

MOON ON THE WATER

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Newsletter of the Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

Feb-Mar, 2009

Overdue for Reincarnation

Michael Zinke, BT

As we approach our first YMJJ of the new year, my mind wanders back to my very first YMJJ. The year was 1993 and I eagerly looked forward to sitting a YMJJ. The eagerness soon wore off though as the aches and pains developed throughout the day. I consoled myself afterwards by convincing my naïve mind with the thought that the long sitting periods would get easier and easier as I attended more and more YMJJ's. I forgot one variable with that algorithm though, the more YMJJ's I sat, the older I got. The older I got the less flexible my body became and the aches and pains simply moved to new areas of my body. So I've given up on the idea that sitting for long periods of time will get easier the more I sit and I now realize that it is all just a part of life. You just need to recognize the aches and pain and sit through them.

As I age I find many other things are also changing – a 40 lb. bag of water softener salt seems to weigh more like 50 lbs now, jar lids are on tighter, the floor seems much farther away when I bend over to pick up something I've dropped, the clothes dryer shrinks more clothes than it used to, and spicy foods have gotten a lot more spicy. The medicine cabinet has more pill bottles in it, my doctor actually knows me by name and remembers why I'm there and when I look in a mirror I can't for the life of me figure out who that old man looking back at me is.

Somewhere during our lifetime our brains decide they aren't going to age anymore. So mentally we think of ourselves as still being in our twenties, or early thirties, or wherever we decide to mentally stop aging. Unfortunately the body doesn't stop the same way. The body keeps right on doing what it is supposed to do, grow old and die.

When we talk about impermanence in Zen we can understand that material things do wear out and eventually fall apart. We have all experienced purchasing new items to replace those that no longer work but with some things impermanence isn't as easy to accept. We don't like to think about our bodies changing and wearing out, we don't like to think about the earth changing or decomposing but both happen every moment of every day. We like to think of mountains and oceans as always being there – never changing, never in any danger – but we know that oceans are in trouble and mountains can become higher or lower with shifts in the earth's crust. Whether you feel global warming is an actuality or not, you have to recognize the changes taking place on our beloved planet. We also like to think that our bodies can still do all the things we did back in high school, and that nothing has really changed.

So Zen teaching says to recognize that nothing is permanent, understand that everything will eventually decompose and disappear. Zen teaching also says if you recognize and accept the teaching of impermanence, your suffering will diminish. This is a tough teaching, a tough lesson to follow and accept because we don't want things to change. We don't want to grow old, have our bodies lose functionality, and then disappear. We want to hold onto our youth so our bodies will remain capable of doing the very things we did when we were in our teens or our twenties. But Zen teaching says to reduce our suffering, we must accept the fact that nothing is permanent and those things we cherish the most will someday be gone; including our bodies.

By understanding the Zen teaching of impermanence, you can let go of your attachment to material things. When you let go of your attachment, you let go of your desire -- your wanting things to always stay the same. When you let go of your desire, you let go of your suffering. Remember the causes of suffering as Buddha defined them? Desire, anger, and ignorance cause suffering. Desire is wanting your body to stay the same and never change, anger is what happens when you realize it is going to change no matter what you want, and ignorance is your denial of the process.

So some days I feel like I am overdue for reincarnation and some days I feel like I'm twenty and I'm ready to go snowboarding. When those days happen to you, enjoy both days. Realize that you can't depend on tomorrow being there and enjoy the moment. This moment is all we have, this moment should be recognized and lived to its fullest. Recognize the fact that everything changes and don't attach to anything. The Buddha laid out the path to the elimination of suffering in your life very clearly. See how easy it is?

Public Talk and YMJJ Retreat

February 27 – March 1

A YMJJ retreat is being scheduled for February 28 and March 1, 2009. The retreat will be held at GLZC. Zen Master Dae Kwang will be leading this retreat and conducting interviews. The price of the retreat is \$120 for both days, or \$80 for Saturday only and \$50 for Sunday only. The price includes vegetarian meals. Sleeping space can be arranged if required at no extra charge. Those needing sleep space should notify Peter (telephone number on last page) and should bring a sleeping bag, pillow, washcloth, and towel. A precepts ceremony will follow the end of the YMJJ on Sunday, March 1.

The retreat will begin with a free public talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang at 7:30 PM on Friday, February 27th. Please plan on joining us for some very strong practice. **You may register for this YMJJ by signing up at GLZC or by email at info@glzc.org. Pre-registration is now being requested. Please register for the YMJJ and pay the appropriate fees by Saturday, February 20, 2009. We are now also requiring a registration form be completed. The form can be obtained at GLZC, www.glzc.org, or via email.**

Retreat Registration and Fee Changes

After much discussion and reluctance, the Dharma Teachers at GLZC have set new YMJJ fees. The new fees are \$80 for Saturday only, \$50 for Sunday only and \$120 for both days. The past few YMJJs have resulted in a loss for GLZC financially and the new fees will, hopefully, cover more of the YMJJ expense. We have also joined other Zen centers in requesting that a release form be signed prior to the retreat and we are requesting payment in advance with a \$35 non-refundable fee for cancellation. We need to know exactly how many people will be attending the YMJJ in order to plan meals accordingly. Canceling late or not showing up for the YMJJ after you have signed up results in excess food purchased and wasted. The Dharma Teachers thank everyone for their understanding and cooperation.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Regularly scheduled events include Introduction to Zen on the First Monday of each month, Dharma talks on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Regular practice periods are Monday and Wednesday evenings, 7:30pm to 8:30pm and Saturday morning from 8:00am to 9:00am. Unless noted below.

February, 2009

Monday, February 23 thru Thursday, February 26. Intensive Practice Week. GLZC, 7pm – 9pm

Friday, February 27. Public Talk with Zen Master Dae Kwang. GLZC, 7:30pm.

Saturday & Sunday, February 28 and March 1. YMJJ with Zen Master Dae Kwang. GLZC.

April, 2009

Saturday, April 4, 2009. Extended Practice/Sutra Talk/Soen Yu Breathing. GLZC, 9am – 3pm

Monday, April 6, 2009. End of Heart Kyol Che/Buddha's Birthday. GLZC, 7:30pm

One Day Extended Practice, Saturday, April 4, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Dharma Teacher Andy Yencha will give a talk on the Platform Sutra from 9 - 11 AM, followed by sitting from 11 AM - 3 PM. The sitting period will include an introduction to Soen Yu breathing, as well as a Dharma Play session.

You should bring a bag lunch.

The Great GLZC Rummage-Palooza – We Need Your Help!

It's that time of year again - time to start thinking about the annual Rummage Sale fundraiser for the Great Lake Zen Center. The Rummage Sale will be held at GLZC on Saturday, May 16th, 2009, from 9 am to 4 pm. This event is our only fundraising event of the year, and it is really important. As you know, the GLZC is maintained solely on donations and fundraising; as it requires a budget of approximately \$12,000/year for rental/maintenance of the Center and support of retreats and other events, meeting our goal each year with the proceeds of the Rummage Sale is vital. In the past, the money from the Rummage Sale has paid for the costs of one YMJJ retreat.

We need your help in a number of ways:

1) Donations, donations, donations: Now is the time to start looking in your closets, attics, and basements for things to donate to GLZC for the sale. It's a good opportunity to declutter, simplify your life, 'let go' of your attachments, and help the Zen Center at the same time. We not only need things to sell, we need relatively nice things that will help us earn some serious dough. We are limited in what we will take for selling, as everything that doesn't sell will be taken to Goodwill directly after the sale. Since Goodwill is rather selective about what they will take, and as we don't want to use the Center to store goods that didn't sell, we do ask that you do not donate the following items: aquariums, computer equipment, humidifiers or vaporizers, clothing, and out-of-season holiday items. We can give you a receipt for you to complete for your taxes next year, if you like. Some of the items we DO like: bikes, tools, electronics, books, dishes, kitchen goods, glassware, toys, CDs, DVDs, decorative items, furniture, sporting goods, purses, luggage, jewelry, and baby goods, to name a few. I'm certain you can come up with other things that we would LOVE to have!

If you wish to bring in donations, please leave them either in the back closet or the interview room at GLZC. We can start taking them now.

2) Donations... (Did I already say that? My bad...)

3) Your time:

a) We could use help on Friday, May 15th for set-up. Set up will begin at 6 pm, and we will have complimentary pizza for those who come; we will work until everything is set up and priced. In the past, we have usually been finished by 9 pm. As an incentive, set-up workers have traditionally gotten 'first dibs' on items to sell... ☺

b) Taking a shift during the day of the sale can also be very helpful, in giving a break to some of the folks who have been there awhile. Also, if you like, you can wear this year's attention getting costume, and 'get your mascot' on. Last year, volunteers wore a furry parrot mascot costume to attract attention on Locust Street. I bet you can't wait to see what we've got in store this year... Come on, you know you want to...

c) Finally, being at the Zen Center between 3:30 and 4 pm on sale day to help pack up is especially important, as there will be people who have been there all day who will be quite tired by that time. Packing up is necessary for us to be able to practice again in a nice clean Zen Center on Monday, and shouldn't take very long if there are "many hands to make light work." It is also an opportunity to get some really great items at very discounted prices, as we typically cut our prices in half at 3 pm. We will have a pick-up truck available to load the remaining goods into, so we can take them to Goodwill right away.

The great thing about this fundraiser is that it really only takes a couple of days of effort to put together, and 'simplifying' is in keeping with our school's teachings. So, I hope you will consider how you can help – it's really nice to have a Zen Center in which to practice, but it also takes some work to help a Zen Center run. We believe we can reach this goal; please help us reach the \$1,300 mark, and help your Zen Center continue on in 2008!

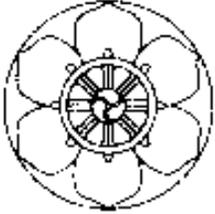
Yours in the Dharma,
Laura Otto-Salaj, SDT

End of Heart Kyol Che and Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Monday, April 6, 7:30 PM

Join us as we celebrate the birth of the historical Buddha and the end of our three month Heart Kyol Che. Friends, family and newcomers are welcome.

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

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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.

