



Water Wheel

Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Spiritual Friendship

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



Shakyamuni Buddha instructed his disciple Ananda that spiritual friendship is the *whole* of the holy life, the essential component in accomplishing the Way. The Buddha said, “This is the entire holy life, Ananda, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship. When a bhikkhu has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, it is

to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.”

Social studies show that loneliness is on the rise. According to a recent Cigna study, of those surveyed “only 53% have meaningful in-person social interactions, such as having an extended conversation with a friend or spending quality time with family, on a daily basis.” Most of us seek out friendships based on shared interests and compatibility. You may ask yourself: “What do we have in common?” “Do I really want to spend time with this person?” “What need is this relationship serving?” The path of conventional friendship is often based on fulfilling your personal needs.

Spiritual friendship is not based on needs or personal preferences. The Zen Center is an intentional community for those seeking a deeper understanding of their life. The most commonly given reasons for coming to the Zen Center are to practice, to awaken, or to find a teacher and sangha to practice with. On the redwood slab hanging inside the Zendo entrance, our founding abbot Maezumi Roshi carved these precautions: “Those who wish to realize and actualize the Buddha’s Way are welcome. Otherwise you better keep out.” Occasionally a person comes here seeking a romantic relationship. However, the intentionality of the Zen Center and the environment itself do not support this motivation. Everyone comes here with an overlay of expectations and habits that cause kerfuffles as they play out, but which can be weathered depending on your degree of self-introspection, receptivity, and capacity for feedback.



Roshi Egyoku with her spiritual friends Roshi Eve Myonen Marko (over twenty years) and Roshi Bill Yoshin Jordan (forty years).

As members of a Sangha, we practice with people we probably would not have chosen for friends or even met. I often say that the Sangha is a collection of independent oddballs who would not likely have met if it weren’t for the urge to practice. With good fortune on your side, you will sit alongside many of the same people for decades. For many of those years, you will not necessarily know much about the personal lives of fellow practitioners, although we know more today due to the practice of council. You will, however, share the profound silence of zazen, the deep questioning into the nature of life through koan and council, and the sweat and grit that it takes to sustain a

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SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP *(Continued from page 1)*

spiritual path over a lifetime. Sharing and encouraging one another's spiritual aspirations year after year throughout life's ups and downs can create profound spiritual friendships.

In early Buddhism, the Pali word *kalyana-mitta* expressed the concept of spiritual friendship—a good or virtuous friend with whom the Dharma is practiced. There are two kinds of spiritual friendships: the face-to-face or vertical student-teacher relationship, and the side-by-side or horizontal sangha relationship. Let's briefly explore these.

In the Pali Canon, there is a story about the young monk Meghiya who, on his morning alms rounds, sees a mango grove that he feels is the perfect spot for meditation. The Buddha gives Meghiya permission to go off to the mango grove to penetrate his own mind. But once settled in this perfect spot, Meghiya finds that his mind is besieged by unskillful thoughts. He returns to the Buddha and says: "Just now, while I was staying in the mango grove, I was for the most part assailed by three kinds of unskillful thoughts: sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill will, and thoughts of doing harm. The thought occurred to me: 'How amazing! How awesome! Even though it was through faith that I went forth from home to the homeless life, still I am overpowered by these three kinds of unskillful thoughts.'"

How amazing! How awesome!

It's easy to relate to Meghiya, isn't it? Haven't you, too, eagerly come to practice at the Zen Center only to find that your mind is scattered and unruly? You find that you are jealous, fearful, desperately seeking approval, or full of judgements about the people here. How amazing! How awesome! The Buddha responds to Meghiya by saying: "In one whose release of awareness is still immature, five qualities bring it to maturity. Which five?" The Buddha goes on to emphasize that the most important quality that brings you to maturity is having admirable people as friends, companions, and colleagues. Only when you have such spiritual friends can you practice effectively the other four qualities, which are: being virtuous and restrained in behavior, being able to hear at will speech that is conducive to awareness, being able to keep persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful qualities, and being able to discern the arising and passing away of suffering.

The Buddha exemplifies face-to-face spiritual friendship with Meghiya, the relationship of a teacher and student. Bikkhu Bodhi, in describing spiritual friendship, writes that by its very nature, the relationship of a teacher and student is unequal. This means that the student

respectfully recognizes that the teacher has been practicing on the path for many years and has certain experiences and wisdom that are helpful in guiding the student. It means that the teacher, being respectful and truthful in his or her guidance, recognizes that the student is sincere and eager to practice. It takes a long time to know how to be a good teacher and how to provide skillful guidance for the student. It also takes a long time to know how to be a good student and how to maintain the proper attitude towards the teacher.

Side-by-side spiritual friendship is based on equality. This spiritual friendship is exemplified by sangha members practicing side-by-side with each other as equals in the Dharma. This means being aware and respectful of each other's journey, being skillfully truthful with each other, and helping each other in a kind and generous manner. It takes time to learn how to be a skillful spiritual friend.

One of my favorite examples of side-by-side spiritual friendship is that of Seppo and Ganto, who appear in many koans and Zen stories together. Although Ganto was about five years younger in age than Seppo, he awakened years before Seppo and was quite clear in his realization. One marvelous koan about them is from the *Mumonkan*, Case 13, while they were both studying with Master Tokusan. In the koan, Tokusan, now an old man, comes to the dining room carrying his eating bowls. Seppo, the brash tenzo, says, "Old Master, the bell has not rung and the drum has not yet been struck. Where are you going with your bowls?" Tokusan returns immediately to his room. Seppo told this incident to Ganto, who remarked, "Great Master though he is, Tokusan has not yet grasped the last word of Zen." Hearing of this, Tokusan summoned Ganto and asked, "Do you not approve of me?" Ganto whispers his reply to him. Tokusan was satisfied and silent. The next day, Tokusan appeared on the rostrum. Sure enough, his talk was different from his usual ones. Ganto came in front of the monastery, laughed heartily, clapping his hands, and said: "What a great joy it is! The old Master has now grasped the last word of Zen. From now on, nobody in the world can ever make light of him."

In this situation, Ganto seizes an opportunity to set up a scenario to awaken his Dharma brother Seppo. "What is the last word of Zen?" becomes Seppo's obsession. Ganto went to great lengths to support and uplift Seppo. Is this not true spiritual friendship? How amazing! How awesome!

Let's all learn how to be true spiritual friends with one another by having our focus be a deep respect for one another's life journeys and transformation over years of practice.

Roshi Egyoku is ZCLA's Abbot & Head Teacher.

Kyōzan's "What's Your Name?"

by Katherine Senshin Griffith

Introduction:

Commanding the center of the heavens, overturning the axis of the earth, capturing the tiger, distinguishing the dragon from the snake: displaying such abilities, one can for the first time be called active and enlightened. And then words can meet words, spirit meet spirit. Tell me, who has ever been like that? See the following.

Blue Cliff Case #68:

Kyōzan asked Sanshō, "What is your name?"

Sanshō said, "Ejaku!"

Kyōzan said, "Ejaku is my name!"

Sanshō said, "My name is Enen!"

Kyōzan roared with laughter.

I presented this koan upon being named a Dharma-Holder. I thought it was appropriate because Senshin is just a name. And Dharma-Holder is just a title, a new role. I see the Sangha as the Dharma-Holder holders (particularly Rōshi). My life only exists, especially in this role only exists in connection to all of you. So, Dharma-Holder holders, please don't let me be a Dharma-Spiller, a samadhi leaker.



Sanshō was Rinzai's most outstanding student, full of great capacity and vigor and his name was known everywhere. He would visit different Zen masters to sharpen his understanding. This koan is about his visit with Kyōzan and opens up the question of who we really are.

When the elder Kyōzan asked Sanshō his name, he knew what it was because Sanshō was famous. Kyōzan's "What is your name?" was a test, asking "Who are you really?"

When Sanshō said, "Ejaku!" essentially, he was saying, "I am you. I am one with you. I am one with everything. No self, no other. We are both absolutely it."

As the Beatles put it: *"I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together."*

Or as Walt Whitman sang in *Song of Myself*:
*I celebrate myself and sing myself
 And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.*

That's what Sanshō meant when he said, "Ejaku!"

But Kyōzan said, "Ejaku is my name!"

Kyōzan was answering I am here and you are there and we are different. We are not the same. This is the phenomenal, relative way of looking at things. Also, very real.

It reminds me of when I asked my father what he was going to do in retirement. He snapped at me and said, "I am not like you. I'm not going to fill up my schedule to the very end." I thought I was being neutral when I asked this but his reaction suggested I wasn't. There was a subtle energy he tuned into. We had a lot in common but also very different lifestyles, and because we knew each other so well, he also picked up on this. A beautiful lesson for me of how subtle projections can be.

Recognizing their differences, smooth as silk, Sanshō said, "My name is Enen!" which was Sanshō's other name.

Both guys were freely flowing between both ways of looking at and experiencing this one world. No problem either way you look at it. They were like two arrows meeting in mid-air. The identicalness of the relative and absolute. The delicious vibrant matching of two great alive beings that get it. Seeing this, Kyōzan roared with laughter in acknowledgement, a cosmic High Five.

We can remember these two aspects of our identity and this laughter as we face the many divisions in our country and protests like Black Lives Matter and the Me Too movement. What if when Sanshō said, "Ejaku!" Kyōzan had said, "Me too!" Maybe that would have been the first Me Too Movement.

Most of us sense that we are part of something much bigger than our smaller selves. Neil de Grasse Tyson says, "We don't just live in the Universe, the Universe lives in us." Can we realize how endlessly expansive this is? Can we see that others are too?

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WHAT'S YOUR NAME? *(Continued from page 3)*

When asked what his name was, Sanshō was alert and alive to the question, answering from a deep understanding of the nature of the universe. He could freely see oneness and difference, as needed.

The Diamond Sutra tells us: “‘Living beings’ are not really such; they are just called by that name.” Can we not get caught in words and content and see things freshly? As an actor, I experience how identities and roles are temporarily put on and discarded, yet fully felt. As a writer, I also have the opportunity to see things from different points of view.

Using words, we say all beings have Buddha nature. Do we really believe that? Can we really see that? No matter who is across from us?

How can we let go of our subtle insidious pre-conceived notions of: people very different than us, or we don't know very well, or think we know too well, or even ourselves? Can we let go of all those adjectives we place on people (including ourselves) like clumsy, forgetful, irritating, stupid?

*At any moment in our daily lives,
we can ask: “What is your name?”*

Can we just see things as data, remembering our common Buddha nature aspect? Do we really believe we are capable of waking up?

When we sit in the zendo together, the One Mind is felt, despite any thoughts in each of our minds. In sesshin, we have assigned roles and seats with our names on the chart. It would make my job easier if I could just write “Buddha” on each seat but that would be chaotic. So, it's practical to view life from the relative aspect and divvy out names and titles.

Looking at it another way, we can think, “How dare you tell me who I am? How dare you reduce the essence of my being to a family name or just one aspect of my identity.” We know we are ever growing and evolving. Let's remember that everyone else is too.

In a Dharma Chat, we had a lively discussion about our relationship to our Dharma names, family names, and nicknames. One father shared how his daughters sometimes challenge him by calling him by his dharma name and asking what would “he” do? Katherine can ask “What would Senshin do? Will Dharma-Holder Senshin behave any better?” A new group of members got new Dharma names upon receiving the precepts. This is a significant rite of passage and everyone grows into their name differently.

“They have no idea how expansive their lives will become with their new name,” shared a previous recipient.

The drag queen RuPaul says: “You have to be able to hear the stage direction from the universe about who you are.” I will add to that: the role you play will always be changing, be ready for changes in the script, for cues to be dropped, and for it to turn out differently than your preconceived notion. For ultimately, life is an ensemble show and that's what our Shared Stewardship trains us to experience.

St. Francis of Assisi kept asking throughout his life, “Who am I? Who are you, Lord?” We too can ask the Universe, “Who am I? What are you?” But the Universe is also asking back, “Who are you?” If you answer “I am the Universe,” the Universe may reply “Me too!”

When we recently bore witness to our war veterans at the Los Angeles National Cemetery, some of us wanted to physically touch the names on the gravestones, others wanted to say their names out loud. We wondered about their stories and who they were, as we also sensed our mutual connection to the big everything.

Each of us can feel a calling to realize our true self beyond any name. As poet Tatsuji Miyoshi writes:

*All of you, my ancestors
Beginningless as today's wind –
Please call my name.*

The capping verse to this koan marvels at Kyōzan and Sanshō:

*Both grasping, both releasing – what fellows!
Riding the tiger – marvelous skill!
The laughter ends, traceless they go.
Infinite pathos, to think of them!*

This vibrant exchange lives with us today. At any moment in our daily lives, we can ask: “What is your name?” We can ask it of ourselves, others, and the Universe.

The key is to be completely open to the answer. Empty of any preconceived notions, our hearts whispering “Reveal yourself to me! I am open. Hello, True Nature of Reality. How are you expressing yourself today?”

Zen Master Hotetsu put it like this:

*I am the pine trees
For all that
If I bump into one
I say excuse me.*

Dharma-Holder Senshin is on the Teacher's Circle and is also a professional actor and writer.

Rites of Passage

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao

On Friday evening, April 6th, Dharma Holders Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen and Jeanne Dokai Dickenson received Dharma Transmission (Denbo) from Roshi Egyoku in two separate ceremonies. The ceremonies were a culmination of many long years of Zen training for both. The Buddha's Birthday Sesshin provided the container for Faith-Mind and Dokai's intensive transmission-week practice schedule, which included a lot of bowing and chanting to the White Plum lineage and the Women Ancestors.

The witnesses to the ceremonies were Roshi Bill Yoshin Jordan and Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley. Senior Students Mark Shogen Bloodgood and Katherine Senshin Griffith assisted. Dokai's husband James Bodhi-Song Graham and her son Eric Dickenson witnessed her ceremony.

By receiving Dharma Transmission, the new Senseis received the gold-colored okesas and stepped into a new sphere of practice as independent Zen teachers. Sensei Faith-Mind received the transmission name of Kyobai (Humble Plum). She continues her work as ZCLA's Vice Abbot and now steps into a formal teaching role. Sensei Dokai has started the Wild River Zen Group in Nevada City, CA, where she and Bodhi-Song reside. She is also involved in working on the homeless situation there.

On Sunday, April 15th, Katherine Senshin Griffith received Dharma Holder empowerment from Roshi Egyoku. This marks the final stages of her formal training with Roshi. She conducted a dynamic presentation of *Kyozan's What's Your Name* (Blue Cliff Record, 68) and ably met the challenges of the Sangha. Dharma Holder Senshin continues to offer interviews and talks at ZCLA.

We asked the new Senseis and Dharma Holder for their responses to these rites of passages:

Sensei Faith-Mind Kyobai: "The sense of 'What just happened?' is very present. I reflect on the 'True Person of No Rank'— putting aside titles, naming, ranks, and yet: Sensei Faith-Mind Kyobai. What an entry point! Deep bows of appreciation to Roshi Egyoku and the Sangha for this entrustment."

Sensei Dokai: "Waking up; bones walking; for how long? No returning. Listening. Again, listening. Doing; not becoming."

Dharma Holder Senshin: "Yikes! If it were up to me or about me, we'd be in big trouble. But it's about the Dharma. And serving the Sangha makes me a better person than I really am."



Top photo: from left, Sensei Dokai Solitary-Plum, Roshi Egyoku, Sensei Faith-Mind Kyobai, and Dharma-Holder Senshin. Bottom photo: the Sangha gathers in celebration of the new Senseis and Dharma Holder.



Peacemakers from the Land of a Thousand Lakes

by Burt Wetanson

Maija Ijas received her Dharma name Myosho (Luminous Voice) from Roshi Egyoku in May 2018 while visiting ZCLA with her husband Mikko Rakushin and their son Oskar. The couple are Zen Peacemakers from Finland.

MAIJA: Like 99 percent of the Finnish people, I grew up a Lutheran. As a young person, as I got deeply into music and composing, my spiritual feelings arose.

WW: A kind of meditative state?

MAIJA: Yes, because when you compose or write music and have good flow, you concentrate on the moment. Just as when you sit or chant. But in my young adulthood, I never heard of such a practice.

WW: When did you encounter Buddhism?

MAIJA: After my son Oskar was born. My husband Mikko started going to the Helsinki Zen Center. It sounded interesting. Then in 2015, a friend of mine who worked in theater said, “Why don’t you come with me to the morning sitting?” I went and heard the bell and that was it. It really hit me. I began to look for a teacher. It all happened very fast, but the path goes back maybe 30 years to when I started to compose. In 2017, we were touring the U.S. with a movie we made together. In Seattle, we learned about ZCLA as a Peacemaker headquarters in Los Angeles. We sent an e-mail to Roshi Egyoku who answered immediately “Welcome.”

WW: What were your impressions of the Zen Center?

MAIJA: I just fell in love with it. Instantly. And all the people. When Roshi took us to breakfast, I asked her to be my teacher because I just felt the connection. And she said yes. That’s why I’m here, my whole family is here. Everything happened quite quickly.

WW: Can you speak about your relationship to the Peacemaker Community.

MAIJA: We feel that we’re just ordinary people who decided to take Bernie Glassman’s teachings, the Three Tenets, and started to live socially engaged Buddhism by ourselves. You don’t feel you necessarily need a teacher to organize for you. You go and speak with people. We organize Street Retreats and Days of Reflection in Helsinki. We have Council Circles. We organized a blood donation



From left: Maija Myosho, Oskar, and Mikko Rakushin Ijas

group. I’ve done three concerts at a hospice. We have a small library in our home. There’s lots of things we can do without a head teacher.

MIKKO: It’s like Bernie says, Take the ingredients you have. I think it’s possible for us because we are artists. We don’t have 9 to 5 schedules. We’ve been freelancing as long as we’ve been adults.

MAIJA: We still have a lot to do to create the way for Finnish people to do Peacemaker work. It has to come from Finnish roots. That’s a really important and challenging job for us, but it’s easier now because we have such good support and contacts. Hopefully, being still young, we have years to work it out in Finland. There’s a good ground if we don’t consider ourselves so much a religious group but more like social activism.

I think there’s a lot we can take from Egyoku Roshi. I think the finest thing here is that you’re not closing up but being open to the world and other groups, because you know fundamentally, there are no others.

WW: Are your problems in Finland similar to ours in the U.S.?

MAIJA: Yes, we have many homeless. Some by their own choice who don’t want to belong to society. Some are students who drop off the safety net and are really poor. The problems are similar everywhere. People can become quite isolated. The darkness and cold weather that afflict anyone living on the street in Finland in the winter is really hard.

Memorial Day Bearing Witness Retreat

by John Kyogen Rosania

On Memorial day, 20 sangha members participated in a Bearing Witness retreat at the Los Angeles National Cemetery. The cemetery is a large, rolling 114 acres where veterans, dating as far back as the Native American Indian wars and the Mexican-American War, are buried.

For many of us, some long-time LA residents, this was the first time we had stepped on these grounds, a reminder of how easily the reality of war and death can become hidden from view.

We gathered together in a circle, settled ourselves, and then shared why each of us had come. Our personal reasons were as different as we were. As we went around the circle, a veteran joined us, waited for a pause, and sang with gusto a military song remembering fallen soldiers. Immediately, he tipped his hat and left. A spontaneous offering, a lively beginning to the retreat.

Geru Meiho Bryan said: "I was moved that complete strangers dipped in and out of the Bearing Witness container throughout the day, leaving me with the feeling that all beings need a safe space to share their experience and compounding for me the importance of this retreat and its healing effect. I found myself wanting to thank every veteran there. I realize now that being there was enough."

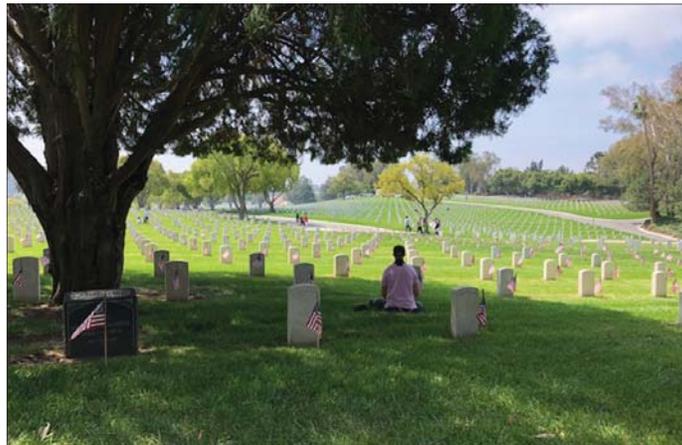
We spent the next hour in silent contemplation, walking the grounds individually, an ocean of white gravestones spreading out in all directions. Thousands of soldiers, spouses, nurses, and two dogs interred. Each grave, a life once as full as our own. We witnessed the range of human responses to death, families eating a meal next to a grave, children playing, a person crying, another standing quietly, a person speaking to the grave, another lying on it.

Glenn Gikai Davis recounts: "Walking up and down long rows of grave markers, and reading the brief inscriptions on the stones, I felt a connection to those who have died. Most having died young, it became very apparent how short and fleeting this life is and the vast amount of suffering and fear that countless people have experienced during battle, not only those on our side buried in the cemetery, but also those on the other side."



We wandered past the Veteran's Day Ceremony with hundreds of people taking a moment of silence and then listening to the words and songs of veterans.

Tina Jitsujo Gautier remembers: "I heard a speaker ask, 'What are the rights, freedoms, and boundaries that we hold so dear that are worth fighting for?' This makes me wonder about the nature of compassionate action and that compassionate action is not always nice, that fighting for rights and maintaining healthy boundaries may take many forms in order to protect and honor true liberation for us all."



We made our way to a hill overlooking the cemetery for a chant circle and council. We chanted as passersby stopped, spending a moment with us, and then moving on.

In time, our separate voices settled into one strong, clear tone extending to the grounds below. On this day, some intimacy with war and its consequences was touched by each of us, in our own way, a reminder of the fragility of this body and this life and our ongoing vow to care for it.

Kyogen is a practicing member at ZCLA.

ZCLA Prepares for Earthquakes

by Burt Wetanson



Roshi Bill Yoshin Jordan

It was 4:30 in the morning of January 17, 1994 when a 6.7 magnitude earthquake struck Los Angeles, leaving large areas of the city looking like a war zone. Broken gas lines erupted into immense fires. Buildings crumbled; freeways collapsed. The fault that caused the destruction – a previously unknown fault nine miles beneath the town of Northridge in the San Fernando Valley – stretched as far as Santa Monica.

Though it would normally be considered “moderate” on the earthquake scale, Northridge did tremendous damage. The injured numbered more than 8,700. 57 people had been killed, including 33 from collapsed buildings. With property damage from \$13 to \$50 billion, the Northridge Quake was called “one of the most costly disasters in U.S. history.”

Northridge posed the question: How prepared would the Zen Center be if a similar “moderate” earthquake struck Normandie Mountain in the heart of Koreatown? This year, 24 years later, ZCLA has undertaken two earthquake projects to strengthen key buildings against a repeat (or stronger) quake, which experts predict could happen at any time. (Though they hope the ’94 quake released some of the subterranean tensions that caused Northridge.)

To help us understand these projects, we interviewed Roshi Bill Yoshin Jordan, a student of Maezumi Roshi and a long-time member and supporter of ZCLA. An experienced general contractor, Roshi Yoshin has overseen several major construction projects for the Zen Center over the years and is the contractor for the current earthquake project.

“The basic goal of the earthquake remodeling being carried out on the Sangha House, the Zendo, and the Pine House (Roshi Egyoku’s residence) is to prevent those buildings from falling off their foundations due to their vulnerable construction,” Roshi Yoshin explained. “Those buildings were in serious danger of collapsing during a strong seismic event like Northridge.”

“In those buildings,” he went on, “the house doesn’t rest directly on its foundation, which aren’t the strongest anyway, being over 100 years old and consisting of bricks held together by mortar. That foundation rests on an intermediate wall situated between the foundation and the

buildings. What is called a ‘knee wall.’ We’ve reinforced that knee wall as well as bolted the buildings down with special hardware designed to hold the house to the foundation. It’s when a house comes loose from its foundations, that’s when you really get movement and damage.

“The Seismic Retrofit of the Pundarika and Nilot-pala is different animal,” Roshi Yoshin explained. “That work is mandated by the City of Los Angeles and is work being done to particularly vulnerable structures called ‘soft-story’ buildings. Some of worst damage in the city of Northridge, and elsewhere around the Los Angeles Basin, was to soft-story buildings and garages.”

Take a stroll around our own ZCLA neighborhood and you’ll see that soft-story apartment houses and other buildings are all around us. Usually, they’re two- or three-story structures in which the street floor consists of garages. The garage space makes the building “soft-story.” Soft-story buildings came into vogue after World War Two to handle LA’s huge population growth and to accommodate the car culture of the region.

“We don’t want that kind of damage happening here.”

When an earthquake strikes, the garage level is in grave danger of collapsing. In Northridge, the building above the garages often came crashing down crushing the cars below, and people died. Remember, it was 4:30 in the morning. Los Angeles was at home asleep in their beds.

“We have two soft-story buildings on ZCLA property – Pundarika and Nilot-pala,” said Roshi Yoshin. “On the ground floor of those buildings, we have 50-foot-long openings with no lateral strength. The garages. We have to create lateral strength and yet leave the openings for cars. Our Retrofit project began on June 11th and will be ongoing in one building or the other for the next three months or so. The cost to the Zen Center will be about \$150,000.

“The Northridge quake has forced us to get serious about earthquakes,” said Roshi Yoshin. “It’s our responsibility to understand how the fault system below us might affect Normandie Mountain, and how we can prepare so that the Zen Center will be here sharing the Dharma for many years to come.”

Open Palm School of Zen

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao

Roshi Egyoku is working with a core group to develop the Open Palm School of Zen at ZCLA. The core group members are Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown, Darla Myoho Fjeld, Patti Muso Giggans, and Lorraine Gessho Kumpf. They have begun a deep dive into examining the distinctive flavor or style of Zen practice that has evolved at ZCLA. Particularly during the past twenty years, ZCLA's practice has been described as being both rigorous and creative.

The Open Palm School of Zen will create a platform that clarifies and organizes ZCLA's unique practice culture and training paths. Its foundation is the deep Zen Buddhist roots which grew from the Buddha's awakening and planted here by Maezumi Roshi, Roshi Bernie, and the White Plum lineage. As Zen settles in the West, shifts naturally occur as we begin to own awakened living in the midst of the circumstances of our lives today. The process of formation itself calls for a thorough review of our work to date and how to present it in a clear and cohesive manner as a platform for future practitioners.

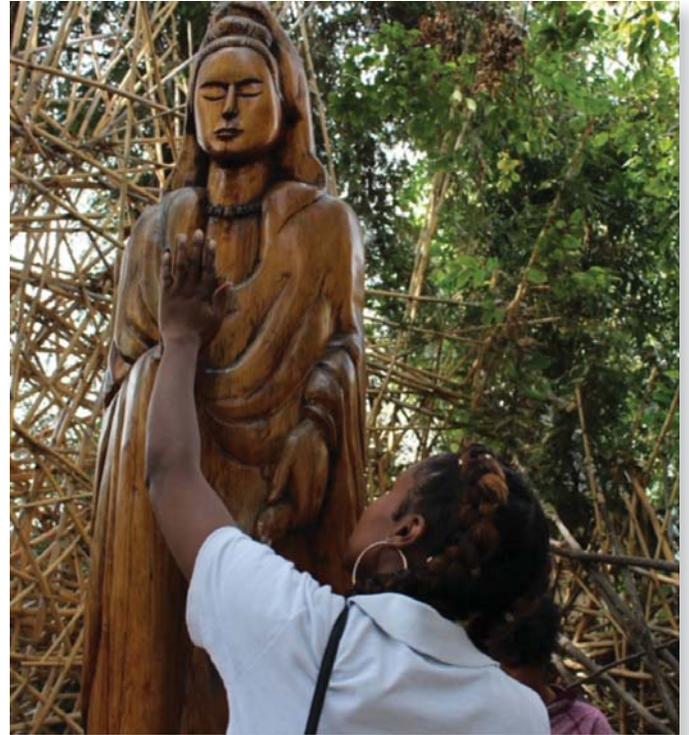
At a recent Priest retreat, we came up with the name *Open Palm School of Zen*. *Open* is the quality of intrinsic mind and also captures the spaciousness of ZCLA and the city of Los Angeles. *Palm* is for the mudras or palm positions we assume in practice, such as the cosmic mudra of *zazen* and the no-fear mudra of the garden Kanzeon. It is also a nod to the elegant palm trees along Normandie Avenue. The word *school* is used in Zen to capture the style or flavor of a lineage, such as the practice style and culture of Zen that is evolving at ZCLA. *School* is commonly used in this sense in the Zen tradition and does not refer to the kinds of schools that we all attended as children through adulthood.

The Training Paths. Currently, we are exploring five training paths. Each of them will be made explicit in terms of entry, substance, study, student-teacher relationships, and so forth. The first three paths are already established, the last two will be developed. The Training Paths are:

- The Teaching Path;
- The Preceptor Path;
- The Priest Path;
- The Mitra Path (Spiritual Friendship); and
- The Sangha Steward Path.

The Practices. Each of these practices will be developed to include the substance, practices, and study texts. The Practices are:

- *Zazen* (Practice and Study of Zen Sitting);
- Koans (Classic and Contemporary Koans, Inquiry);



A visitor spontaneously places her palm over the open palm of the garden Kanzeon, whose hand is in the mudra of No-Fear.

- Buddhist and Zen Texts (Original Buddhist and Zen Texts);
- Precepts/Ethics (Ethical Living in Individual and Organizational Spheres);
- Ceremony (Public and Personal Ritual, Liturgy);
- Shared Stewardship (Collective Awakening);
- Connection (Shadow and Spiritual Friendship);
- Embodying (Body Engagement such as Cooking, Cleaning, Gardening, and so forth); and
- Peacemaking (Social Justice, Social Disruption, Serving Others).

There will be plenty of opportunity for input and discussion by the Sangha as this exploration unfolds. We will continue to listen deeply to the river that is ZCLA and to actively discern what is wanting to arise and needed. This exploration will challenge us to confront deeply embedded paradigms that have historically framed Buddhist practice. For example, we will re-examine the tension between priest and lay, resident and commuter, and monastic and householder.

Roshi Egyoku and the Core Group look forward to this exploration over the coming years.

My Journey with Julie

by Lilly Brodie-Berge

Lilly Brodie-Berge was born during the 2000 Robatsu sesshin to Karen Brodie and Sensei Raul Ensho Berge, who passed away last year. She has pretty much grown up at the Zen Center, absorbing its rich environment. Many of us have witnessed Lilly's journey from a tot bowing and running around the service hall at dawn service, through the funerals for her guppy Kiko and her cat Dharma Bandit, and the many school plays she acted in, including her solo turn as "Pigeon Lady," who emerges from a trunk to play with her dolls in a park. Lilly's love of animals brought fish, parakeets, chinchillas, rabbits, rats, cats, and dogs to the Zen Center. Her family became guide dog puppy raisers, and three of their dogs are now working guide dogs. Lilly's passions include reading, writing, theater, art, and social justice. In August, Lilly will be leaving the Zen Center for Bard College at Simon's Rock early college program. She gave us permission to publish the personal essay about her current guide dog puppy Julie that she submitted as part of her college application. We wish Lilly and Karen a successful transition to this new stage in their lives. We will miss them!

A week after my father died I tried to replace him with a dog. I was sure that a dog would provide the very specific kind of love and companionship that I wanted - I was picturing a passive puppy that cuddled with me as I fell asleep. What I got, however, was a wild and headstrong dog that wasn't interested in humans and was actively opposed to cuddling.

The day after my father's memorial service, my mother and I drove to Guide Dogs of the Desert to pick up my new dog, Julie. My family has raised guide dogs for years, but this was the first one I was going to train on my own. At first, Julie was nearly impossible to train. This was my fault; instead of training her to become the dog I wanted, I simply did the things that I'd dreamed we'd do together. She proceeded to butcher my dreams. I took her to the beach, and she ran away from me. I took her to The Broad, and she got us banned by relieving herself under a Warhol. I enforced a strict schedule with clear rules that made sense to me, and she disregarded all of my commands. Her disobedience made me furious, and for a few days, we entered an angry stalemate. However, Julie's incompetence was not just my problem - her behavior was going to impact the life of a blind person someday.

I tried various methods of dog training, but nothing worked until I tried compassion. I started to become empathetic to Julie, just as so many people had been empathetic with me after my father died. I tried to see the world as she saw it. I began to listen to her cues and to respect her desires. I modified my behavior to fit her learning style. Once I was actively trying to see the world through her eyes, it all made sense to me. I saw that she needed more time with commands, would do better with a different harness, and needed more exercise. It was tortuous in the beginning, but I painstakingly refined my responses to her actions until we were working together seamlessly.



Julie and Lilly at Simon's Rock.

As I started to have empathy for Julie, something wonderful and unprecedented happened: I started to feel better. While therapy had sent me into a downward spiral and talking to loved ones had made me cry, this determined dog had broken through some invisible barrier of grief. Training Julie required me to think complexly at a time when I was resisting the complexity of my new circumstances. She made me problem-solve and think on my feet when I wanted to stop thinking altogether, and she made me

focus on her needs instead of my own at a time when my mind was desperate to close off the outside world entirely. In the months following my father's death, Julie prevented me from devolving into a depression fueled by self-pity. By not treating me as a breakable thing, she forced me to snap out of the mentality that I was a victim of an unjust situation and into the understanding that I was strong and capable of handling whatever happened to me.

My dog is easy to underestimate; she has a goofy personality and she's funny-looking, but she was what I needed during that time. She did for me what no professional could: she demanded a certain level of engagement from me. As a result, I became the person I needed to be to train her efficiently, and in that process I learned to value strength and intelligence instead of self-pity; compassion over judgement; active observation of the universe over hiding from it. Most importantly, taking responsibility for Julie helped me to take charge of my own life, education, and health and create my own path, instead of letting someone else design it for me.



Your Gifts are Received with a Heartfelt “Thank You!”

The Zen Center is maintained by the hands and eyes of each one of you.

To **Roshi Egyoku** and **Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley** for leading Buddha’s Birthday Sesshin;

To all those who helped with Buddha’s Birthday Celebration and to **Tom Yudo Burger** for reading the story of Buddha’s birth;

To **Glen Gikai Davis** for leading the April Day of Reflection;

A special recognition to **Roshi Egyoku** for all her efforts this spring to deepen the roots of the Dharma by the transmission of two new Senseis, recognizing a new Dharma-Holder, giving the Precepts to six Jukai recipients, and starting the groundwork for the Open Palm School of Zen.

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To **Tim Taikan Zamora** for coordinating the Tenzo Retreat;

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To **Reeb Kaizen Venners** for filming the Mother’s Day Benefit Concert and to **Frank Genku Martinez** for Sound Engineering;

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To **Marley Jakuan Dowling** for leading the May Dharma Chat on “What’s in a Name?”;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for leading the Growing a Plum Blossom Sesshin;

To all those who attended the ZCLA Bearing Witness at the Los Angeles National Cemetery;

To **Conrad Butsugen Romo** for leading the May Bearing Witness Council;



Enduring-Vow working hard on planting that tree!



Reroofing the Sangha House.



The retrofit to the Pundarika garages continues.

To **Shogen** for leading the June Zazenkaï;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for leading the Priest Retreat;

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To **Genku** for leading the June Day of Reflection;

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To our Parking Bodhisattvas **Chris Hackman, Dylan Neal, and Yudo** (Parking Steward);

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Lincroft Zen Sangha (New Jersey)
led by Roshi Merle Kodo Boyd

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)
coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The Ocean Moon Sangha (Santa Monica, CA)
coordinated by Michael Seigan Novak

The San Luis Obispo Sangha (CA)
coordinated by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Santa Barbara Zen Center (CA)
led by Sensei Gary Koan Janka

Wild River Zen Circle (Nevada City, CA)
led by Sensei Jeanne Dokai Dickenson

The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)
led by Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley

Outreach Groups

CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group
California Men's Colony (CMC)
San Luis Obispo, CA
led by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Contact info@zcla.org for information.

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Our mission is to provide the training and resources for realizing the interconnection of all life, to maintain the precepts and to embody the Three Tenets of Not-knowing, Bearing Witness and taking action that serves these goals. We provide the teaching, training and transmission of Zen Buddhism.

Our vision is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which the earth and all beings live in harmony, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized and compassion flows unhindered.

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Welcome New Member
Brian Huff

Welcome New Residents
Glenn Gikai Davis
John Heart-Mirror Trotter

Shared Stewardship Entering
Development Circle

Rosa Ando Martinez
Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert
John Kyogen Rosania
Reeb Kaizen Venners

Shared Stewardship Leave-Taking

Resident Members

Laos Joko Chuman
Carol Flowing Mountain Schmitt

Development Circle Member

Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown

Altar Flower Group Member

Geri Meiho Bryan

Dharma Transition

April 6, 2018

Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Kyobai Thoresen
Sensei Jeanne Dokai Solitary-Plum Dickenson

Dharma-Holder

April 15, 2018

Katherine Senshin Griffith

Jukai

June 10, 2018

David Taian Goodsmith
Marley Jakuan Dowling
Nancy Teiju Marquez
Yoko Gyokuren Bajra
Jenny Jusen Bright



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