

sangha

Newsletter of Santa Cruz Zen Center ❖ Warm Jewel Temple - Winter 2020

REFLECTIONS ON TEN YEARS AT WARM JEWEL TEMPLE

by Kokyo Henkel

This country bumpkin has eaten Santa Cruz's rice and has excreted Santa Cruz's excrement for ten good years, and if I told you about all that went down it would burn off both your ears. Though the decade seemed to pass by like a flash of lightning, this is the longest I have lived in any one place since I left my family home at age 19. As someone who has vowed to "leave home" to enter Buddha's Way, I may be already overdue in moving along, continuing to follow the clouds and water flowing across sky and earth. As I prepare to leave Santa Cruz in April, to move to Kathmandu with Shoho, I can't help but consider some of what has happened since I arrived in fall 2009 from the mountain monastery. There have been so many joys and struggles, so many realizations and delusions, too many to recall them all. Was anything actually accomplished over this decade? Mainly what comes to mind is approximately 50 multi-day sesshin retreats, 1000 one-to-one dokusan meetings, 3000 chanting services, and 10,000 periods of zazen. Though I have nothing to show for all that time spent, I certainly have no regrets either.

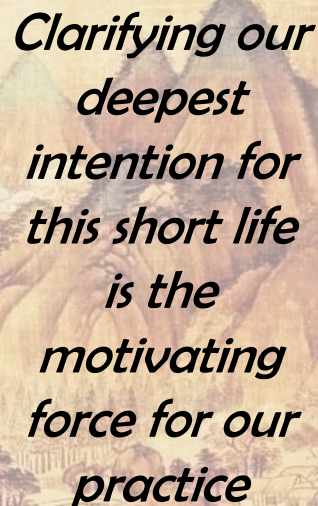
One of my greatest joys during this time in Santa Cruz has been to fulfill a long-standing wish to try to convey the full range of Dharma teachings of our tradition, from India, China, and Japan. Thoroughly studying, commenting on, and discussing the essential root texts with the sangha has deepened my own understanding and appreciation of the buddhas and ancestors beyond measure. Beginning with the Buddha's very first teaching, "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma Sutta," as the first class series I offered here, and ending with the Buddha's last teaching, the "Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra," this fall as my last class series, frames all the teachings in between. These included the study of other sutras (such as the Heart Sutra, Brahmajala Sutra, and Lankavatara Sutra), Indian Mahayana treatises (by Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Vasubandhu), and Chinese Zen texts (by Sengcan, Huineng, Shitou, and Dongshan). Going through 25 chapters of Dogen's Shobogenzo, and 35 chapters of Keizan's Denkoroku (virtually line-by-line, while looking at the original Japanese as well as multiple translations) in many Genzo-e and Denko-e Sesshins has been the highlight of my Dharma studies and discussions over this decade. I feel like I know these founding Japanese Zen ancestors, and their liberating view of reality, much more intimately than when I arrived – and I trust that others in the sangha do as well. All these spoken commentaries on the classic texts of our tradition have been recorded and recently compiled onto one easy-access page with links to all talks arranged by topic. Everyone is welcome to enjoy this as a Dharma study resource and a way to stay in touch with me after I leave town (see kokyohenkel.weebly.com).

Various study groups, special ceremonies, and other activities at SCZC over the years are too many to mention – the weekly break-

fast study group, which has been continuously held for about 8 years now, remains one of the weekly highlights for me, with both social time and Dharma discussion. This group will continue to meet after I leave. I have had the great blessing to be able to give the bodhisattva precepts to 10 sincere practitioners (with 2 more in early 2020), as well as to ordain Rev. Mushin Neti as a priest, to lead 11 practice periods, and to help guide 7 senior practitioners through the role of head student (shuso). I have always enjoyed expressing the intimate and mysterious spirit of Zen through the traditional ceremonies of our lineage, especially the more elaborate and complex ones, and I am happy to have been able to bring various new rituals and liturgy to SCZC, including days of sutra chanting and mantra recitation dedicated to world peace, animal liberation ceremonies, various new chants, and the playing of drums and cymbals. Several interfaith days of silence and discussion with Father Cyprian and others have been delightful.

Over these ten years I have made many new friends, and have also watched some of them die. Apart from practice at SCZC and leading Zen retreats around the country, I have also attended numerous Dharma teachings and retreats led by deeply accomplished teachers too many to name – in various lineages in addition to Zen, especially in the Tibetan Dzogchen and Mahamudra traditions. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to spend countless hours studying and putting into practice the teachings of the buddhas and ancestors, and to have discovered the wondrous benefits of month-long solitary meditation retreats, which has become an annual practice for me over the past four years. Through all this study and meditation, my understanding of Dharma and practice of zazen is quite different than when I first arrived in town. I feel that the ever-deepening and never-ending practice and verification of the Way, in order to clarify the Great Matter more and more fully, and meet others more and more openly, is the most essential "job" of any Zen teacher. I sincerely hope that my practice has been of some benefit to others.

As far as struggles and difficulties, I regret that I have not always been able to meet harmoniously with everyone in the sangha. I know that nobody, even the Buddha, can always meet each person in a way that brings joy and ease to the other. However it is my vow to do so, and though it sometimes feels like one continuous mistake, I will continue to try. When I first arrived as a teacher at SCZC after living for almost 20 years in monastic communities, I felt an obligation to be quite strict with people, especially with long-term practitioners. I even took attendance during zazen in Practice Periods for the first years, and would ask people what happened if they missed a period. Though I still feel that commitment to daily zazen and other events with the sangha is the heart of Zen practice, as that is the way I was trained and through which I have benefitted, I hope I have become a bit more flexible and understanding regarding the complexity and myriad commitments to negotiate in lay practice in the modern world. I am truly impressed with the effort many people make to weave ongoing



*Clarifying our
deepest
intention for
this short life
is the
motivating
force for our
practice*

Zen practice with the sangha into a busy daily life schedule.

I know my teaching style has not resonated with everyone, as this very active conceptual mind has long been drawn to the more subtle and radical teachings of emptiness and nonduality, so difficult to understand and convey accurately through words. I know my verbosity can sometimes overwhelm people, especially after a couple hours of talking, when I feel I am just getting started in the exploration of some topic. I know I am often not so skillful at presenting the precious Dharma to those newer to practice in an easily comprehensible way. These personal shortcomings may be influenced, at least partially, by what may be my deepest fear: that the subtle liberating teachings at the heart of Zen – awakening from the illusion of separate self, the illusion of the true existence of things, and the illusion of the duality of subject and object – may be easily lost in the busyness of daily life, and that more and more Zen temples around the world may end up becoming merely social clubs for like-minded people, merely places to find a bit of quiet in the midst of a stressful life, or places for learning and practicing merely the Buddha's basic teachings without transmitting the unique understanding of Zen. Though these aspects of a Zen temple are not unimportant, especially for newer practitioners to connect with Dharma, if practice is left at only that, I fear the 1500-year tradition of Zen will not last in this world, or only remain in a facsimile version. These fears may help contribute to my chronic disease of excessive long-windedness about difficult topics.

In conclusion, if I were offer a few words of encouragement for sincere Zen practitioners before I depart for distant lands, they might be these: clarifying our deepest intention for this short life is the motivating force for our practice; trusting that liberation from discontent really is possible is the sustaining fuel for continuous practice; realizing the boundlessness of buddha-nature we all share is the source of respect and care for all living beings and the great earth. Many bows of gratitude to the sangha for your generous support, your kindness, and your enthusiasm for Zen practice over these ten years – I vow to practice and verify Buddha's Way more and more deeply for you and for the benefit of all beings.

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

by Anais Schenk

Dear Friends,

Next year holds many changes for the Santa Cruz Zen Center. For the last couple of years, we have had a practice leadership model that involved four of our five transmitted teachers all splitting major responsibilities for programming and carrying the Dharma into our community: Kokyo, Patrick, Gene and Cathy. Next year Kokyo and Cathy will be stepping out of the practice leader council. Kokyo will be moving to Nepal for a few years while Shoho goes to school for a Masters Degree. He has created a personal website where you can access his events (he plans to come back to the U.S. at various points), talks, essays, and other teachings. After many years of holding various organizational roles at SCZC, Cathy has decided to offer her services without focusing on the organizational side of things. She will still be active at SCZC and will continue to offer classes, dokusan, lectures, and sesshins.

Next year, Patrick and Gene will continue in their Practice Leadership roles in a horizontal model, in which authority is shared equally. The teachers and Board of Trustees will watch closely throughout the year to assure that the Sangha's needs are being met with just two teachers in the Practice Leadership role. We will check in with the community in the form of another community meeting and/or other correspondence in the spring or summer. I have confidence that Patrick and Gene will continue to hold the Sangha's needs at the forefront of their practice as we move through these changes.

Also coming next year, the community kitchen and bathroom will be remodeled. While we won't be changing the footprint of the house, we are going to rehab the community space which sees a lot of use with our robust programming. During the remodel, which will begin in the spring, the space will be unavailable.

Last, but not least, the calendar for 2020 is now posted on our website. Specific details and registrations for each event are available closer to the month in which the event is offered. However, the pdf showing all events for the year can be viewed and downloaded on the website at sczc.org/calendar. The Board of Trustees and Practice Leaders really value the input of our community and always welcome your thoughts and insights, particularly as we move through these big changes next year.



Procession to Holy Cross Church for Memorial Service of Paul Sherrill on October 1. Paul, husband of Laurie Bair, was a practicing Catholic at Holy Cross as well as a member of SCZC.



Valeria Miranda received the bodhisattva precepts from Rev. Cathy Toldi on December 21. Her new Dharma name is Kanshin Ekai: Brave Heart, Wisdom Ocean



Shuso (Head Student) Rev. Mushin Neti Parekh after Dharma Inquiry Ceremony at end of Practice Period, December 11

REFLECTIONS ON BEING SHUSO

by Mushin Neti Parekh

The role of Shuso for the Fall Practice Period of 2019 has come and gone in an instant - but the impacts of the teachings received, and the practice of collective zazen will continue to manifest in the bright light of the ever-abiding present. We studied so many marvelous teachings with Rev. Kokyo - Mahaparinirvana Sutra on True Self, meditation instructions on Boundless Awareness, and during Rohatsu Sesshin, the story of Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening. A recent innovation for SCZC has been Shuso Teas. This was a wonderful opportunity to discuss practice and Dharma in the spaciousness of one-on-one discussions. It was warm, intimate, and expansive. The practice period culminated with the Shuso Dharma Inquiry Ceremony. Together we brought the sangha wisdom gained during the practice period into the light for all of us to enjoy. May Santa Cruz Zen Center be blessed to have many Shusos in the years ahead.

SEEKING SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB VOLUNTEERS

We are seeking volunteers to help with our social media (taking and posting photos and events), and/or to serve as a backup for website maintenance and e-newsletters. No skill is required to put things on the internet! Training can be provided. Please contact webmaster@sczc.org if you are interested.



Garden Jewels by Rev. Ellen Richter



CLOUD COMING INTO BIRD

Painting by Rachel Van Dessel

Poem by Corinne Barch

cloud coming into bird
bird
calling out your ancient name
stirring
do you then rise
(ancient name repeating)
approach coming into cloud?

SEEK THIS

by Ziggy Rendler-Bregman

Take the dark path
through coastal forest
into a high meadow
where not a single bird sings
nor breaks the pale
blue dome of this day.

Discover *Mother Madrone*,
lichen-robed, deeply rooted.
Season after season
her limbs bear a downpour
break without witness.

A single cloud drifts
while slender grasses bow.

My box of watercolors
attracts the bees. Patch of
Golden Yellow, Periwinkle Blue,
not even this shining palette
convinces them to stay.

Here, paint brushes whisper
to a slow moving creek.

I let this green-blade morning
wash over me, pool
into the root and hallow
of my dream-filled bones.

Santa Cruz Zen Center
113/115 School Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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115 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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DAILY SCHEDULE



Monday-Friday:

5:45am Zazen (all periods 40 min.)
6:25am Morning Service (chanting)
12:00pm Zazen
5:45pm Zazen
6:25pm Evening Service

Wednesday Evening:

6:35pm Lecture/discussion
7:30pm Informal tea

Saturday Morning:

8:30am Zazen
9:10am Morning Service

Sunday Evening:

5:45pm Zazen
6:25pm Evening Service

Library open during tea after
Wed. Lecture

See sczc.org for other weekly
and monthly events including
"Ordinary Recovery" and
Dharma discussion groups



SCZC is on
Facebook

2020 Sesshin and Zazenkai (Retreats and One-Day Sitzings):

January 11 (half day) Zazenkai (Patrick Teverbaugh)
February 14-16 (3 day) Parinirvana Sesshin (Kokyo Henkel)
March 14 (half day) Zazenkai (Eugene Bush)
April 16-19 (4 day) Buddha's Birthday Sesshin (Patrick Teverbaugh)
May 9? (1 day) *at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center*
June 13 (1 day) (Eugene Bush)
July 11 (half day) Eco-Sitting for the Earth (Neti Parekh)
August 21-23 (3 day) Mountains and Waters Sesshin (Cathy Toldi)
October 16-18 (3 day) Sesshin (Eugene Bush)
November 14 (1 day) Zazenkai (Eugene Bush)
Dec 3-9 (7 day) Buddha's Awakening Day (Rohatsu) Sesshin (Patrick Teverbaugh)

2020 Practice Period:

Fall Practice Period: October 14 - December 16 (9 weeks) (led by Eugene Bush)

2020 Class Series and Workshops:

February 2, 9 (2 meetings): Being Together in Deepest Truth (Kokyo Henkel)
March 22-April 5 (3 classes): Class (Patrick Teverbaugh)
Sep 12-13 (2 day) Tenzo Training Workshop (Cathy Toldi and Mary Knudtson)
Oct 18 - Nov 29 (5 classes): Class (Eugene Bush)

2020 Weekly and Monthly Study and Practice Groups:

Monday Breakfast Study Group, 7-8:30am (Kokyo Henkel or Patrick Teverbaugh)
Friday Morning Cooking for the Homeless, 9:15-12 (Patrick Teverbaugh)
Friday Midday Koan Study Group, 1-2pm (Neti Parekh)
Friday Evening Ordinary Recovery, 7-8pm (Patrick Teverbaugh)
First Tuesdays: Awakening Together, 6:45-8pm (Cathy Toldi and Val Miranda)
Third Thursdays: Foundations of Practice, 6:35-8pm (Eugene Bush and others)