

EUGENE ZENDO

AUGUST 2001

BUDDHA EYE DHARMA ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3



August weekend farm retreat

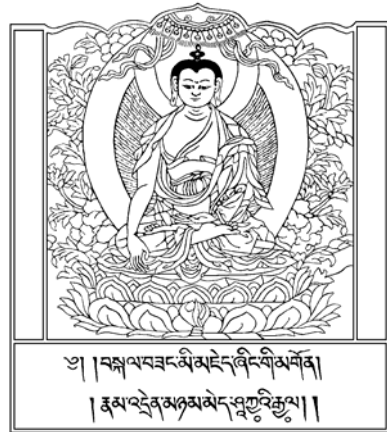
We will have a short retreat over the weekend of August 18th and 19th at Debra's farm, Horton Road Organics. Debra has graciously offered to let us rearrange her living room for the weekend and use it for a Zendo.

The retreat schedule has not been set as of the printing of this newsletter, but it will be posted at the Zendo the Tuesday before the event. The schedule will follow a typical pattern, but will include a number of periods for outside walking meditation as well as a chance to work helping grow the best veggies in Oregon!

This also will be the first time we have a sleepover retreat in Eugene. We are asking people to bring a sleeping bag, and you may sleep in the Zendo at the seat where you do Zazen or you may bring a tent and sleep outside. There will be a couple of separate sleeping places inside for people with special needs.

There is space for twenty people. Please sign up at the Zendo or call Ejo. Please indicate if you need special sleeping arrangements or have special dietary requirements.

You may make a donation at the end of the retreat to help pay for expenses and support the zendo.



CHIN... CHIN... CHIN

The inkin is my favorite. At first, I had struggled to reproduce the quintessential ringdown crescendo-to-fade that calls us to full prostrations. I think I produced more disappointing dull thuds at first, but then blessedly, Kyogen sensei showed me the trick. Striking the bell firmly and rapidly, you let go and rest the striker against the reverberating bell, which in turn rings the striker. The sound is simple, effortless, beautiful – a tiny soft ting ting ting you may hear (if the fan isn't running). The bell rings us.

As a good teacher, the inkin allows us to experience in our bodies the three pure precepts. The building crescendo presents the 10,000 things – all our crazy life circumstances – from dull to dramatic. *Ceasing from evil*, we observe all phenomena with feet firmly planted in acceptance – listening. We say “OK, I am really upset with so and so...” or “Gee, I'd rather be swimming.” Still, it isn't time to bow yet until we take it all in. In precisely the exact moment, only when nothing is left, in silence, do we drop the self. *Doing good*, regardless of our state of mind. If we listen carefully, we will know when practice asks this of us in our daily life, which we may or may not be happy about. By the inkin, *we do good for others*. When I first learned to gassho, it was easy to overdo it – like, when in doubt ... At the moment I feel a better way is to let it come from silence and not obligation, the exact millisecond when it is called for. To bow from *our* actual standing place, not someone else's. Most of the time, I am too late, hesitant, yet I do hope to hear the inkin outside the zendo. To see our changing conditions as the beautiful bell that they truly are - return to standing, and make us wholly ready for the next moment. Ringdown. Silence. Gassho.

Zendo protocol

As our Zendo takes on a more formal character, it is appropriate that we start to clarify the forms that we use at the Eugene Zendo. I have taken some time to reflect on the Japanese forms for the Meditation Hall (Zendo), Dharma Hall (Hatto), and Buddha Hall (Butsuden). Traditionally these three different parts of the temple existed to facilitate different activities, so that people would move from place to place depending on the activity.

As is the case with many small temples in Japan, we don't have the luxury of multiple spaces, so we have combined all the activities into one hall we call the "Zendo". I've taken pieces from the form for each hall as well as a little from Dharma Rain Zen Center (DRZC) and Zen Community of Oregon (ZCO) to come up with a form for us. Here is a summary of the forms we will use:

- ✿ Upon entering the Zendo, turn towards the altar and do a standing bow with your hands in gassho (palms together)
- ✿ Pick up the appropriate sutra books and walk to your seat in shashu (hands held at lower chest with the right hand wrapped around the left fist). Make sure that you do not walk between the haiseki (bowing mat in the center of the zendo) and the altar, or that you do not step on or between the cushions. If you walk in front of the Buddha, turn towards the altar and make a standing bow in gassho. Fill the inner seats first starting from the far side of the altar.
- ✿ Bow to your seat, turn clockwise, bow to the Zendo, and then sit down. Face inward to wait for service.
- ✿ When instructed, stand for the beginning of service and wait in shashu. After the celebrant enters (the officiator of the ceremony, usually a priest; *doshi* in Japanese), there will be a small bell. At that bell do a standing bow to the center to greet the celebrant and each other. When the ring down bell for prostrations begins, situate yourself for prostrations in a way that you won't block others. A double bell signals the last prostration. It is also fine to do a standing bow in gassho if you are unable to prostrate.
- ✿ When the small bell rings twice in quick succession, take your seat and prepare for sutra recitation. Listen carefully to the precentor's (the person who rings bells, and announces and leads the chants) announcement of the sutra so that you will know what will be chanted.
- ✿ During chanting, bring all your attention to the chant. Follow the lead of the precentor for pace and tone.
- ✿ Don't gassho during the dedication of merit, but do gassho during the "All Buddhas..." (Ji Ho San...) incantation. Small bells during dedications of merit signal an extended seated prostration. Prostrate towards the center from the seated position at the first bell, and return to a seated position at the second.
- ✿ At the end of service, there will be another ring down for prostrations. After the last prostration, stay turned toward the altar and do a standing bow at the sound of the small bell to honor the Buddha. Turn towards the center and do a standing bow at the sound of the second small bell to honor the Sangha.
- ✿ Wait for instructions in shashu.
- ✿ For Zazen, face outward and sit. Make sure to spend a few moments settling into Zazen; rock back and forth to help settle your body on the cushion. Three bells signal the beginning of Zazen. Two bells signal kinhin (walking zazen). One bell signals the end of Zazen. Consult with a priest if you have questions about Zazen.
- ✿ After the two bells that signal kinhin, stand and face inward. At the first sound of the wooden clappers, bow in gassho. At the second sound of the clappers, spread out evenly along the kinhin route, maintaining gassho. At the third sound of the clappers, lower gassho to shashu and begin kinhin. At the end of kinhin, the clappers will sound again. Bow in shashu. Move at a regular pace to your seat and face inward in gassho. When the clappers sound again, bow and return to zazen.
- ✿ At the end of the event, turn clockwise and then straighten your cushion. Bow to your seat and then turn around clockwise and bow to the Zendo. After all ordained have left, gather your things, including the sutra book, and move to the exit, keeping in mind the rules about the haiseki and altar.
- ✿ Remember to replace your sutra book.
- ✿ Remember to not bow to the altar as you exit.

This list seems like a lot to remember. Don't worry about making a mistake, but simply read over this list a couple of times while visualizing what you already do at the Zendo. Refer back to this list if you can't remember how something is supposed to go. Watch other people at the Zendo who you think may know the form, but be careful not to follow the celebrant or the precentor, because they do different things.

It's a good idea to check in with a priest about zazen form (physical and otherwise). Please do not hesitate to make an appointment to talk with Ejo or sign up for sanzen.

Self...

Life can be likened to a time when a person is sailing in a boat. On this boat, I am operating the sail, I have taken the rudder, I am pushing the pole; at the same time, the boat is carrying me, and there is no I beyond the boat. Through my sailing of the boat, this boat is being caused to be a boat-let us consider, and learn in practice, just this moment of the present. At this very moment, there is nothing other than the world of the boat: the sky, the water, the shore, have all become the moment of the boat, which is utterly different from moments not on the boat. So life is what I am making it, and I am what life is making me. While I am sailing in the boat, my body and mind and circumstances and self are all essential parts of the boat, and the whole earth and the whole of space are all essential parts of the boat. What has been described like this is that life is the self, and the self is life.

Zen Master Dogen; Shobogenzo, Zenki; Tr. Nishijima & Cross

Who am I?

The past couple of weeks we have been discussing “self” during our Tuesday night meeting. The power of language and ideas presents a hold on us when we try to find security a particular. In this case, “self” is something we *think* we understand very well. We use the word “I” in every other sentence and we seem preoccupied with the story of our lives. But when it gets down to the heart of the matter, we must ask: “What is self?” “What is no-self?” “What is life?” “What is death?”, and our concepts of what and who we are start to crack. We can feel deep insecurity and confusion.

When I was in grade school, I used to play a game. I would ask myself, “If I didn’t exist then what would I be ... if I didn’t exist then what would I be... if I didn’t exist then what would I be?” After two or three times of really getting inside this question, a great energy would enter through my feet, and climb its way up to the top of my skull. I would freeze and something would shift. I played that game a lot because I liked the way it felt. I didn’t know anything about Buddhism or Zen, but this question is an important one for us to ask when we start to take Zazen seriously. This question brings us to the edge of our comfortable assumptions about self. Just like when we stand on the edge of a tall cliff, the edge of our idea of self can release a lot of energy. Sometimes that energy is experienced as insecurity or fear. Sometimes it is simply excitement. Regardless of how we experience the released energy of looking beyond our idea of self, looking beyond is what will draw us into sincere study of the way.

Zen Master Dogen writes in the Shobogenzo:

To study the Buddha way is to study the self.

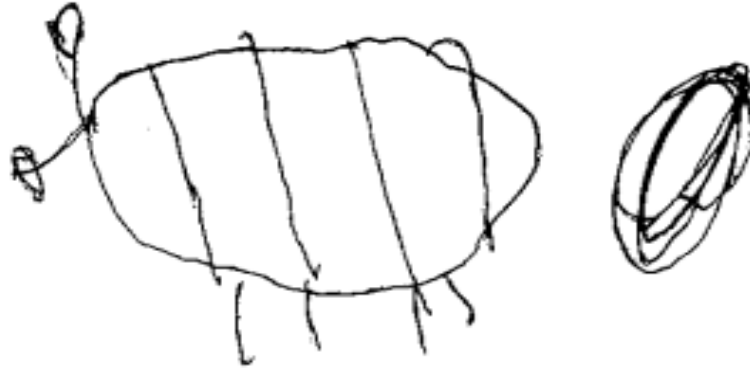
To study the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things.

Dogen leads us to the Dharma Gate of Joyful Ease that passes through our idea of self. He starts by saying that studying the self is studying the Buddha way, but he is not referring to introspection as we may think of it. Zen does not ask the question “what is this self” and then go about crafting an answer from what we mine from our experience or consciousness. Studying the self is not an exercise in trying to identify and define an unchanging unit of the universe that we can know as ourselves. When we forget ourselves and do one thing as sincerely as possible, we recognize that the universe lives through us. Then finally, we step through the gate of not two and meet myriad things.

Another translation of the Dogen passage quoted above reads: “To forget ourselves is to be *experienced* by the myriad dharmas.” When I am being quiet and listening, it becomes difficult to identify whether sounds are being heard by me or I am being sounded by the sounds. It becomes difficult to say whether I am breathing or I am being breathed. It becomes difficult to say whether I am sitting or I am being sat. “People eat meals, meals eat people” (Dogen SBGZ). This is not an upside down world from our normal experience. It is an upside down world from the way we normally choose to experience the world. In each moment, holding on to our thoughts, we hold on to the dream world of the sleeping. When we start to loosen our grasp and turn from the drama of our lives, we wake from our slumber, but self does not go anywhere. It is right there along with all of the ten thousand things. And it happens to be who we are.

Ejo



For a long time, Zazen has meant for my kids: “Daddy dresses funny and goes somewhere else.” But now that the Zendo is also the place where we live, Zazen is having an effect on the kids. They have very quickly developed an intuitive relationship with the Zendo itself and are starting to explore Zazen. They love to play in the Zendo (I try not to chase them out), but they also respond to the formality of the space when there is a sitting or a service. I am very pleased to have a chance to share in this with them.

I recently had a chance to find out what they have learned; the other day while riding in the car, Kaede told Azusa, “I know what Zazen is!” Azusa probed a little, “Well what is it?”

Kaede said matter of factly, “It’s when you sit quietly and listen to everything, and then you turn into a potato bug and do something weird with your hands.” She doubled over and raised her palms above her head in prostration!

Announcements

- There will be a weekend retreat at Horton Road Organics over the weekend of August 18th and 19th.
- There has been a date set for the first annual Zendo garage sale. We will be holding the sale on the weekend of September 8th and 9th. Start saving your stuff. We are still in need of a place to store items as well as to have the sale. Please let Tony know if you can help out with finding a location. Tel. 349-9072
- We will rotate Zendo practice positions in mid-September. Ejo will explain the various positions so that you can decide what to volunteer for, but it is also nice to simply volunteer for any position. Taking on some responsibility for running the Zendo is a nice way to show appreciation and commitment.
- Sunday August 26th Ejo will be leading a Buddhist ceremony as part of the Health and Well Being conference at the Eugene Hilton. There will be a full schedule of ceremonies from various traditions running all day as part of the conference. Please let Ejo know if you can help out with the ceremony and/or setup, and keep your eyes peeled for the full schedule of events in the Eugene Weekly.
- The Special Use Permit application for the property is coming along nicely. Look for a display of our proposal in the Zendo library. We are thinking of setting up a trip out to the property.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS PLEASE

Thank you Debra for the article!

Take a few minutes to write, draw, or manifest something to share with the Sangha. The newsletter this month got a little long (long-winded?) with me writing about this and that. Next month there may be nothing!

Calendar for August 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	2 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	3 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	4 Zazenkai at Eugene Aikikai from 8:30 AM
5	6 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	7 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service 7:30-9:30 PM Zazen/Dharma	8 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	9 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	10 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	11 Zazenkai at Eugene Aikikai from 8:30 AM
12	13 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	14 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service 6:15 PM Zendo Meeting Deadline for Newsletter 7:30-9:30 PM Zazen/Dharma	15 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	16 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	17 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service Farm Retreat early arrivals and set up	18 Zazenkai at Eugene Aikikai from 8:30 AM Farm Retreat all day
19 Farm Retreat to 12:00 Then....who knows? Swimming?	20 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	21 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service 7:30-9:30 PM Zazen/Dharma	22 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	23 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	24 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	25 Zazenkai at Eugene Aikikai from 8:30 AM
26 Health and Well Being Conference all day at the Eugene Hilton. Eugene Zendo service at 12:30.	27 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	28 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service 7:30-9:30 PM Zazen/Dharma	29 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	30 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	31 6-7:15 AM Zazen/service	

Summary of Weekly Schedule

Monday – Friday: 6 – 7:30 AM Zazen, Service, Tea
 Tuesday: 7:30-9:30 PM Service, Zazen, Dharma Study