

Cedar Rapids Zen Center Newsletter

Volume 7, Number 1

Winter, 2006

"Dankas Are Paying for Us"

One winter evening shortly after I was ordained at Zuioji, I left the light on in my room as I scuttled off in a hurry to retrieve something from the Buddha Hall. Halfway to my destination, I heard an elder dharma brother: "Zuikosan! The light's on in your room. It's a waste of our donations." I returned and turned out the light, and I didn't forget again. I was reminded of this incident recently by an American friend's story. She participates in practice periods at the temple of a mutual friend in Japan. Whenever our Japanese friend saw something going to waste, he would say quietly, "Dankas are paying for us." "Danka" are member families of a Japanese temple - our friend Anglicized it by adding a final "s." Danka offerings of time, money and goods provide for the temple, and our friend wanted to honor their donations by not wasting them.

In America, also, Buddhist temples exist because of generous gifts of time, money and goods. In reality, these contributions are made to the dharma, not to the teacher or the temple. They come from people who could have used them for many other things, sometimes from people who can ill afford them. Donors give because of their faith in us and our practice. They trust us to use their gifts carefully and wisely in maintaining the dharma and making it available to all beings.

This is not just true for temple life. We often think we have money or possessions or love because we did something to deserve them, or because we created them, but this is not the case. Everything we have is ultimately given to us by earth, sun, water, and other beings. This goes for our bodies and spirits, too. I can say I am writing this article, but where did I get the ideas I put in it and the strength and health to write with? The whole universe is our "dankas" who are paying for us.

So, my friend, where does that leave us? Knowing that nothing is ours, we receive everything as gift. We regard each thing that comes into our lives, even air and water, with gratitude and use it wholeheartedly. That goes also for the things we didn't want in the first place – the really strange scarf from the elderly aunt, the mean remark from the spouse. Even our deaths. Each is a gift from the universe. How can I use this, not waste it?

Each person gives what they can, and each donation is a donation of that person's spirit. Our refusal of others' gifts kills their spirits. We can see this killing when we pay attention. It's in the crestfallen feeling we have when we offer a friend some of our ice cream and hear, "No, thanks. I'm on a diet." Or maybe we notice the disappointment of someone whose offering we refuse. If the gift is something we truly cannot use, we can accept it, then decide how best to use it.

We can also put aside our ideas – our usual comparing and judging. In January at Shogoji, we went out nearly every day to do takuhatsu – begging. We walked in the cold in straw sandals, holding our bowls out for donations. Takuhatsu money provided about ninety percent of our daily needs, so this was important activity. When we received something, we simply received it, whether it was five yen or a thousand yen or a bag of oranges. Each thing got an equal welcome. Upon our return to the temple, we immediately counted the donations. When we wrote the day's total in the ledger, we didn't compare it with other days and cheer or complain. If our donations were small, we just ate more daikon and taro. "Dankas" gave what they could and we existed on it.

This is not limited to friends and relatives and the things we usually consider as gifts. Air, food, our environment, good health, a job, the people around us – all are gifts. We often think of these things as just there, but they are all donations to support our lives. It's good to remember that "dankas are paying for us" as we breathe and remember not to waste that air. This spirit of gratitude and care is the source of contentment and joy.

Receiving with gratitude and using whatever we receive with care is part of "dana paramita," the perfection of giving, one of the Buddha's most important teachings. In reality there is no giver, receiver and gift. They are all one. In reality, we are all being given life and sustenance in each moment in universal dana paramita. Let us honor the spirits of the "dankas" that contribute to our lives and use their contributions in ways that honor their spirits and their gifts.

- Zuiko Redding

Now I've Gone and Done It

Well, I'm officially Buddhist now, got my new name "Anko," "tranquil light" or "peaceful light." "Anko" is also a very nice sweet red bean paste used in Japanese pastries. If ever I get too full of myself I can just think about the jingle, "With a name like Smuckers you've got to be good.." I got my paper that tells who my spiritual ancestors are – the document of my pedigree.

I sewed my blue rakusu and learned, in the process, how mindful I really am not as each misplacement, each mis-stitch, each wandering moment, was all too real for all to see. Once I finished it, I had to give it up until the ceremony, when I got it back. I said "Yes I will" together with the rest of the sangha when asked if I would abide by the Ten Grave Precepts. I've also found that the bit of dun-lop stomach I've got is actually pretty useful as the rakusu can be tucked in to prevent it from flopping about when doing full bows.

My wife doesn't really get it, but figures it's cheaper than wine, women and song so if this is a mid-life crisis it could be a lot worse. At least I think that's what she thinks, but then I know for a fact that she doesn't know what I'm thinking so I really shouldn't do her thinking for her.

So, having acknowledged Buddha as a wise and true teacher, the Dharma as his teaching, and the Sangha as those fellow travelers on the path who, like good travelers and not tourists, value the journey as much as the destination, I guess I'm officially not a skeptical Buddhist anymore, if I ever was.

When I was 20 and 30, everything I learned in school was bullshit, old, tired, history, without value in that modern world. Now that I'm seeing 60 roll over on the odometer of life I realize all that is old is new again. I suppose you can call me a fundamentalist, although that has a really bad flavor in these days of the Ten Commandments being dropped on stem cell research labs and the ultimate guided weapons lurking in subways, buses, and under every bed. But for me the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the Ten Grave Precepts form an interesting place to stand and see the world, my life and my place in the world.

Our whole life is practice, every step we take is part of our journey on the path of life; standing in line at the check-out counter no less so than sitting in zazen. Harder in the check-out line though, harder still when you get cut off in traffic. I hope, no, I believe, that now I'll walk more steps forward and fewer in confused circles as I've got some good and true markers along this path of life. Our reality

SESSHIN

March 17 - 19

from Friday at 7:00 p.m.
to Sunday at 5:30 p.m.

Join us for all or part of sesshin. Please sign up by March 10 to assure a place. Out-of-town people are welcome to stay at Zen Center.

To register or get details, contact us:

P.O. Box 863, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406
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is born with us and will die with us but it's up to each of us to make the most out of what we are given, where we are, what choices we get to make. As the ice cream vendor said when he took the monk's money and didn't return any, "Change comes from within."

Ceremonies don't change people, they just mark an event in time. Being purified with a pine branch is symbolic, nothing more. Repenting of past and harmful karma doesn't help, doesn't keep you free from doing bad things to yourself and others in the future. But karma does give a new motivation for mindfulness, awareness of where you are, measured against the mileposts that have been given, and received. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; in accepting the Buddha's precepts, I hear Jesus' words with new meaning. A new job for monkey mind; watch me and tell me where I am and how I'm doing. But now I have a rakusu to hang around my neck, a reminder of a ceremony in which vows were taken, intentions clearly stated, sincere repentance made, the Way made clear. Only a ceremony, nothing more. Only a ceremony, nothing less.

Or so it seems to me, of course.

- Brian Reynolds

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Credits	Artwork	Abe Coleman
	Editing	Ellen Wetzel
	Writing	Brian Reynolds Zuiko Redding

Great Sky Sesshin - 2006

Those of you who missed Great Sky sesshin last year may be happy to know that we'll be doing it again this year. This year's dates are August 12 – 19, and it will again be at Hokyoji, the retreat center in southeastern Minnesota owned by Minnesota Zen Center.

The daily schedule will include zazen, dharma talks, services, oryoki meals and work.

Accommodations are very simple, ranging from bunkbeds to the zendo floor to camping on the grounds in one's own tent.. Showers and outdoor toilets are available.

Participation is limited to 24 people. Fees are \$280 for a bunk bed or \$230 for zendo accommodations or camping.

For registration forms and further information, go to <http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org> or call Milwaukee Zen Center at (414) 963-0526 or Cedar Rapids Zen Center at (319) 247-5986.

News Notes

Annual meeting will be held on Sunday, April 30 at 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. There will be a potluck afterward. This is the meeting at which we discuss Zen Center's goals and plan for the future. We encourage your attendance.

Buddha's Birthday will be celebrated on Sunday, April 9. There will be a special ceremony followed by cake and tea. Children are especially welcome.

Giving with no expectation of reward, the merit of our generosity to the dharma is vast and subtle. Because of your gifts, people can come to sit each week. If you've been a contributor and your name is not included here, please accept our apology along with our gratitude.

Matthew Alles
 Carol Anderson
 Margaret Baldwin
 Deborah Barrett
 Revs. Hogen and Chozen Bays
 Christa Brusen-Gomez
 Robert and Nittaya Burnham
 Alexandra and David Carey
 Martin Carver
 Amy Carr
 Courtney Cook
 Susan Dalton
 Jeff Denburg
 John Denny
 Paula Duvall
 James Eich
 Mary Lou Emery
 Mark Ferrara
 Nancy Footner
 Penny Freeman
 Mark Friedman
 Kristine Shingo Fretheim
 Rev. Dokai Georges
 Cleve Gilbert
 Joseph Givvin
 Linda Graves
 Curt and Cynthia Gunther
 Douglas Gustafson
 Marli Haddy
 Leslie Hankins
 David and Beverly Hannon
 Joseph and Miriam Hannon

Julie Hannon
 Lisa Hannon
 Christopher Heald
 Chimi and Larry Higa
 Jonna and Eric Higgins-Freese
 Carl Hultman and Rev. Susan Nelson
 Ben, Francine & Emmalee
 Hunnicutt
 Michael Jamosky
 Rachael Kane
 Rev. Hōkō Janice Karnegis
 Joel Katcher
 Sandy Kingchan
 Tim Knepper
 Rev. Fudo and Barbara Koppang
 Jack Kroeck
 Helen Kudos
 Kim Lapakko
 William Learn
 Rev. Ryoten Mary Lehmann
 Kristin Lenertz
 Thomas Linehan
 Roger Lips
 William Maakestad & Jean Wolf
 Timothy and Theresa Macejak
 Lisa Marr
 Susan Martinelli-Fernandez
 Rhiannon Mayes
 Mary McCulley
 Robert and Louise McMaster
 Lynn Mennenga
 Joe and Linda Michaud

Jim O'Neal
 Henry Panowitsch
 Donovan and Ikuko Miller
 Yayoi Teramoto Moreland
 Molaan Mosell
 Rev. Tonen O'Connor
 Joey O
 Kyaw Kyaw Oo and Kyi Kyi Aye
 Bob Osterman
 Beth Parker
 Judith Pedersen-Benn & David Benn
 Cathy Penn
 Shirley Pike
 Gregory Plack
 David Ray
 Rev. Eidō Phoebe Reinhart
 Daniel J. Retoff
 Brian Reynolds
 Laura Rigal
 Deborah Rogers
 Kathy Schumacher
 Annie Servin & Michael Crowley
 Joanne Shaver
 Richard and Diana Sloan
 Christopher Spinler
 Thomas Miller & Lynne Steiner
 Jim Summers
 Scott Temple
 Ellen Wetzel
 Rev. Shoken Winecoff
 Jeff Wright and Tracey Roberts
 Charles and Victoria Zelnick

Cedar Rapids Zen Center

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Daily Schedule

Zen Center – 1618 Bever Ave. SE

Morning

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
 6:00 - 6:40 am zazen
 6:40 - 6:50 kinhin
 6:50 - 7:20 zazen
 7:20 - 7:40 sutra chanting

Sunday
 9:00 - 9:40 am zazen
 9:45 - 10:30 dharma talk
 10:30 - 11:15 tea
 11:20 - 12:30 work period

Evening

Tuesday
 6:30 - 6:50 pm zazen
 6:50 - 7:00 kinhin
 7:00 - 7:20 zazen
 7:20 - 7:30 kinhin
 7:30 - 7:50 zazen

Wednesday, Thursday
 6:30 - 7:10 pm zazen
 7:10 - 7:20 kinhin
 7:20 - 8:00 zazen

Calendar

February	15	Zazen instruction
	19	All-day sitting
March	15	Zazen instruction
	17 – 19	Sesshin
April	9	Buddha's birthday
	19	Zazen instruction
	30	Annual meeting
May	17	Zazen instruction
	21	All-day sitting
June	18	All-day sitting
	21	Zazen instruction
July	14 – 16	Sesshin
	19	Zazen instruction
August	16	Zazen instruction
	12 - 19	Great Sky Sesshin