the pollution and the poverty. Our month long stay was never easy, (most of us were mildly sick with colds or gastrointestinal problems much of the time), but somewhere along the way the rewards started to show. The big ones

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Stems and Roots

Zen Master Dae Kwang

During the later T'ang Dynasty there was a large Zen temple in Southern China named Ho Pak Sah. As with most Zen temples of this period, the monks of Ho Pak Sah earned their keep by working the soil. Because of the many monks and the large land holdings of the temple, a heavy burden fell on the monk who administered the farmlands. Early each morning he would inspect the gardens and paddies to make sure everything was running smoothly.

One morning as he was walking along the path to check the upper irrigation system, he heard a loud ruckus. His initial shock soon turned to puzzlement. Usually dawn was a time for quiet reflection, but on this morning he was confronted by angry voices. Where was all this shouting coming from? His eyes were drawn toward the pumpkin patch at the edge of the garden. In disbelief his eyes grew large--the pumpkins were fighting! This would never do, the harmony and success of the whole temple were at risk.

Suddenly he gave out a loud belly shout, "Ho!" In startled surprise the pumpkins grew silent. "This is a Zen temple! You must all now learn how to practice correctly." With great patience he taught each of them how to meditate. How to sit. How to breathe in carbon dioxide slowly through their leaves and breathe out oxygen...slowly asking, "What is a pumpkin?" Since they already knew these things, they learned quickly. Soon their minds became calm. He then asked them to put their leaves on top of their heads. Immediately there were several "ahhs" of recognition. Then the whole patch broke into a collective "YES!" The realization was clear: everyone had a stem coming out of the top of their head connecting each to the other. Why were they fighting? They all shared a common vine, rooting them to the source of life. By practicing, they had discovered their original connectedness and attained harmony. It's very important that you find your stem.



*Zen Master Dae Kwang
GLZC Guiding Teacher*

Some Zen-ertainment (or Haiku Gone Bad)

Laura Otto-Salaj, SDT
Co-director, GLZC

Editor's note: At the weekend retreats we fondly call YMJJ's, Zen students practice in silence for long hours. Sometimes the body becomes sore from bowing or sitting, but more often it is the mind that causes students the most trouble. It is this YMJJ experience that inspired Laura to create this series of Haiku poems.

4:45. *#*?!
Why can't we have sleep practice?
Whining, whining. Yawn.

A kong-an for you:
Do cows have Buddha-nature?
Mu! Moo. Moo. Moo. Moo!

Patterns in the rug.
Hasn't that damn thing hit yet?
Monkey mind has me.

My butt is so sore.
My knees hurt pretty bad, too.
Hit the chug-pi, eh?

Zen Master asks me.
Oh no! Dog runs after bone?
What the heck is that?!?!

Really want soda.
My kingdom for chocolate
Instead of veggies.

My chanting sounds bad,
An off-key duck quacks Sanskrit.
Dae da ra ni. Quack!

Chug-pi hits at night.
Time for practice to end now...
Or not? Let's stay up!

Dharma Crafts Order

Are you in need of a new cushion or mat upon which to seat yourself and attain enlightenment? The GLZC directors will be placing an order to Dharma Crafts for mats and cushions in the near future. If you would like to have us place an order for you, please contact Peter or Laura. Catalogs are available at GLZC or on line at www.dharmacrafts.com. We are also seeking donations from anyone who would like to purchase a mat or cushion for the Zen Center.

Two YMJJ Retreats Scheduled at GLZC

July 11-13 and October 17-19, 2003
with Zen Master Dae Kwang
6:00 AM - 9:30 PM

A YMJJ retreat has been scheduled for July 11-13, 2003, with GLZC Guiding Teacher Zen Master Dae Kwang. The retreat will be held at GLZC. Zen Master Dae Kwang will be leading this retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the full retreat is \$60, or \$35 for one day. The price includes vegetarian meals. Scholarships are available for those who would like to attend but are unable to pay the full price of the retreat. Please see Peter or Laura if you would like to request a scholarship.

Sleeping space is available at no extra charge at GLZC. Those planning on staying at GLZC should bring a sleeping bag, pillow, and wash cloth/towel.

The retreat will begin with a free public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang at 7:30 PM on Friday. 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.*

GLZC is also planning a YMJJ retreat at GLZC October 17-19, 2003, led by GLZC guiding teacher Zen Master Dae Kwang. Following the YMJJ will be a precepts ceremony. *Anyone interested in taking precepts in October should talk to Peter or Laura as soon as possible.*

GLZC Rummage Sale a Big Success

The rummage sale held at GLZC on May 17 was a great success! Many thanks to those of you who donated items, assisted with setting up or cleaning up after the sale, worked during the sale, or who supported the center by purchasing items. We had a lot of fun and made some money to support our retreats. How wonderful!

Sangha Picnic Planned for August

GLZC is planning a Sangha and family picnic in August. The date, time, and place have yet to be determined. Watch for details to be announced soon on the GLZC website, at the Zen center, and through our on-line group site. Hope to see everyone there!

GLZC T-shirts for Sale

We have a few T-shirts with the Great Lake Zen Center logo and name on them for sale. There is one long-sleeve shirt and several short-sleeve shirts. They cost \$20 each and are available at the Zen center. Checks should be made out to Susi Childress. If you would like a shirt and aren't able to come to GLZC to pick it up, e-mail Susi at susichldr@aol.com to make arrangements.

Taking A Crazy Ride *(continued from page1)*

included the friends we made, the splendor we discovered (especially beneath Kathmandu's grime and disorder), the songs and dances we learned from our porters, and the perspectives we gained about life in one poor, "developing" country.

Our school tells a story about a fellow who loved reading about swimming. For years he devoured every book he could find on the topic. Friends would quiz him about different swimming strokes, and he would explain, in detail, the techniques for each one. He cultivated a reputation as a swimming "expert." Then one fateful day he was stepping from his dock into his boat when he slipped into deep water. Like a rock, he sank to the bottom and never floated up. It turned out he did not know much about swimming after all.

Nepal was like that for me. For years I read books and viewed documentaries on Nepal, but until I got on the bus, I had no sense what the country was like. Speaking metaphorically, buses are going past us all the time. I can think of one or two that roll past my doors at work and home on a tight schedule, and I wonder if it's past time I got onboard. Zen Master Seung Sahn would say, "Don't check, just do it." "Oh well," I sigh to myself and think, "don't know," . . . you know? But those are my personal busses and I already told a long story about me. What's really important is what you do when the local transit pulls up to your subconscious. Do you step up and on, or do you let it rumble by? It can be a crazy ride, but you know (like I do) that the craziness is what makes it worthwhile.

The Million Dollar Words

Zen Master Seung Sahn

From "Zen Master Goes to Europe" (unpublished)

By Zen Master Seung Sahn and Mu Sang Sunim

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Once a scholar and his friend were talking about what was most valuable. The scholar said, "I have two words which are extremely valuable. I will sell them to you for \$1,000,000."

The friend was very excited. "O.K., I will buy them." He paid the \$1,000,000, received an envelope with the words in it, and opened it up. Inside it only said, "Pay attention!" The man was very disappointed and angry. "This is not worth \$1,000,000!" His wife, however, was happy since she knew her husband often got very angry and forgot himself. The scholar told his friend that he must hang the words over his door, so he did so and thought no more about it.

One day late at night, the man came home from a business trip. He came home a day early and was not expected. When he arrived at the door, he saw a pair of man's shoes outside the door and immediately became furious. He ran to get a knife to kill his wife, but on the way to the kitchen, he saw the sign, "Pay attention!" and stopped. "First I'll check." Very angry, he went to the bedroom and found his wife sleeping in the same bed with – her sister! Her sister was a nun, and at that time nuns wore man-style clothes. So the man was very happy that he had checked first. "Ah, those words were worth \$1,000,000!"

Midwest Sangha Weekend Highlights

On April 25 Dharma Teachers and Dharma Teachers in Training from GLZC and around the Midwest came together in Chicago for some practice and workshops, led by Zen Master Soeng Hyang and Bill Brown, JDPSN. The workshops were very helpful to the teachers in attendance, and everyone seemed to enjoy the food and camaraderie. The Midwest Sangha weekend followed the teacher's workshop, and it was held at Argonne National Labs in the Chicago suburbs. More than 60 people participated from several midwestern states. There was excellent teaching by Zen Masters Soeng Hyang and Dae Kwang as well as Ji Do Poep Sa Nims Bill Brown, Thom Pastor, and Judy Roitman. Besides the good food, practice, workshops, interviews, and walks in the woods, perhaps one of the highlights was the variety show on Saturday night. Who would have thought we were blessed with such talent! The weekend was such a success that plans are in the works for a repeat, perhaps as soon as next year!

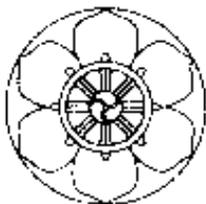


DT/DTT Workshop Participants



Midwest Sangha Weekend Participants

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



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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, DT
Co-Director: Peter Neuwald, DT
Treasurer: Jeff Ligman, DT
Secretary/Publicity: Andy Yench, DTT
Editor/ Member At-Large: Susi Childress, DT

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.

