
MOON ON THE WATER

Volume 14, Issue 3

Great Lake Zen Center, Milwaukee, WI

June/July 2012

Hyang Eom's Up A Tree

Zen Master Wu Kwang

Adapted from a talk given at Chogye International Zen Center of New York on April 1, 1990.

Master Hyang Eom said, "It is like a man up a tree who is hanging from a branch by his teeth; his hands cannot grasp a bough, his feet cannot touch the tree; he is tied and bound. Another man under the tree asks him, 'Why did Bodhidharma come to China?' If he does not answer, he evades his duty and will be killed. If he answers, he will lose his life.

This kong-an presents a very interesting situation. The rather dramatic image of the man up a tree is a vivid portrayal of two existential situations or issues that we all have to face. First, what does it really mean to stay alive, or be alive? And the second issue is about responsiveness. Someone under the tree is calling out, "Help me out here. Tell me something. Give me something." This raises questions about relationship and correct situation and responsibility. Responsibility, in this sense, means the ability to respond. How is one to respond in such a situation?

There's a similar Zen story in which a man is being chased by a tiger, and he's running for his life. He gets to the edge of a cliff and can't go any further, but he sees a vine going over the cliff, so he grabs hold of it, swings over, and is hanging there. Down below, he sees another tiger – waiting. The man is hanging there with one tiger above and another below. Then, a field mouse begins to gnaw at the vine right above him. Just at that moment, this man sees one wild strawberry growing on the vine right near him, and without holding back

See *Up A Tree*

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Abbot's Corner

Locked Out – Now What?

Pete Neuwald, Abbot



On the Sunday of Memorial Weekend I was invited to give a talk to our Dharma friends at the Milwaukee Zen Center (MZC). Accompanied by Dharma Teacher Gretchen Neuwald, we arrived just before the appointed time. As we drove up, I noticed someone sitting on the steps of the porch at MZC. When we approached, we were told that the door was locked. We waited a while and a few more people showed up, but no key. Someone said, "What are we going to do?" In response, jokingly, said, "We could go to the Great Lake Zen Center (GLZC) for the talk." Ha ha, that turned out to be what we needed to do. No problem. GLZC was only a few minutes away. Of course, let's just head over there!

This is like Hyang Eom's "Up a Tree," albeit on a much smaller scale. What can we do when faced with an impossible situation? How can we get into the center when it is locked? We run into these situations all the time in our lives. Once I forgot the key to our center too. Oh no! What can we do? There's no way out! Hey, that happens! We ended up practicing in the little park across from GLZC.

These situations range from small (I can't find my socks!) to large (I've been diagnosed with cancer!), but they are essentially the same situations. The point is what do we do in those situations? Moment to moment, we face these situations in life and respond to them as they come up. This usually means letting go of something we want, doesn't it always? If we have no wanting, then, no problem, just respond to this situation right now.

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anything he bites the strawberry. What a taste!

This story is about the first issue of the kong-an only. It's about life and death and what it really means to be alive or dead. But there's no element of relationship in the story. There's no one calling to the person to respond. But both stories portray people pushed to the limit.

Hyang Eom's training and his struggle were very intense. He was pushed to the limit. So the kong-an that he made to test his students is also of a very intense kind. A man is up a tree hanging from a branch by his teeth. And everything is tied. This state of being tied means he can't hold onto any conception, anymore. Also, his feet have no resting place – he can't find support in the usual ways that he was used to finding support. At that time, someone calls to him, "Please help me." How does he stay alive?

Jesus addressed the question of being truly alive in his saying, "It's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get to heaven." In many spiritual traditions, there is the notion that one only really becomes alive when one strips away everything. This is variously referred to as renunciation, non-attachment, letting go of ideas, conceptions, opinions, frames of reference, and one's orientation towards oneself and the world. If one lets go of it all, one becomes really poor – has nothing.

There's another story, a favorite of mine, also from the New Testament that speaks in a different way to this issue of what it really means to stay alive. After the Last Supper, Christ tells his disciples, "You will all fall away because of me this night," and they all say, "No, no, no, no." His main disciple, Peter, whose name means "the rock," says, "Master, I would never deny you." And Jesus says to him, "Peter, before the cock crows this very morning, you will have denied knowing me three times."

Jesus is then arrested and Peter goes and stands outside of where they have taken Jesus into captivity. When he is asked if he is one of Jesus' followers, he says, "No, no, no – I don't know the man." Three times – "No, no, no – I don't know." Now that's a very interesting point. He denies knowing his master, whom he loves dearly, three times. Yet he goes on after Jesus' death to become the organizing force in the Christian movement, the first pope.

That's the Bodhisattva way, just try – over and over and over again. We sometimes say, "Try, try, try for ten thousand years non-stop." The story of Peter may seem extreme, but it is instructive nevertheless. As another Zen saying goes, "If you fall down seven times, get up eight times."

Facing our failings and our weakness and yet still again rousing up that energy of "try" is very much connected to our view of what it really means to be alive, to enliven our environment, to enliven our relationship and to be able to really be responsible and responsive.

Who Are You?

Frank Pauc

Last week I received a message from my old roommate from West Point. It was a bit of a surprise. Over the years, we have corresponded in a haphazard sort of way – a Christmas card here, an email there. We have not kept in close contact by any means. My former classmate, Bruce, wrote to me that he was going to be in the Chicago area, and he wanted to drive up here to visit with me. I told him that I was good with that, and he arranged with me to come to our house. He said that he was going to bring along his wife, Lori.

When I was at West Point, I knew Bruce and Lori well. Lori's brother was also one of my classmates. Quite often a group of us went up to her parents' cabin in the Adirondacks for a weekend. We would go snowmobiling in the winter or go canoeing in the nearby lake during the summertime. We always had a party there and sometimes it got a little wild. Bruce was dating Lori while we were still in school. He married her soon after graduation.

I hadn't seen Bruce or Lori since our graduation in June of 1980. Bruce and I took separate paths in our military careers and we never managed to connect again. Eventually, I moved to the Milwaukee area and Bruce settled in Denver. I was very curious to find out what they would be like after thirty-two years. I learned a lot when they drove up to our house yesterday afternoon.

Bruce recognized me immediately. It took me a moment to recognize him. My last visual memory of Bruce was somewhat different than the man standing in my doorway. Then my mind took the old portrait of Bruce that was in my head and repainted it with some grayer tones and wider dimensions. I knew his eyes and his voice, and those things were enough for me to make the connection between the young man from years ago and the older man who had appeared out of nowhere.

I never recognized Lori. My mind wrestled with the fact that this woman was a stranger to me. I could not reconcile this lady with the Bruce's old girlfriend. It wasn't just her appearance; her mannerisms did not match what I remembered from three decades ago. I thought to myself, "What does a woman who is eagerly showing me photos of her grandkids have to do with the party girl I knew?" What happened?

The three of us talked for about an hour. It is surprising how quickly you can run out of topics when you haven't seen somebody for thirty-two years. I felt some connection with Bruce during our conversation, but I had no common ground with Lori. She was like somebody I had just met for the first time in Pick-n-Save. I didn't know her at all. I wondered if this is how it feels to have Alzheimer's.

I'm boring you with this story because in Zen we put great emphasis on the transient nature of things. I think that I understand that concept in the abstract, but it something else to have a real, personal experience of this changing world. I saw the obvious physical changes, but I think that the years also caused

Calendar of Upcoming Events

June 2012

Introduction to Zen

Monday, June 4, 7:30 - 9:00 PM

**Annual Locust Street Festival
Open House and Book and Art Sale**
Sunday, June 10, 11 AM - 8 PM

Public Talk with Zen Master Wu Kwang
Friday, June 22, 7:30 - 9:00 PM
First Unitarian Church

YMJJ Retreat with Zen Master Wu Kwang
Saturday, June 23 - Sunday, June 24

Sutra Talk
Wednesday, June 27, 7:30 PM

July 2012

Introduction to Zen
Monday, July 2, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

No Practice
Wednesday, July 4

Dharma Study and Discussion
Saturday, July 21, 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

Dharma Talk
Wednesday, July 25, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Great Lake Zen Center's Great Big Book Sale

Sunday, June 10
11:00 AM - 8:00 PM

During the Locust Street Festival

Books, Vinyls, DVDs, Art and **LIVE MUSIC!**

Low Prices
@ GLZC
828 E. Locust St.

Support Our Sangha and Have Fun!

Who Are You?

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subtle emotional and spiritual differences. The truth is that I spent an afternoon with people that I didn't really know and they probably had the same experience with me. Was the woman sitting at my kitchen table still Lori or was she somebody completely different? Who is she really?

I'm attached to my fading memories of Bruce and Lori. This causes suffering. During our time together, I felt sad. We ended our talk with the usual promises to keep in touch and get together at some unknown date in the future. As Bruce and Lori took their leave, Lori looked at me and spontaneously gave me a hug. Then they left.

Maybe the thing to do is to just start over. Maybe what actually happened was that I met this couple again for the very first time. Maybe instead of mourning the loss of the Lori I knew years ago, I should rejoice in meeting a new Lori. Maybe I should get to know the people that actually came to visit me.

Public Talk with Zen Master Wu Kwang

Friday, June 22
7:30 PM

First Unitarian Society
1342 N. Astor St.

Zen Master Wu Kwang, (Richard Shrobe) is guiding teacher of the Chogye International Zen Center of New York and lives in New York with his family. He has a Master's degree in Social Work and did six years of postgraduate study in Gestalt. He started practicing with Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1975 and was given inka in 1984. He received dharma transmission on August 1, 1993. A former professional musician, his undergraduate training was in music theory, and he also studied with jazz pianist, Barry Harris. Currently he has a private practice in psychotherapy specializing in the Gestalt approach. He has written three books: *Open Mouth Already a Mistake*, *Don't Know Mind: The Spirit of Korean Zen*, and *Elegant Failure: A Guide to Zen Koans*, all available from Amazon.com.

YMJJ Retreat led by Zen Master Wu Kwang

Saturday, June 23 - Sunday, June 24

Zen Master Wu Kwang will lead a weekend YMJJ retreat. The retreat will be held at GLZC. In addition to leading the retreat, Zen Master Wu Kwang will be conducting interviews. Vegetarian meals are provided. Sleeping space is available at no extra charge at GLZC or members homes. Those planning on staying at GLZC should bring a sleeping bag, pillow and washcloth/towel. You may register for this YMJJ by signing up at GLZC or [contact us](mailto:info@glzc.org) (info@glzc.org).

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is published by the
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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

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.



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