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Portrait of Dogen by Kaz

Wind Bell Contents

News and Feature Articles

- FIRE COMES TO TASSAJARA *BY* Gaelyn Godwin 3
- CHANGE YOUR MIND DAY *BY* Susan O'Connell 18
- BUDDHISM AT MILLENNIUM'S EDGE 20
- LETTER FROM ABBOT ZOKETSU NORMAN FISCHER 36
- NEW DANA PROGRAM 43

Book Excerpts

- INTRODUCTION TO *BRANCHING STREAMS*
FLOW IN THE DARKNESS *BY* Mel Weitsman 10
- A SHORT TALK DURING ZAZEN *BY* Shunryu Suzuki Roshi 16

Dharma Talks

- TENDING THE FIRE *BY* Ralph Steele 22
- WHY DOGEN? *BY* Kaz Tanahashi 30

Related Zen Centers 44

Cover: Portrait of Dogen by Kazuaki Tanahashi



Fire Comes to Tassajara

On September 8, 1999, a lightning storm in the Ventana Wilderness started at least ten small fires. The small fires grew slowly and joined to become two huge fires, named the Tassajara / Five Fire and the Kirk / Hare Fire. The Tassajara / Five Fire encroached on the Tassajara watershed. Here are some excerpts from notes kept by Gaelyn Godwin as the fire moved closer to Tassajara Zen Mountain Center.

ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, I drove up the road in the Tassajara pickup to make a quick trip to Salinas for building materials. I had just about reached the bathtub near the ridge when the first of a long phalanx of fire vehicles stopped me. Captain Jamie Copple, in command of the operation, asked me to pull over to let the wide engines proceed—they were on their way to evacuate Tassajara. I asked if I could turn my truck around and return to Tassajara. When I got back, far in advance of the slow parade of engines, most people were still at lunch but Leslie James, the director, and several others came outside to meet the fire chief before he entered the gate. Jamie informed us that fire was racing up the ridge to the southwest, behind the Tony Trail, and was expected to reach Tassajara within hours. They wanted all but a small group evacuated within half an hour. The huge engines waited outside the gates, engines thrumming, while we took this in. Then we went to work: a group of volunteers gathered in the courtyard and 28 people were allowed to stay. Most of them were sent to secure the buildings, some were sent to help the evacuees move and to make sure the activity in the parking lot proceeded smoothly.

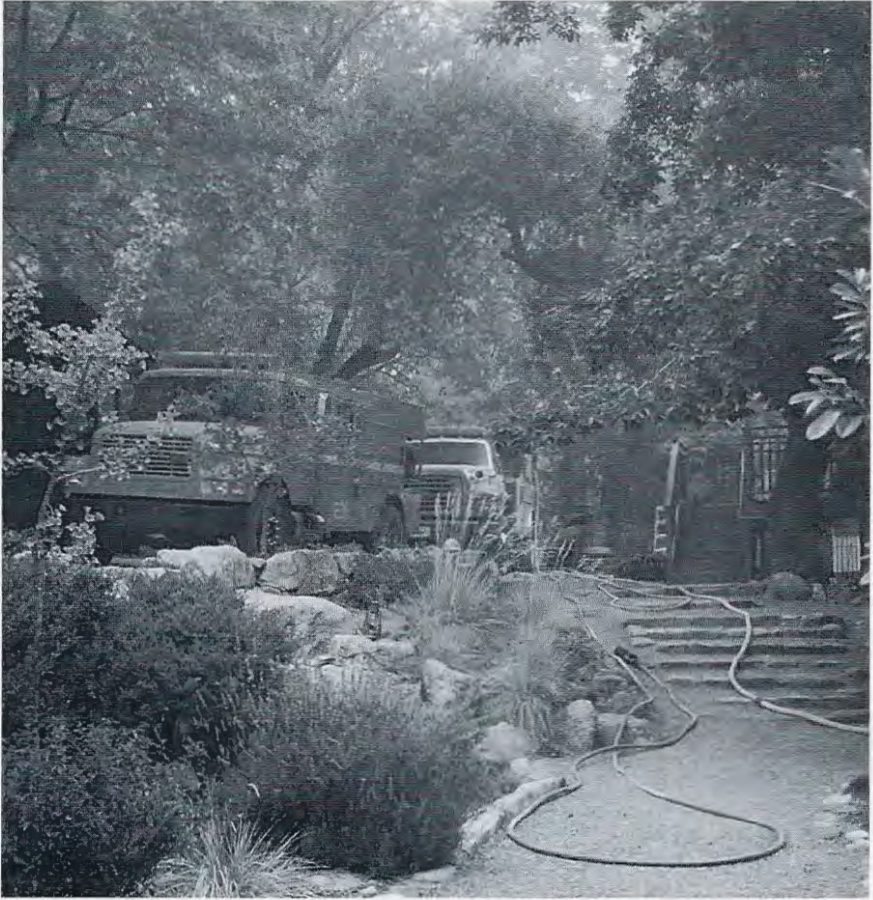
By the time the evacuation was complete the fire had reached the ridge and was flaming over the top, backing down the steep sides of the ridge that looms high above the Tony Trail. The flames were large. Later we would be able to see that the entire east facing slope of the Tassajara watershed was burned to the ground, but for now just the crescent shaped piece of the ridge was clearly on fire.

The firefighters positioned their engines throughout Tassajara, in an array that Jamie had designed after his earlier inspection visit. Now 84 firefighters were spreading out through Tassajara: three engines in the flats, two near the bathhouse, two near the stone rooms, one next to the zendo, two near the dining room, two near the shop and the propane tanks. Long lines of fire hose snaked through Tassajara, all of it charged with water and ready to go.

Meanwhile, the remaining Tassajara residents, along with several work period volunteers, were taking care of Tassajara: closing down all the buildings, removing small wooden altars, bringing the wooden objects down from the memorial site, cutting fire lines around the stupas and the photovoltaic panels, setting the sprinkler systems going on the wood shingled kitchen and on the propane tanks, filling in ditches that had been dug for projects but which would now be hazardous for the fire fighters.

Once our tasks were completed, our job was to wait until the fire got close enough so that Tassajara could be set afire all around us. Since the fire was approaching so fast from so many directions the plan was to wait until it was approximately 100 feet above us and then set "back fires" at Tassajara that would be drawn up to the main fires, thus exhausting the fuel around Tassajara and allowing the main fire to move elsewhere. After this, the plan was to spend however much time it required to clean things up and to extinguish falling embers. The fire teams expected the road to be closed by fire immediately and were planning to spend many weeks at Tassajara if necessary.

We established teams to keep the fire pumps going to provide continuous water to the engines. As evening approached, we established a communications network because the fire was still hovering outside of the back fire border and would slow down as night fell. Next on our agenda, dinner. Kathy Egan and Linda Macalwee organized the kitchen and cooked for 112 people. The firefighters pretty much kept to themselves at first, remaining alert and eating in shifts so that the engines were all kept ready, but they were quite pleased and surprised that we provided food for them. As the evening wore on, we knew we needed to rest, so, as the fire teams kept watch, the Tassajara residents moved into rooms very close to the center and went to sleep.



Fire trucks crossing Tassajara's main bridge

September 17, 1999

We spent yesterday waiting for the fire on the ridge to reach us. We learned much more about fire behavior and about each other. Today, three days into the fire here, the captains in charge of the inmates team approach me to ask if the inmates can use the showers. As far as I can tell none of the firefighters have ventured into the bathhouse, and the inmates' captains are the first to ask. There are 32 inmates, and they use both the men's and women's sides. They haven't had a chance to bathe in days and they emerge looking good. They wear orange clothes while the regular fire fighters wear yellow fire shirts. They are camping out past the flats; they've discovered the free weights out there, and they are getting a little antsy with the lack of activity.

Actually all of the crews are beginning to notice that they have time on their hands and they begin to look around for ways to help. The afternoon kitchen is now staffed by Forest Service people in blue tee-shirts; they are strong, physically adept people, very calm in their movements. Engine Crew 27 takes on finishing up the repairs to Cabin 4 and then they move to help shop member Sarah Emerson finish installing the plywood to cover the insulation under the dining room. They are skilled and handy, accustomed to doing the repairs around their own station houses. Judith Keenan supervises firefighters all over the place: she has anybody with any time and moderate skill at work. They are beginning to show signs of merging with the Tassajara residents. There are often comments now about how special the place and the people are, about how unusually kind things seem here.

The Forest Service catering service insists on sending down meals for the firefighters, which they do not want, preferring our food. Jamie does everything he can to prevent this calamity. Nevertheless, buckets of heavy, meaty, high protein products arrive, and we do our best by putting out two long tables in the dining room with firefighter food on one and Tassajara cuisine on the other. One door is marked "Chicken"; the other door is

Two fire crews from Angeles National Forest with Tassajara resident Charlie Henkel, front far right. These crews were very helpful, not only protecting Tassajara from fire, but repairing, rebuilding and working in the kitchen, too.



INDIA MACCARTHY

marked "Not Chicken." Most firefighters select from both tables; some firefighters remain vegetarian for their entire stay. We end up sending a truckload of fresh leftovers to the homeless shelter in Salinas.

The road remains closed except for accompanied trips. The fire has reached the road in several places; back burning is taking place in others. I drive up the road several days in a row, following Jamie, to keep up with developments. Some days it's like driving through a burning forest—it is driving through a burning forest; other days the fire is down in the valleys.

Someone suggests that we have an evening dharma event, a simple question and answer for the firefighters. I assume that there are only three or four who are interested in the practice we are doing, yet, surprisingly, when Luminous Owl Charlie Henkel and I arrive to do the Answer part of the Question and Answer, the room is full. About half of the firefighters have come, along with most of the Tassajara people. In the middle of it, Jeff, a firefighter from Los Angeles, asks how to start a meditation practice and we move casually into basic zazen instruction right there and then, on our dining room chairs. As the group sits upright, gathering their attention, straightening up, relaxing their shoulders, the whole room becomes gently quiet and still. The first stillness since the fire reached us.

The next day several of the firefighters seek out the ino for further instruction. When I walked through the upper garden and around the side of the zendo I glanced up to see that the zendo shoe rack was full of firefighter boots—large heavy leather boots with many hooks for laces. It was a wonderful sight, touching me somehow more than any other single impression during the fire. I have seen many wonderful things at Tassajara, and the rows of well-worn firefighter boots on the zendo racks will remain emblematic for me.

They've all fallen under the spell of Tassajara now. No hesitation now in going to the bathhouse. Some of them have made a few gentle bows as they leave the kitchen. They smile openly and explore the cookbooks, the bookstore, making themselves at home in the kitchen, in the shop, some even in the zendo.

They know they are the envy of other crews in the forest. Word is out that something curious is going on here. Reporters have begun to arrive. Teasing is happening after an article appeared describing the firefighters' proximity to the famous Tassajara Hot Springs and bathhouse.

The fire is still burning just out of reach and the valley fills with smoke each evening. The firefighters have fixed practically everything we were working on when work period came to its abrupt end; the inmate crews have even cleared a fire line along the length of the phone cable and an area 50 feet around the phone transmitter. This was a difficult task and they are justifiably proud of their work. We won't lose the phone after all. They have now begun to dig a new septic line for us.



JUDITH KERNAN

Inmates entering Tassajara

September 21, 1999

Tonight is quiet and we're all sensing that our paradise is coming to an end. The decision makers at the higher level won't let two strike teams (ten engine crews of five people each) stay to protect Tassajara forever. Besides, we've got 40 people outside, somewhere, wanting to come in to begin practice period. Tonight, heavy rain is predicted and the fire crews have accepted our offer of rooms; many of them sleep inside Tassajara guest rooms this night. Not a few choose to remain in tents near their engines.

Rain arrived, along with lightning. Not enough rain to douse fires lurking under trees. Rain and large flakes of ash fall at the same time. Ashes have been falling throughout the event, of course, some are incinerated leaves—exact shadows of their formerly green selves. It is more humid now, but once the humidity lifts and the day heats up as predicted it will be a dangerous situation again, they all say. But, in truth, they seem to want it to heat up; this is, after all, their chosen line of work. They like forest fires and they like Tassajara. At breakfast this morning one captain, when told that it might rain again reacts with disappointment, "They said it was going to be hot and dry today, not raining!"

September 22, 1999

Suddenly, at 11:30 am, Jamie returns to order all the engine crews to pack up and move. It is the moment we've all dreaded—the end of paradise. The bustle of activity masks the emotions and keeps the farewells

short and hurried. But we postpone the ending, and decide to have a final lunch together, spending one last boisterous half hour in the dining room. Then the parade begins. The residents line the road waving goodbye as each huge engine pulls toward the gate, all the lights flashing and swirling in farewell. Some firefighters put their hands in gassho as they drive out. The final two vehicles contain the inmate fire crews and they also smile their thanks to us and put up V for victory or, hopefully, for peace, as they leave.

The fires are still burning, but Tassajara is not in immediate danger. Jamie will return with two new crews tonight. The two crews had been stationed at Church Ranch and had protected it, enduring several days of heavy smoke in the valley, trapped by the fire on the Church Road before they could get out. Jamie leads the new crews around Tassajara himself, pointing out the important landmarks. The one feature of which he is most proud is our fire standpipe system. All the firefighters have been impressed with the prominent yellow standpipes lining Tassajara.

September 23, 1999

This morning the air is extremely humid and, even though there were lightning strikes last night, the fire in our area seems quiet. For the first time in two weeks we have permission to run on the trails and, from the top of the Horse Pasture Trail near the Tassajara cut-off, we can see how extensive the fire was in the Tassajara watershed. We were lucky, very lucky. Back at Tassajara we learn that the remaining two crews are being pulled out and assigned to duties on the northern end of the fire. Jamie returns to take his laundry off the line and to say goodbye; he will be transferred, helicoptered in to another hot situation on the other side of the forest but he is proud of the friendships that were nurtured here.

Later on in the afternoon another news crew drops in with Forest Service guides. The focus of their interest is the remarkable story of the bond that developed between the fire crews and the Tassajara monks. Apparently legends are growing about this event at Tassajara—on the one side, the legendary kindness and hospitality of the 28 Tassajara residents, and on the other, the legendary receptivity, professionalism and kindness of the 84 firefighters.



The fire is quiet around us but huge helicopters pass overhead throughout the following days, approaching the fire directly now that the perimeter has been established. Fires are still burning to the north and west, but the road is open and Tassajara residents have begun to return. Preparations for practice period are under way again. We are prepared to continue to live in this wilderness. As one fire captain said, "If you want to live here you'd better learn to live with fire." And we are learning.

Introduction

Sojun Mel Weitsman

IN THE SUMMER OF 1970

Suzuki Roshi gave these talks on the *Sandokai* of Sekito Kisen. Suzuki Roshi had come to America in 1959, leaving Rinso-in, his temple in Yaizu, Japan, to serve as priest for the Japanese-American congregation at Sokoji temple at 1881 Bush Street in San Francisco. During those years a large number of people came to practice with him, and San Francisco Zen Center was born. Suzuki Roshi became surrounded by so many enthusiastic American Zen students that in 1969 he and his students moved to a large building at 300 Page Street and established Beginner's Mind Temple. Two years earlier, Zen Center had acquired the Tassajara resort and hot springs, which is at the end of a fourteen-mile dirt road that winds through the rugged mountains of the Los Padres National Forest near the central coast of California. He and his students created the first Zen Buddhist monastery in America, Zenshinji (Zen Mind/Heart Temple). We were starting from scratch under Suzuki Roshi's guidance.

Each year Tassajara Zen Mountain Center has two intensive practice-period retreats: October through December, and January through March. These two practice periods include many hours of zazen (cross-legged seated meditation) each day, lectures, study, and physical work. The students are there for the entire time. In the spring and summer months (May through August), Tassajara provides a guest season for people who are attracted by the hot mineral baths and the quiet atmosphere. In this way the guest season provides support for Tassajara and the students. In the summer period the students sit zazen each morning and evening, and the rest of their time is devoted to work practice.

Reprinted from *BRANCHING STREAMS FLOW IN THE DARKNESS: ZEN TALKS ON THE SANDOKAI* by Shunryu Suzuki. University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 1-9. Edited by Mel Weitsman and Michael Wenger.

Shunryu Suzuki



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Zen Talks on the *Sandokai*

By the author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

During the summer of 1970, when these talks were given, the students were attending services and zazen several times a day, preparing meals, and working on the many tasks of building and maintenance. During the day, Suzuki Roshi, small and seemingly frail, was busy putting large stones in place on the side of the creek to prevent erosion. At night he lectured. Those of us who were fortunate enough to work with him were always amazed at his energy and ability even when he was old and not well. He worked all day in the hundred-degree-plus heat. His tremendous spirit was communicated through his work. We might spend all day putting a large stone in place, and if it wasn't right he would take it out and start all over the next day.

At that time I was Suzuki Roshi's personal attendant. At the beginning of our formal daily practice of zazen and service, I would follow him into the zendo with an incense offering. In the heat of the day, I would sometimes place a water-soaked washcloth on top of his shaved head to cool him off. His wife, Mitsu-san, came down from San Francisco in that summer of 1970 and was very worried about him. She knew he was very ill and thought he was working too hard. Sometimes when she would pass by he would pretend that he was resting and then go back to moving stones. She once chastised him, using the familiar name for an abbot: "Hojo-san! You are cutting your life short!" He replied, "If I don't cut my life short, my students will not grow."

Although there was much to be done, he was never in a hurry. He was centered both in balance and in time. He always gave me the feeling that he was completely within the activity of the moment. He would take the time to do everything thoroughly. One day he showed me how to wash a kimono, inching around the entire perimeter using the part held in one hand to scrub the part held in the other, until the whole thing was finished. One time he said, "You have a saying, 'to kill two birds with one stone,' but our way is to kill just one bird with one stone."

In 1969, the students had built the stone kitchen with great care. Stones and rocks of all shapes and sizes are everywhere at Tassajara. We cut off the roof of an old car and used it as a sled to haul large stones. We became adept at building stone walls and steps. Our carpentry crew was headed by a young carpenter named Paul Discoe, who later studied in Japan and became a master in Japanese carpentry. Edward Espe Brown's *Tassajara Bread Book* and *Tassajara Cooking* were generated from that time, as well as Bill Shurtleff's classic books on tofu, miso, and tempeh. There was a wonderful feeling of pioneering. Zen was sitting meditation, but it was also serving and work. The combination gave the practice a feeling of wholesomeness. We were in the mountains building this monastery with our bare hands. We felt gratitude toward this place, toward each other, and toward our teacher, as well as toward all the people who were supporting

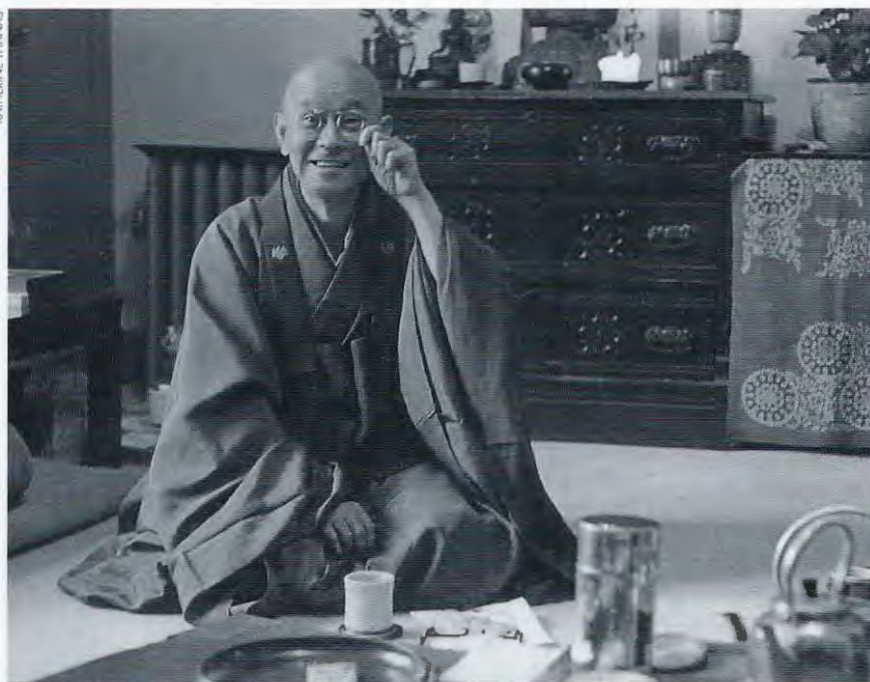
our effort. We also felt that we were doing something for others, not just for ourselves.

Although Suzuki Roshi had studied the English language for many years in Japan, it took several years before he could communicate fluently here in America. During his twelve years here, his command of the language became better and better. Though he often had to grope for just the right expression, he usually found it. But even when searching for the right expression he was always eloquent. In fact, someone who heard him give a talk in Japanese and a talk in English on the same day found the English one far more innovative and compelling—perhaps even helped by the fact that English was not his native language.

Suzuki Roshi gave hundreds of talks. Strictly speaking, a talk is more of an informative kind of presentation, while a teisho offers the teacher's own dharma or direct understanding, often using a koan or a text. Suzuki Roshi rarely used a text, although he frequently made reference to one. Often a Soto teacher's talks are mixed, with the teacher both lecturing and expressing his or her own understanding of a particular text, as Suzuki Roshi does here. During the talk, students sit with crossed legs, in zazen posture, not leaning on anything, with straight backs and open minds. It is customary for the teacher to give a talk weekly, and sometimes more often. During long retreats called sesshins, Suzuki Roshi spoke every day and sometimes twice a day.

Suzuki Roshi was in the lineage stream of Zen master Dogen (1200–1253) and was committed to introducing Dogen's way of practice to the West. Although he recommended studying the many written works of Dogen (few of which were translated into English at that time), it was the spirit of Dogen that was most vital for him. Like Dogen, he did not consider Zen a teaching or practice separate from buddha dharma, or that the Soto school of Zen was either superior or inferior to any other school. He characterized our way as Hinayana (Narrow Vehicle) practice with a Mahayana (Wide Vehicle) mind.

In the mid-sixties, we started recording Suzuki Roshi's talks. By that time he was visiting Zen Center's small affiliated Zen groups in Mill Valley, Berkeley, and Los Altos. It was decided to turn some of his Los Altos talks into the basis of a book so more people could be exposed to his teaching. This became the raw material for the well-known book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, which has been translated into many languages and has gone through almost forty printings to date. In these freely flowing talks he covers much ground. But essentially his message is how to let go of our self-centeredness and settle ourselves on dai-shin (big mind or big self), how to practice zazen in a formal way, and how to extend and find our practice in the informality of our daily lives. "Beginner's mind" in the title refers to the unassuming attitude of just being present in each moment, accepting the



Suzuki Roshi in the dokusan room at 300 Page Street

non-dual reality of each moment with openness and clarity, being careful not to fall into partiality based on opinions and false views, and being open to all possibilities.

The talks were recorded and transcribed by Marian Derby, who was the head of the Los Altos Zen group and who first conceived of the book. The transcriptions were edited by Trudy Dixon, a close disciple, and Richard Baker, who succeeded Suzuki Roshi as the second abbot of Zen Center. The editors of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* gleaned the most interesting and unique parts of those Los Altos talks and edited them into short chapters. Each chapter is a little gem of wisdom.

The *Sandokai* talks, on the other hand, present a completely different teaching context and consequently have a different feeling. Here we have Suzuki Roshi lecturing on an ancient Chinese poem, line by line, word by word, over a period of about six weeks (May 27 to July 6, 1970). The *Sandokai* of Sekito Kisen is chanted in the liturgy at Zen Center as well as Japanese Soto Zen monasteries. Suzuki Roshi wanted to make its meaning clear to us. This was an enjoyable undertaking for him. He set up a blackboard next to his seat and wrote and explained the Chinese characters as he went along. (For the sake of smoother reading, we have deleted most of Suzuki Roshi's detailed explanation of each Chinese character.) These

*Someone on the old baths
bridge at Tassajara*

evening talks were given in the zendo. It was still hot enough in the evenings that our cushions were soaked with perspiration when we got up.

Suzuki Roshi gave a total of twelve talks to Tassajara students on the *Sandokai*. We have included one more that he delivered to Tassajara students and a group of visiting philosophy students, which took the form of a general summary or overview. Also included is a short talk about zazen that he gave during the sitting one morning.

Because these talks were sequential, editing them was more difficult than was the case for *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. The voice in the *Sandokai* talks doesn't always sound like the voice of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, partly because Suzuki Roshi is speaking about a text here, but also because of the editors' approach in presenting his voice. Originally we wanted to keep the text as close as possible to the original, but as we continued to go over the talks it became clear that a verbatim account sometimes had to give way to consistency. Suzuki Roshi occasionally revisited the same topics during the series of talks, but not always with the same approach. So often the editors would have to choose between different ways the same phrase was stated on different occasions. Sometimes we would have to bridge the gaps in statements that were indistinct or not clearly expressed. And rather often we would have to choose whether or not to leave intact a statement that was characteristic of Suzuki Roshi's way of speaking or to change it for the sake of written clarity and consistency.



INKE SCHWAB

Suzuki Roshi also made up phrases of his own in order to express himself in a more non-dualistic way. For instance, he often used the phrase "things-as-it-is" to mean the fundamental nature of reality, something beyond words. But he also used "things-as-they-are" to refer to our usual discriminating, dualistic way of thinking and perceiving (good/bad, right/wrong). He was well aware of the difference. In "things-as-it-is," his use of the singular and plural in the same phrase stretches our ordinary way of thinking.

He also made up the word "independency," which he uses to express the dependent and at the same time independent nature of our lives. When I asked him about this once, I said that English has the words "independent," "dependent," and "interdependent," but I had never heard the word "independency." He laughed and said that he had made it up. He explained that we are completely independent and at the same time completely dependent. If you think you are just independent, that is wrong. If you think you are just dependent, that is not right either. "Interdependent" might seem like the correct word here, but Suzuki Roshi used "independency" to express that ambivalent quality. He said that the secret of Soto Zen is "yes, but."

We have tried to make Suzuki Roshi's language as clear and fluid as possible without losing or compromising his personal mode of expression. In a Zen lecture or *teisho* the speaker's presence contributes powerfully to the student's experience. Working with just words, the editors must be careful not to overlook that quality when it comes through, and not eliminate it in favor of a perfectly grammatical presentation. Often his slightly offbeat expressions have more impact than if he were speaking "properly."

We have retained Suzuki Roshi's use of masculine pronouns in several instances in this text. Coming from a culture that traditionally favors men, Suzuki Roshi was unusual. He made a great effort to respect the practice of men and women equally and without discrimination. He also respected time-honored values of the interdependent relationship between women and men. Although in his talks he would typically refer to a student as "he," it was simply the convention of the time. He often said that whether you are a man or a woman, you should be yourself completely—that when you are you, Zen is Zen.



Suzuki Roshi died on December 4, 1971, of cancer, a year and a half after delivering this teaching on the *Sandokai*. He was sixty-seven. He must have had a premonition of his coming death when he said that Zen teachers in the Soto tradition often lecture on the *Sandokai* toward the end of their lives.

A Short Talk During Zazen

Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

(Presented during zazen on the morning of June 28, 1970,
between the tenth and eleventh Sandokai lectures)

YOU SHOULD SIT WITH YOUR WHOLE BODY: your spine, mouth, toes, mudra.¹ Check on your posture during zazen. Each part of your body should practice zazen independently or separately: Your toes should practice zazen independently, your mudra should practice zazen independently, and your spine and your mouth should practice zazen independently. You should feel each part of your body doing zazen independently. Each part of your body should participate completely in zazen. Check to see that each part of your body is doing zazen independently—this is also known as *shikantaza*. To think, "I am doing zazen" or "my body is doing zazen" is wrong understanding. It is a self-centered idea.

The mudra is especially important. You should not feel as if you are resting your mudra on the heel of your foot for your own convenience. Your mudra should be placed in its own position.

Don't move your legs for your own convenience. Your legs are practicing their own zazen independently and are completely involved in their own pain. They are doing zazen through pain. You should allow them to practice their own zazen. If you think you are practicing zazen, you are involved in some selfish, egotistical idea.

If you think that you have a difficulty in some part of your body, then the rest of the body should help the part that is in difficulty. You are not having difficulty with some part of your body, but the part of the body is having difficulty: for example, your mudra is having difficulty. Your whole body should help your mudra do zazen.

Reprinted from *BRANCHING STREAMS FLOW IN THE DARKNESS: ZEN TALKS ON THE SANDOKAI* by Shunryu Suzuki. University of California Press, Berkeley pp. 147–149. Edited by Mel Weitsman and Michael Wenger.



The entire universe is doing zazen in the same way that your body is doing zazen. When all parts of your body are practicing zazen, then that is how the whole universe practices zazen. Each mountain and each river is going and flowing independently. All parts of the universe are participating in their practice. The mountain practices independently. The river practices independently. Thus the whole universe practices independently.

When you see something, you may think that you are watching something else (outside yourself). But, actually, you are watching your *mudra* or your toe. That is why zazen represents the whole universe. We should do zazen with this feeling in our practice. You should not say, "I practice zazen with my body." It is not so.

Dogen Zenji says, "Water does not flow, but the bridge flows." You may say that your mind is practicing zazen and ignore your body, the practice of your body. Sometimes when you think that you are doing zazen with an imperturbable mind you ignore the body, but it is also necessary to have the opposite understanding at the same time. Your body is practicing zazen in imperturbability while your mind is moving. Your legs are practicing zazen with pain. Water is practicing zazen with movement—yet the water is still while flowing because flowing is its stillness, or its nature. The bridge is doing zazen without moving.

Let the water flow, as this is the water's practice. Let the bridge stay and sit there, because that is the actual practice of the bridge. The bridge is practicing zazen; painful legs are practicing zazen; imperturbable zazen is practicing zazen. This is our practice.

¹ In zazen, *mudra* refers to the position of the hands, which form a circle called "the cosmic circle."

Coast to Coast "Change Your Mind Day"

Susan O'Connell

*H*OW MANY PEOPLE WILL COME TO GOLDEN GATE PARK on a Saturday afternoon to listen to the dharma and meditate, and stay while the chilling summer fog rolls in? Over the course of the afternoon, between six and seven hundred.

On June 5, the San Francisco Zen Center, along with the Bay Area Shambhala Center, Spirit Rock and *Tricycle* magazine, sponsored a free afternoon of dharma talks and meditation. *Tricycle* has been presenting a similar event in New York's Central Park for the last five years, and it was an obvious extension to present Buddhist teaching in the green meadows and open air of San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

This was the first event organized collectively by three of the largest Buddhist groups in the Bay Area. Representing Shambhala were Pamela Krasney and Jeanne Ellgar. Carolyn Zecca-Ferris represented Spirit Rock. Participating from Zen Center were Paul Haller, Susan O'Connell, Vivi Letsou and George Gayuski, along with 25 volunteers. The program was underwritten by donors. Dharma talks and meditation instruction from several Buddhist traditions were offered to the audience.

Speaking from the Zen perspective were Paul Haller, Blanche Hartman and Jane Hirshfield. Representing Spirit Rock's vipassana tradition were Jack Kornfield, Wes Nisker and Ajahn Jumnien. Speaking from the Tibetan tradition were Cynthia Kneen and Tulku Jigme Rinpoche. Hyun Mook Sunim from the Korean Zen group in Hayward played the taiko drum and chanted sutras in both Pali and English. Nancy Beckman filled the air with haunting shakuhachi flute music and Julie Wester invited the audience to its feet to lead them in meditative movement.

Helen Tworikov, publisher of *Tricycle*, anchored the program by sitting on the speaking platform for the entire afternoon, introducing teachers and other participants and encouraging passing onlookers to come and join in listening to the dharma. The organizers received a lot of appreciative comments about the day, and next year's event is already being planned.



Some 600–700 people stopped by during the course of the day to listen to “Change Your Mind Day” speakers in Golden Gate Park this summer.

Susan O’Connell, shown here at the doan bell, worked with people from Tricycle magazine and other Bay Area Buddhist groups to arrange the West Coast version of Change Your Mind Day. Behind her is San Francisco Zen Center Abbess Blanche Hartman, Helen Tworikov, and other CYMD speakers.



Buddhism at Millennium's Edge

AS WE APPROACH the end of this human millennium, so full of confusion and violence, we're presented with a great challenge: how to repair ourselves and the world. Can Buddhism help? It seems that the need for Buddha's teachings has never been greater than in these times. But how do we translate ancient wisdom into contemporary terms? How do we apply centuries-old mindfulness practices in this time-pressured, modern world?

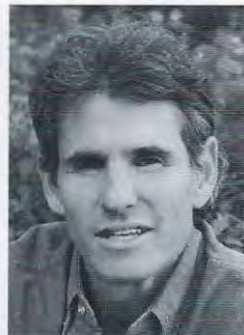
In 1998, San Francisco Zen Center sponsored a year-long series of monthly benefit lectures and workshops by some of Western Buddhism's most respected teachers and practitioners. The lectures and workshops were so well-received that it was clear such a series should be organized again.



Robert Thurman
January 15, 16



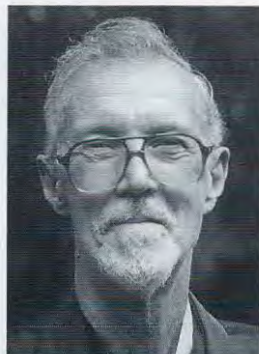
Bernie Glassman
February 18, 19



Jon Kabat-Zinn
March 3, 4



Sylvia Boorstein
June 3, 4



Robert Aitken
July 28, 29



Richard Baker
August 18, 20

Next year, as in 1998, the speakers will be people whose Buddhist practice is central to their life's work, but whose work is somehow an extension of traditional Buddhism. The first date shown for each speaker is a lecture at 7:30 p.m. at First Unitarian Center in San Francisco. The second date is an all-day workshop. Saturday workshops will be at Green Gulch; Sunday workshops will be at City Center in San Francisco.

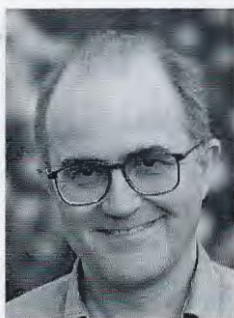
Lecture tickets are \$15 each, and series tickets for all twelve lectures are \$165 and include reserved center-section seating. Workshop tickets are \$75 each for the general public, or \$60 each for members of San Francisco Zen Center.

The insights of the Millennium's Edge 2000 speakers are sure to inspire us and shine some light on the path ahead. We are grateful for the support of these fine teachers, and fortunate to be able to share this special treasure of wisdom.

For information on the series, or to purchase tickets, call 415-863-3133.



Lama Surya Das
March 18, 19



Stephen Batchelor
April 21, 22



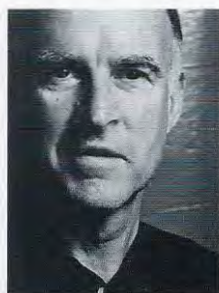
Maxine Hong Kingston
May 19, 20



David Whyte
September 22, 23



Joan Halifax
October 13, 14



Jerry Brown
November 10

New Dana Program Will Help Ensure Zen Center's Long-Term Survival

AS RETIRING ABBOT NORMAN FISCHER MENTIONS IN HIS LETTER in this issue of *Wind Bell*, San Francisco Zen Center has recently launched a new program of support called Planned Giving.

Planned Giving is the name for structured donations of cash, stocks and bonds, real estate and other assets that typically are given through supporters' wills, retirement plans, charitable trusts and the like. Planned giving used to be the province of mainly the wealthy; but these days, many middle-class, working people—even those who may not have all that much extra income during their lifetimes—now have sufficient means to leave at least a modest charitable legacy when they depart this life.

Contributing to Zen Center's financial stability helps ensure that the Buddha Way and Suzuki Roshi's teachings remain available for future generations. This alone is reason enough for many to remember Zen Center in their estate plans. But planned giving also offers tangible, immediate personal benefits to donors. The good news is that making charitable donations results in significant estate and income tax advantages. And the even better news is that one need not feel compelled to choose between providing for family and supporting Zen Center. In fact, in certain circumstances, a single asset that has gone up in value over the years—such as the family home, or stocks that have done well—can be used to increase financial security for both heirs and Zen Center at the same time.

Planned giving need not be a complicated or expensive process. For those with modest estates, arranging a charitable bequest (gift from your will) can be as easy as checking the appropriate boxes on a pre-printed will form that Zen Center can provide. Another simple alternative might be to name Zen Center as the beneficiary of any unused retirement benefits. If left to your family or other heirs, these benefits could be taxed at very high rates; but if left to Zen Center, no estate or income taxes would be deducted. Retirement benefits and life insurance are two of the simplest and most cost-effective assets to leave to charity.



BUTCH BALDWIN

After many years of lay practice at Zen Center, Tony Patchell and Darlene Cohen received priest ordination at City Center on May 26, 1999.

If you inform the development office that you have included Zen Center in your estate plans, you will be acknowledged either formally or privately, depending on your wishes. You will also be invited to join the occasional special activities of the Dharma Lamp Circle, Zen Center's planned giving recognition society. Any size or type of planned gift qualifies one for membership; there is no minimum gift level required in order to join the fun!

For help in figuring out the most effective way to provide for both your heirs and Zen Center, call Deborah Russell, Director of Planned Giving, at 415-865-3790.

Tending the Fire

*Ralph Steele
Saturday Morning Lecture
City Center
January 30, 1999*

HMM. What are you doing in there? What are you doing in there?
What are we doing in here? Right now? At this very moment?

I want to talk about the dhamma as a way of utilizing the theme of “tending the fire.” We all have a fire. Believe me, we do. It’s so important that we be mindful of our fire. The Buddha called that fire “suffering.” And indeed it’s a potent fire when we look at it. That’s why I ask you, and why I’m constantly asking myself, “What am I doing in here?”

You know, there’s the surface layer, but let’s go underneath. Let’s go underneath that to the traumas, the sexual abuse, being put down, the many different forms of rejection that we have experienced from childhood to now. We continue to perpetuate our suffering when we do not look below. We go on pretending there’s no fire there.

When certain life situations happen, that fire blazes for a moment or two or a day or week. Some of us end up on medication. Some do a sesshin to tend their fire. That’s not the purpose of doing a sesshin or meditation retreat. What the Buddha was trying to do, and what he did—what he accomplished—is peace. Peace. Freedom. So enlightenment. If that is not our primary intention, then we’re not doing a Buddhist practice. We’re not practicing. We’re unintentionally perpetuating our suffering. And it’s potent. Mmm. So potent. And it gets out of control when we don’t tend our fire.

We have so many examples of how our fire can get out of control. We can not only fill this room with grief, but we can fill this entire town with just our stories. So we have a fire. Hmm. And it’s always going to be there. It can be out of control, or it can be in control. I have a clinic in Santa Fe,

Ralph Steele is a Vipassana teacher, trained in the teaching/training program at Spirit Rock in Marin County. He has degrees in religion, humanistic psychology, and marriage, family, and child counseling. He is the founder of the Life Transition Therapy program in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ralph is now on retreat in Thailand until May 2000. If you would like to contact him, his e-mail address is ralph@lifetransition.com.

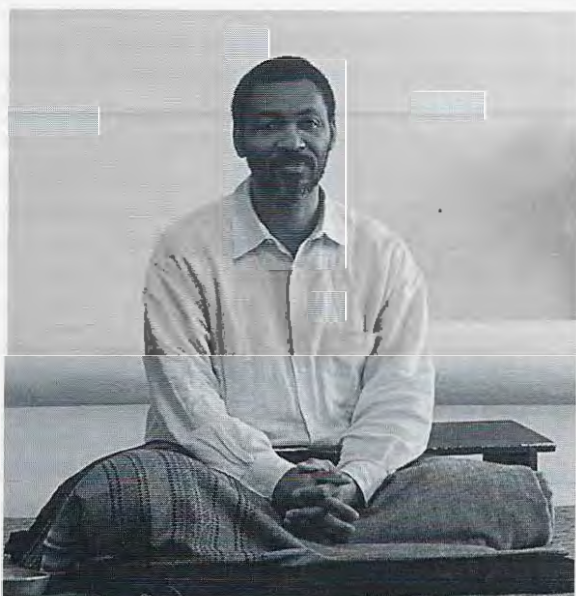
a pain clinic, meditation-based. It's been there quite a while. One of the things I do is a meditation-based breast-cancer support group. And when women first come to the meditation, to the group, their fire is blazing. Angry at the world, perhaps. If I'm a Christian person, I'm angry at God. I'm angry at my husband who left me because I have breast cancer. I'm angry at the doctor who talked to me condescendingly.

My job is to help them to tend their fire. I can't heal their cancer, but I can help them to tend their fire. It's that simple. We're all in this together. When we don't pay attention to that fire, conditioning, habitual patterns, and addictions come up. Our job is to manage our body, speech, and mind. And when we don't do that, they manage us.

Here's an example of conditioning. One of the things Jack Kornfield and I do once a year is we work with gangs. Serious gangs. I mean, very serious gangs with bullet holes and knife wounds. But they want to get it right. They want to make it right because they trust us. We work with other professionals and rent a camp somewhere in the country. We fly in gang members aged 14–25 from Chicago, East Oakland, the Bay Area, East L.A.

We did this one group in Fairfax in Marin County a few years back. They didn't like the food we eat [laughter]—so one day they walked into town, the town of Fairfax. [Laughter.] All right? Oops. You already know. One white person and about eight or nine African Americans, about eight

Ralph Steele





Volunteer participants in Zen Center's Outreach program make bag lunches for homeless people in San Francisco.

or nine Latinos, walking into town—baggy pants, hats on backward, looking for something to eat. They walked in the store. As they walked in the store, people just followed them around the store. When they came back, they said, "Ralph, you know, we thought this was supposed to be a good place. So why are these people following us all around? They don't trust us. They're like looking for us to sneeze and they would call the police." That's our conditioning. That's our society. Those are our habitual patterns. Those are our addictions—when we don't tend our fire.

It's like that everywhere, not only in this country. My partner Sabina and I were at the Frankfurt train station, on our way to giving a seminar in Copenhagen. I'm an old jock football-basketball guy. I was pushing a cart with the luggage to one of those newsstands, and she went off to do something. And the *USA Today* was there—was right there. The cart was here. I turned around, got the *USA Today*, paid for it, turned back around, and my briefcase, which had been on the cart, was gone. Gone! And in that briefcase were all my notes for the seminar in this country I was headed to—to people I'd never seen before in my life. At the train station there was an ocean of human beings. I just went nuts. I was running all over the place. And as I was running, people were just making a path, you know. [Laughter.] All they saw was this guy with a black leather jacket on and dark glasses. They were just scattering all over the place. Conditioning. I really didn't

notice that until I got on the train and just sat back and looked. And I laughed and laughed. You know, it's so funny—the conditioning that arises when we don't tend our fire. This is what happens. Habit sets in.

In our sitting practice, hmm, you know, can you be with it? When physical sensations come up? I use the analogy of munchkins, you know; the munchkins sawing on your knees, on your back. The more you flare up, the more they're partying.

Can you be with it? Can you be with the practice? Can you let the dhamma guide you? Can you be with the dhamma? Dhamma. The root words are Sanskrit *dhri*, "to cradle," and *ma*, "mother." Dharma. Dhamma. Can you be with it? Can you just be with it?

That's just the first step—being with it. The next step is understanding the nature of impermanence. Understanding that you really have no parents—meaning that if you're not practicing freedom, if you're not practicing enlightenment, if you're not walking on the path, then that means you have a parent or want a parent. That means that you are dependent on something. We have to walk the path. There are people ahead of us on the path, senior teachers to let us know, "Hey, this practice works." But we have to walk it.

I have no home. I have no parents. I make awareness my home.

I have no life or death. I make the tides of breathing my life and death.

I have no means. I make understanding my means.

I have no magic secrets. I make character my magic secrets.

I have no ears. I make sensibility my ears.

I have no body. I make endurance my body.

I have no limbs. I make promptness my limbs.

I have no strategy. I make unshadowed-by-thought my strategy.

I have no miracles. I make right action my miracles.

I have no principles. I make adaptability to all circumstances my principles.

I have no talents. I make ready wit my talent.

I have no friends. I make my mind my friend.

I have no enemy. I make carelessness my enemy.

I have no sword. I make absence of self my sword.

[Anonymous]

I have no parents. Hmm?

Sister Mary, my grandmother, Sister Mary Rainey, lives on Pawleys Island, one of the sixteen Sea Islands stretching 160 miles along the Atlantic coast mainly between Savannah up north to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She was called "Sister Mary" before I was born, before my mom was born. In the church on Pawleys Island, the male deacons are called

"babas" and the female deacons are called "sisters." Members of my family have run that church for over a hundred years.

Sister Mary is presently 95, going on 96. She's been a sister for a long time. She's still at home. She's still taking care of herself. She lives by herself. The only person she lets live in that house is me when I go home because I was born there. She's a very special lady. My cousins have to go over to the house every day to get the gifts and the money that people leave behind after they stop by for her blessings.

As a child, I remember our horse died. And so we buried it. That was a big hole. At least four or five feet deep. It was big. I mean, to me, as a kid, it was pretty big. And we put that horse in that hole and we covered it with lime to keep the animals away, and then we covered it up. Two days later, I went back out there. The horse was dug up and the majority of the horse-meat was gone. And I went back and told Sister Mary what happened. And she said, "Everybody has to eat. We're all part of the chain." We're all beings here on the planet. We all need to look out for each other.

The Buddha didn't teach us about the mental factors so that we can become attached to them. But we do become attached to them, and that's what creates our conditioning. Yes. We can blame our parents, but how long are we going to hang onto that? You know, some of my clients are fifty-some years old and they're still ragging on their parents. How long do you want to do that?

Yes, we've all been abused, misused, and stepped on. That's very true. Yes. There's deep pain. When I say "fire," yeah, it burns—it burns very deeply. Remember, the Buddha did not teach us about the mental factors so we can be attached to them. We attach ourselves to them and oh, boy! The conditioning and the suffering! We get so burned by that fire. Spend a few thousand dollars and a few thousand hours in therapy and psychiatric clinics, going through three or four marriages and divorces, and oh boy! Think about it, huh? Mood swings on and on and on. Instead of tending our fire, we allow our mind, body, and speech to manage us—not the other way around.

Bring in the power of mindfulness and understand the nature of impermanence, hmm? Mindfulness—ah!—a personal trainer. Personal trainers are a big thing here in California, huh? [Laughter.] People like Demi Moore and all those other Hollywood stars—they're looking good. They have their personal trainers. Just like mindfulness. Think about it. You practice mindfulness, and your friends say, "Oh, you're looking good!" [Laughter.] "What have you been doing?" "Oh, I've been meditating." "Oh, well I want to go to that meditation too." Well, they do not have the faintest understanding. It's more than just meditation. That's why I ask you, "What are you doing in there?" The power of mindfulness helps us to notice our conditioning and our habitual patterns. Oh, how sweet this practice is!

Seeing the true nature, seeing the non-duality, no self—when one begins to tend the fire. Understanding. Being mindful is watching out for our ego, is watching out for our self. We have a self; we have an ego. That's okay. What's not okay is when you don't watch out for that rascal that's in there, because that's where our data bank lies. And for some reason, it seems to come out with all the negative stuff first: the put-down, the condescending attitude. It's very clever. Trungpa Rinpoche said something about the ego:

The problem is that ego can convert anything to its own use, even spirituality. Ego is constantly attempting to acquire and apply the teachings of spirituality for its own benefit. The teachings are treated as an external thing, external to "me," a philosophy which we try to imitate. We do not actually want to identify with or become the teachings. So if our teacher speaks of renunciation of ego, we attempt to mimic renunciation of ego. We go through the motions, make the appropriate gestures, but we really do not want to sacrifice any part of our way of life. We become skillful actors, and while playing deaf and dumb to the real meaning of the teachings, we find some comfort in pretending to follow the path.

[Chogyam Trungpa, *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*: Boston, Shambhala, 1987, p. 13.]

"Pretending." That's specifically addressed to the old students. I'm not putting the old students down, because the new students are here today because of what the old students have cultivated, and I welcome you both.

Diversification is—hmm—seems to be in the air for some reason. I don't know why. This is probably one of the most diverse cities in the nation. And look at this room. Very interesting, huh? We need to investigate that. There's something wrong. And I'm not only talking about diverse in color, but I'm talking about diverse on all different levels. Hmm.

*Rock stupa
at Tassajara*



IN THE
MOUNTAINS
OF TASSAJARA

We have fear. There's this deep fear after we reach some type of comfort zone—a fear of change. Take a moment. Look around the room. It's okay. This is a Zen center. But we're in America. We do what we want to do. [Laughter.] Go ahead. Please. Make eye contact with somebody. Please do that. Let yourself see yourself in that person. Take a moment. If you dare do that. Some of you did. And some of you didn't. Because of fear. You can't see yourself. Can you see yourself in another person? If you can't do that, then you do have conditionings. Because that's what's stopping us from seeing ourselves in the other person. That's the only thing that's stopping us. Listen to this:

Life is the Sacred Mystery singing to itself, dancing
to its drum, telling tales, improvising, playing
and we are all that Spirit, our stories all
but one cosmic story that we are loved indeed,
that perfect love we seek we are already.
That the love in me seeks the love in you,
and if our eyes could ever meet without fear,
we would recognize each other and rejoice,
for love is life believing in itself.

[Manitongquat, "A Prayer to Humankind,"
in *Context*, 1983, No. 1, p. 59.]

Hmm? No self. Non-dualism. When we get to that level, the only thing we have is the dhamma, hmm? The only thing we have is peace. The only thing we have is freedom. When we get to that level of seeing, of being, of breathing, of living. Cultivating that knowing. Cultivating that gives us inner strength and confidence. Confidence that, all right, here comes death; you put death in your lap. You're living your life, moment by moment. Here it is right here. "How're you doing today? Fine. Are you okay in there? I'm okay in here. It's a great day, isn't it?" Hmm. Moment by moment. As one Zen master said, it's like walking on the bottom of the ocean.

Tell you one more story of Sister Mary—of confidence in the dhamma. In the South they have chain gangs. Those are guys in uniforms with black and white stripes, and their ankles are chained together. Their job is to clean the roads. We lived on a dirt road in the swamps, and they would come down the road cleaning the bushes about maybe ten or fifteen feet off the road. And my brother and I, we would see them coming up the road, and they'd get closer, and it's a scary feeling. It's in the air. We would run into the yard behind the hedges, and we would watch them. And I don't know why—everybody was always black except for the guy who was in charge. So there's one white guy and all these black guys. He has a pair

of glasses on—the kind that look like a mirror. And a double-barreled shotgun. And he's standing there with the gun hanging open. They come up the road, and they get in front of the house, and all of a sudden, Sister Mary walks out of the house with a pitcher of lemonade—a cup tied to it with a string—and a plate of sweetbread. As she gets closer to these guys, the guard closes his gun. She walks by this guy as if he's not there. And she walks up to these guys, and she's giving them lemonade and sweetbread. And as she's giving them that, she's blessing them and saying, "Don't worry. You'll be okay, you know. It was wrong what you did. Accept what you did." These guys are sweating and crying. And they're saying, "Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

She gets through with the gang. She walks up to the guard to offer him sweetbread and some lemonade, and he just shakes his head. And so he missed that darshan. She goes back in the house, and these guys continue up the road. However, they start a cadence. And they start singing. And they start swinging everything in unison—ah! it was sweet!—as they go up the road. And my brother and I would run back out there, and we'd start shooting marbles, playing around. It was so joyful—that peace. Someone who walks into that, walks with that confidence and demonstrates the result of that—it's like a child was just born into a room. Light is all over the place. That peace. Mmm.

The practice. Our intention. Understanding our intention is very important, because the Buddha had one practice—he had one thing in mind, as well as all the other buddhas before him—enlightenment, freedom.

I'll read you this as a closing. It's from Zen master Dogen—the mind of the ancient buddhas as we walk this path together:

The mind of that ancient buddha should not be understood as something irrelevant to your experience, as some mind which exists from the beginningless past, for it is the mind which eats rice gruel, or tastes other food in your ordinary everyday life. It is the mind which is grass, the mind which is water. Within the life, just as it is, is the act of sitting like a buddha, which is called "arousing the thought of enlightenment." The conditions for arousing the thought of enlightenment do not come from anywhere else.

It is the enlightened mind that arouses the thought of enlightenment or freedom.

One honors the Buddha with a grain of sand. One honors the Buddha with the water in which the rice has been soaked.

One offers a handful of food to living creatures, like the smile we just gave to each other, and to the buddhas. Like this dhamma talk I just gave to you.

Why Dogen?

Kazuaki Tanahashi

DOGEN SAID, "Miracles are practiced three thousand times in the morning and eight hundred times in the evening."¹ You must already have experienced two thousand seven hundred miracles this morning; so there are three hundred more to go. [Laughter] During Dogen's time in the thirteenth century, and in fact through most of the history of Buddhism, the midday meal was the main meal and often the last meal of the day. People were sleepy in the afternoon, when it was miracle-free time. [Laughter]

An attraction of Dogen to many of us in a time of advanced science and technology is that he didn't regard miracles as magical or supernatural phenomena which might be brought on by prayers or rituals. According to Dogen, miracles are such daily activities as fetching water and carrying firewood. Every encounter we have is a miracle. Every breath we take is a miracle. But, as we often focus on imperfection, lack, and failure, we become cranky and unhappy. So Dogen's words can be a good reminder of the miracles of each moment.

People say, "How many years did it take you to put the Dogen book together?" I sometimes say, "It took us seven hundred fifty years." It's true in a way if we consider that Buddhism practically didn't exist in the West until recently. In the sixteenth century a Portuguese missionary reported a strange kind of demon worship in Japan. When this was the typical European perception of Buddhism, there was no need for Dogen in the West. Zen was formally introduced to the United States in 1894, when Soen Shaku gave a lecture at the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago. D.T. Suzuki, one of his students, wrote a lot about Zen but seldom mentioned Dogen.

ENLIGHTENMENT UNFOLDS: THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF ZEN MASTER DOGEN, edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi, translated in collaboration with Zen Center teachers, has been published by Shambhala Publications. Kaz spoke prior to a book signing at City Center on May 29, 1999.



In my twenties when I was a beginning artist and looking for a spiritual guide, I read Dogen's poems and essays, which blew my mind. Let me read some of the lines that inspired me most:

Birth is just like riding in a boat. You raise the sails and row with the pole. Although you row, the boat gives you a ride and without the boat you couldn't ride. But you ride in the boat and your riding makes the boat what it is. Investigate a moment such as this. At just such a moment there is nothing but the world of the boat. The sky, the water, and the shore are all the boat's world.²

I had been studying European literature and philosophy, in particular the writings of the existentialists. Camus, for example, points to the impermanence of life, realizing that we are all on death row. In my view, existentialists couldn't find any way out and expressed helplessness, despair, and boredom. Then I saw Dogen, who was so positive, as if he were presenting a next step to the existentialist understanding.

I didn't have a firm grip on what Dogen was talking about, and perhaps because of that, I was drawn to him. In 1960 I had my first art show in Nagoya; it took place in a rented gallery for six days, as was common in

Japan. There was an old man, Soichi Nakamura, who came to my show every day. We became friends. I realized that he was an accomplished scholar and Zen teacher. I said to Nakamura Roshi, "Dogen is amazing but few people understand his writings. It would be a great help to many people if you would translate Dogen into modern Japanese." He said, "I would, if you do that with me." So I said, "I would be happy to help you." I thought I would work with him for a few years, get that done, and then do something more interesting. [Laughter]

Prior to that, when I was thirteen years old, soon after World War II, I practiced Aikido and its spiritual foundation, Shintoism, with Morihei Ueshiba, founder of Aikido. My family and I were living in the master's dojo complex. So in a way I had to study Aikido. Later my father started a Shinto church. I was the only person around, so I ended up practicing Shintoism with him for some years until his church grew larger. I started going to a Christian church and then to Nakamura Roshi's temple. My father was wondering why his first-born son was interested in other religions. My explanation was: "We should understand what other people are doing. Some day we may have to convert them." [Laughter]

Translating Dogen's paradoxical words from medieval Japanese and Chinese into modern Japanese was extremely painstaking. Sometimes we worked for a whole day on just one line. I started studying Sanskrit with a tutor and Chinese and Buddhist teachings. At one point I was invited to have a show in Washington, D.C. It was January 1964, and I was twenty-nine years old. I first landed in Honolulu, where I met Robert Aitken, who was not a roshi yet. He gave me a list of Zen places to visit on the mainland and suggested that I meet Rev. Shunryu Suzuki.

I visited Soko-ji and had a friendly conversation with him for about one hour. I guess he was wondering what I was. Finally Suzuki Roshi said, "Are you a salesman of Buddhist goods?" [Laughter]

I said, "No, I am not. I am a student of Dogen."

Then I said to Suzuki Roshi, "I understand you teach zazen here. What kind of text do you use?"

He said, "*The Blue Cliff Record*."

I said, "Why not Dogen?"

"Dogen is too difficult for American students."

"Don't you think you should present your best when you teach foreign students? It doesn't matter if they don't understand it. [Laughter] Don't you think Dogen is your best?"

After a few moments of silence, he said, "I am scheduled to give a talk to my students on Sunday. Would you please talk about Dogen for me?" [Laughter] I had never given a public talk in English. I borrowed a copy of his Dogen book and wrote a lecture. My topic was "time" based on "Time Being," a fascicle of Dogen's major work, *Shobogenzo*.

After showing my artwork in North America for one year, I went back to Honolulu and translated "Genjokoan," another fascicle of *Shobogenzo*, with Aitken Roshi. Returning to Japan, I suddenly found the work of translating Dogen into modern Japanese much easier. Translating into English had changed the dynamics. When you translate something into another language, you have to deconstruct the structure of the original sentence and try to find the best possible syntax to make it sensible in that language. Some kind of breakdown process had taken place, which opened up my mind. I said to Nakamura Roshi, "It might be a good idea if you would let me do the translation by myself and comment on my draft afterward." I dictated my modern Japanese translation into a tape recorder and asked a team of volunteers to transcribe it. We completed the entire 95 fascicles of *Shobogenzo*, which were published in four volumes with an extra volume of dictionary, in 1972.

At one point I thought of translating more of Dogen's writings into English. As Suzuki Roshi had passed away, I wrote to Baker Roshi. When I met him in Kyoto in 1975, I expressed my wish to collaborate with those who were practicing Zen. Baker Roshi asked me directly: "Are you a Buddhist?" I said, "Well, I am not. But I am a Buddhist scholar." Then he said, "Why don't you come to Zen Center and work with us?" Since 1977 I have had the pleasure of being part of the Sangha and working with friends who are deeply engaged in Zen practice.

Dogen was extremely serious and formal, a high spiritual leader and excellent community organizer. I'm the opposite. I like to be informal. I like free thinking and identify myself as a drop-out. In no way am I a good student of Dogen's. But I am attracted to his world view and teaching, and wish to support, in a modest way, those who are following Dogen's path.

Dogen said:

By the continuous practice of all buddhas and ancestors, your practice is actualized and your great road opens up. By your continuous practice, the continuous practice of all buddhas is actualized and the great road of all buddhas opens up. Your continuous practice creates the circle of the way.³

We receive a great teaching, and we actualize it. We receive a great heritage, whether it is a common human heritage or a Buddhist heritage, and it is we who make it vital. Teachers make students, and vice versa. Teachers are students and students are teachers.

Enlightenment Unfolds has been a three-year project of Zen Center. An obvious part of this collaboration is that some of the teachers in this community have worked with me and Zen Center has provided financial support. A less obvious part is that all of you who practice together have helped. Let me give you an example. There is an East Asian expression that



Sojun Mel Weitsman reads from Enlightenment Unfolds at the book signing at City Center. Other participants, from left facing camera, are Taigen Leighton, Abbess Zenkei Blanche Hartman, and the book's editor, Kaz Tanahashi.

is usually translated as "sitting in a crossed-legged position." Norman Fischer suggested "sitting in a meditation posture" as an alternative translation. This translation radically widens the concept of meditation posture. Some of you say, "I can't sit in the cross-legged way. I need to sit on the chair," or "Can we meditate in a wheelchair?" When you raise these issues, you are our teachers in redefining the concept.

Once my wife, Linda, said, "Why do you say 'Patriarch' [as in 'the Sixth Patriarch']?" In Chinese this word has no gender, so I realized that "patriarch" was not a good translation. Some of us translators came up with the word "ancestor," which is commonly used now. In this way we could correct our understanding of dharma and make it more accessible. My partners and I examine each word and try to find the most appropriate translation



that is justified in light of the original thought. When we had meetings to review the draft translation of *Enlightenment Unfolds* at Zen Center, I said, "We are the humblest people in the world." Of course real humble people don't say such things. [Laughter] What I wanted to say was that we are open to everyone's comments and hope to make the book, and the practice, accessible to as many people as possible.

In this book we have included Dogen's fundraising letter. People like the idea that even Dogen had to do fundraising. [Laughter] Fundraising is a way to offer people an opportunity to give, which is an important practice. Fundraising is also a way to clarify the meaning of your practice and explain it in a way that others can understand. Dogen was trying to build a small monks' hall soon after he had come back from China. In his letter he said, "We will thoroughly engage in each activity in order to cultivate proper conditions to transform the ten directions."⁴ This is an outrageous statement. By taking care of every small detail of life—sitting, walking, cleaning, and cooking—he wanted to change the world. One of his tasks

was to establish a practicing community by encouraging its members to be sensitive to other people's feelings, be fair and open, and not to overstep others' responsibility. What Dogen was doing was small, but the effect of his thinking and practice has proven to be enormous, and his influence is still growing. It is ironic and inspiring: being thoroughly engaged in each activity, while working with others harmoniously, may be the most immediate way to bring forth large-scale transformation.

1 "Miracles," translated with Katherine Thanas.

2 "Undivided Activity," translated with Edward Brown.

3 "Continuous Practice, Fascicle One," translated with Mel Weitsman and Tensho David Schneider.

4 "Donation Request for a Monks' Hall at the Kannon-dori Monastery," translated with Michael Wenger.

Letter from Abbot Zoketsu Norman Fischer

July 1999

I AM WRITING THIS LETTER FROM TASSAJARA, in the abbot's cabin, where Suzuki Roshi and all of the Zen Center abbots have lived part-time since Tassajara Zen Mountain Center was founded in 1967. A few years ago, then-abbot Sojun Weitsman remodeled a bit, creating more space for a desk and bookshelves, and worn tatami mats have been replaced, but otherwise the single room dwelling is unchanged. The doorlatch still makes the same loud metallic rattle on opening and closing as it did in the mid-1970's, when I was a monk in residence here.

Tassajara itself still radiates the same powerful sense of quiet and concentration. The tradition of daily practice and work during the summers and deep silence during the fall and spring practice periods carries on as it has in an unbroken continuum since the beginning, despite buildings burning down and being rebuilt, and our several changes in leadership. Students, young and old, come to Tassajara now from all over the country and the world, and monks come here to train from other Zen groups as far away as Europe and Japan. (As I write this, a Japanese priest and his wife are practicing together here as fellow students, something that would be inconceivable in Japan.) We have slowly been improving the physical plant. There are a few new cabins, a new yurt and kaisando (founder's hall), a refurbished dining room and dorm, and a new bathhouse. But old students coming back for summer visits feel the power of the place to be unchanged. Tassajara remains the soul of Zen Center.

Almost five years have gone by since I was installed as co-abbot of Zen Center in the Buddha Hall at Page Street. The time has passed swiftly and I am ready to step down in February 2000 to make way for our new abbess, Jiko Linda Cutts. As many of you know, I was at first quite reluctant to accept the position of co-abbot, but now I am very glad that I did, and I have enjoyed immensely the time I have spent in office. It is not easy being an abbot of Zen Center; the demands and responsibilities are very great, but in addition to the actual duties and skills required there is a heavy though subtle spiritual weight that an abbot must bear. I was worried that all of this would be too much for me, but it has worked out fine, and I have survived the five years more or less intact. As I said to many people when I began the job, my first priority was personal survival. A frazzled, out of touch, or

grumpy abbot is not going to be an effective abbot, I reasoned. My strategy worked well, I think, and I am more happy and at ease now than when I began.

I had other priorities, of course. Since I was the first abbot of Zen Center from the generation of practitioners who arrived after Suzuki-roshi's time, I was very concerned to show that it could be done, that the new system of term limits for abbots could really work, and that the Dharma candle could successfully be passed on to another generation. I was also concerned that Zen Center put its house in order organizationally, developing policies and community understandings that were democratic and fair, reflecting our background as Western people, and yet preserving the tradition that we had inherited from Japan. I also wanted to see to it that our finances were in order, and that we had in place a strong cadre of young people who might reasonably be expected to carry the tradition forward. In addition, I wanted to make the point, to ourselves and to the world at large, that Zen practice is not only something that occurs in monasteries, something done by highly motivated and committed people who are willing to sacrifice everything for the joy of the Dharma. I wanted to see to it that the teachings and practice were made available widely, in all sorts of ways.

I had these goals and desires in mind, but I obviously did not feel that it was within my power to accomplish them on my own. My attitude was: if I am honest and straightforward and if I take care of myself and my practice and encourage others these things might come to pass. If they do not, and we only just survive for a few more years, that will be all right, too.

We have survived, and we have done better than that. Thanks to the efforts of many, many talented people—old students, colleagues with whom I have practiced for twenty-five years, as well as many enthusiastic, intelligent and committed new students, members and benefactors—I think we are more firmly and beautifully established today than we were when I began my term.

In fact, most of my goals have been accomplished. When I was installed, we all hoped that we could have a good system of election of abbots for succeeding terms; now we know that it can be done, and that former abbots who remain as teachers at Zen Center (and I am thinking chiefly of our senior Dharma teacher and former abbot Tenshin Anderson) can do so effectively and happily for the benefit not only of our students here, but students all over the country and the world. We have also seen in the last five years the development of a group of good and committed students, many of whom have ordained as priests during this time. We have begun having children again—four new babies were born in 1999. While we of course cannot accommodate many families, and are not trying to become a commune, the fact that children are being born in the community is a

spontaneous sign of confidence, and it is a joy for all of us. (Several of the children who grew up in the community during the 1970s and 1980s have returned as adult students in the last few years as well. This has been a particular pleasure for me.)

Organizationally, we have taken many important steps. We have worked out, in a natural and thoughtful way, I think, a good understanding of how power sharing between our elected board, the elders' council and the abbots of Zen Center can work. In the past there had been some confusion about how these groups would be mutually supportive and balanced. Would an elected board with real authority overshadow the religious autonomy of the abbots? Would there be mistrust or squabbling between the Zen Center administration, the Board, and the teaching side? (All of these things did occur in the past.) As of today, I can happily report that all of this is ironed out. The Board has found a way to take its responsibility as steward of Zen Center, while allowing the abbots a wide respect and the administration an appropriate amount of freedom.

We have also established some crucial policies in the last few years. The long struggle to create a good ethics policy for Zen Center has reached



Zen Center is recently enjoying a baby boom. Shown here are four new babies born in 1999. From left are, Michael Thiele, who lives with his wife Leslie and their new son Lukas Pratt at Green Gulch; David Basile, who lives at 340 Page Street with his wife Jazmin Hicks and son Indigo Forest; Nancy Petrin, who lives with her husband Daniel Leonard and their daughter Olivia Claire at Green Gulch; and John Schick, a close neighbor and practitioner at Green Gulch, who lives with his wife Jean and their daughter Jade Charlotte at Muir Beach.

a successful conclusion and our Ethics and Reconciliation Council is now in full operation, providing a safe informal forum for student complaints and ethical issues, with a formal grievance process in place if needed. We have also completed, with the help of James Kenney, a Zen student of long standing who is an actuary, our "elder monks' policy," a non-retirement policy that provides clear and modest benefits to older students who have served the organization for many years. Along with this we have completed our "Path and Gates" policy, a map of a student's path through the Zen Center mandala, with specified times built in for students to reflect, with their teachers, as to whether more time in residence is useful or not. While quite simple, in a way, this policy was hard to work out, and is necessary for the conscious, fair and reasonable regulation of the flow of students through Zen Center's residential temples. The Elders' Council has held another orderly and harmonious abbatial election and has also, for the first time, given some clear definition of the training and requirements of a Zen Center priest.

With the appointment of two new senior teaching positions we have been able to make progress in areas that were formerly under-developed. Under Michael Wenger, dean of the Study Center and head of publications, we have been able to oversee the publication of several books that are published or will be out soon, including Suzuki Roshi's *Sandokai* lectures (under the title *Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness*, published by University of California Press) and a forthcoming new collection of Suzuki Roshi lectures. We have also set in order the Suzuki Roshi archives, and are raising funds to preserve our founder's tapes and transcripts into the next century.

With Paul Haller as head of Zen Center's outreach program, we have been able to share our practice with the world in many ways. Our students have been active in offering meditation to prisoners, in hospitals, drug rehab centers and childcare centers; we have been working with other groups to find housing and provide food for the homeless, to protest capital punishment, and to promote racial diversity in Bay Area sanghas. Many new affiliated temples and sitting groups are under way all over the country, from Bellingham, Washington, to uptown Manhattan. We have been offering retreats for business people, engaging in various forms of inter-religious dialogue, and networking throughout San Francisco and Marin on behalf of peace and justice. In addition, the last five years has seen us make some progress in our community practice of forgiveness and peace-making with our second abbot, Richard Baker, who left Zen Center unhappily in 1983. During this time we have reached out to him in several significant ways, and he has responded. Although we have not reached, and may never reach, an unqualified rapprochement, I feel good that we have done our best, and I have a strong faith that in future an appropriate friendship and mutual appreciation will be possible.

Perhaps the area where we have made the most progress, and have the greatest challenge for the future, is in the area of finances. I have taken a strong personal interest in our fundraising, and we have done well, receiving large grants and contributions for projects that needed to be done, most notably the Tassajara dining room refurbishment and the upcoming Green Gulch housing project (we are presently in the process of raising the last of the necessary funds for this crucial project). We have managed to stabilize and improve our sources of income, have created an investment policy and a system of set-aside funds for property and retirement purposes, and we have undergone a complete overhaul of our accounting system, so that for the first time we have been able to do some long-range financial planning.

The results of that planning is where the challenge comes in. It now seems clear to us, as we envision the next ten to twenty years, that our expenses will go up considerably, while our income will remain more or less the same. There are simply only so many cabins at Tassajara to fill for the summer guest season and so many tables at Greens Restaurant for dinner, only so many weekend rooms to fill at Green Gulch, only so much produce that can be grown on the farm. I am convinced that in order to survive in the long run, which means taking care of our older as well as our new students, providing more study time to train teachers and funds to fix roofs and foundations, we will need to improve our finances considerably. We will have to create and develop new income sources but, even more importantly, I believe, it will be crucial for us to raise a considerable sum of money for an endowment, perhaps as much as ten million dollars.

We have begun thinking about this and are actively working on it. We have assigned Deborah Russell in our development office the full-time task of developing a Planned Giving campaign. Although it seems as if the sum of \$10 million is beyond our fund-gathering capacities, it is doable in the context of a Planned Giving campaign, in which individuals who might not have a great capacity to give can afford to do so in the form of bequests. I am convinced that our many supporters will want to do this for Zen Center, in order to ensure the survival beyond their own lifetimes of the organization they have worked so hard to create and support. Zen Center is the first and still the largest residential Buddhist center in the West, and its ongoing establishment for future generations has a dimension beyond our own sangha. To ensure its survival for 500 years and more is something all of us can get behind. As my last gesture as abbot of Zen Center, I would like very much to see the Planned Giving Endowment campaign kicked off strongly by fall of this year.

Many people have asked me about my plans as I leave the abbotship. I will serve Zen Center one more year in the capacity of "former abbot," giving support, advice and teaching as I am asked. After that time I am hoping to continue my Zen practice and teaching independently, pursuing my

writing and my interest in working with nonresidential students, both experienced and new. I hope to go on with my retreats for business people and my Jewish-Buddhist retreats (working with my old friend Rabbi Alan Lew), and perhaps work also with young people in mentoring retreats. I don't know if I will be able to do all or any of this, but I intend to try. I know that I will miss being at Zen Center full time every day, but I am certain that I will remain involved, as a friend and sangha member, for the rest of my life. Zen Center has been the warm heart of my entire adult life, and it has been a rare and wonderful privilege to have been able to work with so many good people on such a powerful and satisfying project. May we all continue this effort.

Greens Restaurant celebrated its 20th anniversary this summer. Shown at a party to mark the occasion are, from left, Greens Executive Chef Annie Somerville, and Zen Center old-timers David Cohn and Darlene Cohen.



BLITCH-BALLUYUT (2)



Lou Hartman and Abbess Zenkei Blanche Hartman also turned out for the event at Greens.



Altar at Berkeley Zen Center

Related Zen Centers

*B*UDDHISM IS OFTEN LIKENED TO A LOTUS PLANT. One of the characteristics of the lotus is that it throws off many seeds from which new plants grow. A number of Zen centers have formed which have a close relationship with San Francisco Zen Center. A partial list of these follows:

CENTERS WITH DAILY MEDITATION

Within California

Arcata Zen Group, 940 Park Ave., Arcata 95521. Contact Maylie Scott at mayliescott@earthlink.net or call 707-442-9155 in Arcata.

Berkeley Zen Center, 1931 Russell St, Berkeley 94703, 510-845-2403. Sojun Mel Weitsman, abbot.

Dharma Eye Zen Center, 333 Bayview St, San Rafael 94901. Mon-Fri 5:15 a.m. zazen and service; Monday 7:30-9:30 p.m. zazen, tea and discussion. Call for sesshin schedule or zazen instruction, 415-258-0802. Myogen Steve Stucky, teacher.

Hartford Street Zen Center, 57 Hartford St, San Francisco 94114, 415-863-2507. Zenshin Philip Whalen, abbot.

Jikoji, in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Saratoga, 408-741-9562. Ryan Brandenburg, director.

Kannon Do Zen Center, 292 College Ave, Mountain View 94040, 650-903-1935. Keido Les Kaye, abbot.

Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School St, Santa Cruz 95060, 831-457-0206. Wednesday zazen 7:10 p.m., lecture/discussion 8 p.m. Katherine Thanas, teacher, 831-426-3847.

Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, 6367 Sonoma Mountain Rd., Santa Rosa 95404, 707-545-8105. Jakusho Kwong, abbot.

Outside California

Chapel Hill Zen Center, Use mailing address to request information—P.O. Box 16302, Chapel Hill NC 27516; meeting location, 5322 NC Hwy 86, Chapel Hill NC 27514; 919-967-0861. Taitaku Patricia Phelan, teacher.

Hoko-ji, Taos, NM, 505-776-9733. Kobun Chino, abbot.

Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, 3343 E. Calhoun Pkwy, Minneapolis MN 55408, 612-822-5313.

Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha NE 68131-1363, 402-551-9035. Nonin Chowaney, abbot. E-mail nzc@aol.com. Website: www.geocities.com/Tokyo/temple/7228

WEEKLY MEDITATION GROUPS

Within California

Almond Blossom Sangha, 4516 Bluff Creek Dr, Modesto CA 95355. Wednesdays 7–9 p.m. Website: <http://webpages.ainet.com/meditate/>

Bolinas Sitting Group, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 30 Brighton Ave, Bolinas. One Saturday a month (usually the second one) 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Contact Taigen Leighton, 415-458-8856 or Liz Tuomi, 415-868-1931.

California Street Zen Group, St. James' Episcopal Church, California St between 8th and 9th aves, San Francisco. In the parish hall downstairs from the main church. Wednesdays 7:30–9 p.m. Contact Teigen Leighton, 415-458-8856.

Monterey Bay Zen Group, meets at Cherry Foundation, 4th and Guadalupe, Carmel. Tuesdays 6:30 p.m. Mailing address P.O. Box 3173, Monterey CA 93924. Katherine Thanas, teacher. Contact 831-647-6330.

North Peninsula Zen Group, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1600 Santa Lucia Ave, San Bruno. Meets Thursday evenings 7:30–9 p.m. Contact Darlene Cohen, 415-552-5695.

Oakhurst-North Fork Zen Group/Empty Nest Zendo, 54333 Two Hills Road, North Fork 93643. Wednesday 5:45 p.m. class and sitting and Sunday 8:45 a.m. One half-day sitting per month. Contact Grace or Peter Shireson, 559-877-2400.

Occidental Sitting Group, 3535 Hillcrest, Occidental 95465. Sunday 9:30-11:30 a.m. zazen, kinhin, talk, discussion. Meet at Anderson Hall—call for directions. Contact Bruce Fortin, 707-874-2234.

San Rafael Sitting Group, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Court St. between 5th and Mission in parish offices to right of church. Wednesdays 7-8 a.m. Contact Taigen Leighton 415-458-8856.

Thursday Night Sitting Group, Marin Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 240 Channing Way, San Rafael. Thursdays 7-9 p.m. Contact Ed Brown, 415-485-5257 or U.U. Fellowship, 415-479-4131.

Vallejo Sitting Group, behind 812 Louisiana, Vallejo. Thursdays 7-8:30 p.m. Contact Mary Mocine 707-649-1972.

Outside California

Clear Spring Zendo, 7116-D Chimney Corners, Austin TX 78731, 512-231-9644. Zazen, kinhin, service, classes, discussion. Contact Flint Sparks, Ph.D., 512-327-8561. Website: www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Fuji/4024/clearspring.html

Elberon Zen Circle, 1032 Woodgate Ave., Long Branch NJ 07740. Zazen, kinhin, service, classes, discussion. Contact Brian Unger, 732-870-9065.

Eugene Zen Practice Group, 1515 Hayes, Eugene OR 97402. Wednesday mornings. Contact Gary McNabb, 503-343-2525.

One Pine Hall Zazen Group, Seattle WA. Zazen, kinhin and service. Mondays 6:30-7:30 a.m. Contact Robby Ryuzen Pellett, 206-789-6492. Need to bring own cushions.

Silver City Buddhist Center, 1301 N. Virginia St., Silver City, NM 88061-4617. Zazen, service, classes, discussion, ceremonies. Contact Dr. Paul (Oryu) Stuetzer, 505-388-8874 or 505-388-8858.

Silver Mountain Ranch, Zen Retreat, 51 Turkey Creek Rd, Gila NM 88038. An affiliate of Silver City Buddhist Center, 25 miles north of Silver City. Daily zazen, library, organic produce, personal and group retreats. Contact Shawn (Ryushin) Stempley, guestmaster, 505-535-4484.

Siskiyous Sansui Do, 246 4th St, Ashland OR 97520. Zazen, kinhin, service, lectures, discussion. Contact Harold Little or Patty Krahl, 541-552-1175. E-mail: www.gmrdesign.com/sangha.

**TRUST FUND FOR MARK PETCHEY,
SON OF GRAHAME AND HIDEKO PETCHEY**

On July 17 of this year, Mark, the son of Grahame and Hideko Petchey, survived an automobile accident that killed his friend, Max. Mark suffered a traumatic brain injury and is in the early stages of emerging from coma. It is clear that his recovery will be slow and long.

Grahame and Hideko are caring for Mark at home since his release from the hospital. A trust fund has been formed to help provide care and comfort for him beyond the limitations of insurance and family capabilities. Your prayers, help and contributions are greatly appreciated.

Donations can be sent to:
Trust Fund-Mark Petchey
c/o Cal Fed Bank
328 N. Main Street
Sebastopol, CA 95472-3438

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Information may be obtained from the City Center, 300 Page Street, San Francisco CA 94102, 415-863-3136, or from Green Gulch Farm, 1601 Shoreline Highway, Sausalito CA 94965, 415-383-3134.

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center usually offers two three-month practice periods: September to December and January to April, when the center is closed to visitors. During the Guest Season in the summer months, visitors may come as guests or as students. For more information on the opportunities available, please contact the office in San Francisco.

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