

Cedar Rapids Zen Center Newsletter

Volume 6, Number 3,4

Summer and Fall, 2005

"It's Not About Being Right . . ."

Green leaves are becoming yellow and orange. In summer at Shōgōji I enjoyed the green reflection of the trees on the wooden floor of the passage to the abbot's quarters. I was always disappointed when it disappeared in autumn.

In summer, Westerners came to Shogoji. They were sometimes shocked to see the same power struggles, anger and cutting remarks they'd left at home. Buddhist monasteries, they felt, should be free of the quarrels and tensions of "regular" life. Perhaps all those pictures of beautiful gardens, peaceful sitting halls and monks bowing to one another can be pretty misleading!

Wherever there are people, there is strife. The truth of our lives is that we exist in a web of interdependence in the midst of constant change, but we usually forget this, don't we? We think we are separate, permanent, very important beings. As such, we are entitled to certain things. When the world doesn't treat us as we think we deserve, we grow angry and fight with others.

Over a cup of coffee one afternoon, one of our members told me that, during a rather heated encounter, her husband said simply, "You know, my dear, it's not about being right. It's about being together." Our notion of the "rightness" of our ideas is just a red herring distracting us from the real goals in our lives – peace and harmony with ourselves and with those around us. How often we get lost following after the fragrance of our self-centered ideas! Let's let the fish be and turn back toward reality. It's not about winning or losing. It's about living in the midst of things as they are.

Kosho Uchiyama in his book *Opening the Hand of Thought* notes, "Winning is delusion, loss is enlightenment." Winning is only our idea of winning – what makes us feel powerful, what gives us rewards. Victory is often temporary. The one we have bested, feeling humiliated and angry, will be waiting for us. Loss is enlightenment. It forces us to confront our egoistic desires. It allows us to examine them and see how destructive they are.

Actually, neither winning nor losing is best. If we win, we have to deal with the other person's resentment. If we lose, we have to deal with our own resentment and hurt. In both

cases, we continue in our dualistic ideas. The secret lies in dropping the duality of self and other.

Uchiyama Roshi tells of a temple teacher who hears noises in the garden. He goes out and finds the squashes fighting. He has them all sit zazen for a while, then asks them to feel the tops of their heads. Of course, there's a stem growing there and everyone's stem is attached to the same vine. Seeing this, the squashes cease their fighting.

I suspect they forgot this lesson in a day or two and were at it again – that's how things usually go. We forget that ourselves and others are not two – we are all part of the same world – and we begin fighting. To remember that "It's not about being right," is to wake up to non-duality. Big mind, the mind that sees equally from all sides, opens up. Then we can consider solving the problem rather than winning or losing.

Thinking we should have everything we want and others should behave exactly as we wish them to is simply the dream of the mind that forgets that reality is not the same as our ideas. When we wake up, we see that to have true peace we have to let go of our ideas and work with reality just as it is. Peace happens when everyone gets something and everyone gives up something. Lasting peace is a situation in which neither party feels the settlement was unfair and wants to reopen the fight. If there is lasting peace, we've won whether we've gotten everything we wanted or not.

Acting with wisdom and compassion in the realization of our role in the vastness of this world is what brings peace of mind. No matter what happens, we suffer if we have contributed to it with dishonesty, bullying or manipulation. When, no matter what the outcome, we have done our best to be honest, fair, and respectful, we will have peace.

It's about building habits. Each response makes the next one easier. It's as if each action wears a rut in our path, making it easier simply to follow it as it gets deeper and deeper. Finally, it becomes almost impossible to climb out. The rut has become deep and comfortable – climbing out takes big-time effort and courage. Best to build ruts that we will be satisfied with and that will help our lives. If we see ourselves creating ruts that won't result in a peaceful mind, it's best to change them as soon as possible.

- Zuiko Redding

THE TWO TURTLES

Driving down a rural highway last spring	Driving down a rural highway last summer
I pass a turtle starting to cross the road	I pass a turtle starting to cross the road
Plodding along	Plodding along
I hesitate at 60 miles an hour	I hesitate at 60 miles an hour
Clinging to destinations through inertia	Clinging to destinations through inertia
Half a mile later I let go	Half a mile later I let go
Do a 180	Do a 180
Return	Return
To find the turtle now in mid-road	To find the turtle now in mid-road
And traffic approaching	And a U-Haul bearing down quickly
I pull over, stop, get out	I slow down, watch from my car
Quickly stroll to the center of the highway	The front left tire hits squarely
(not running – clinging to my dignity)!	Drags underneath
In time!	Shattered, splattering
Scoop turtle up, make <i>him</i> do a 180 into the grass	Six or seven pieces
Make him return	A turtle who will be missed
To his family, his life	By his family; the end of his life
The culmination of 10,000 previous turtle lives	10,000 previous turtle lives come to an end
How precious!	The last moment of his life
Alive, able to breed	A disgusting mess
A string of 10,000 future turtles left to live	And a string of 10,000 future turtles who will never be
And their offspring	And their offspring
Infinite turtles saved	An infinite loss of turtles
So glad I turned back in time, let go in time	How I wish I hadn't been so clingy, and turned back sooner
A deep feeling of euphoria	Sadness, and irritation, and regret
I can hardly wait for another chance to save a turtle!	Why didn't it go the way it did the last time?
But I remind myself	But I remind myself
I have been just one circumstance	out of many in the life of this turtle

- Tim Macejak

Cell Mates

*"Hey, you OK, man?"
I nod and smile brightly
Like sunshine on snow*

Realization

*I stumble forward
A moment of clarity
Outweighs years of thought*

High Mist

*Flickering spirits
Part through damp mist curiously
I wonder at them*

- Dave Ray

SESSHIN

December 2 - 4

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 November 25 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
phone: (319) 247-5986
email: crzc@avalon.net

New Year's Sitting

We'll be observing New Year's Eve on Saturday, December 31, with zazen from 7:30 until 10:00 p.m., followed by the traditional Japanese celebration of making and eating buckwheat noodles. You're also invited to bring other treats to share. Come join us anytime during the evening. Family and friends are welcome – people who don't sit can arrive at the end of zazen if they wish. Children are welcome, too.

Membership

A new year will begin soon, and this is a good time to invite you to become a member of Zen Center. Members are people who commit to supporting Zen Center with their practice and their resources. Members also participate in the decisions that are needed to ensure that Zen Center continues as a vital and healthy organization. They pledge monthly contributions of funds or effort and help to build Zen Center through their ideas and their practice.

There are several categories of membership:

- ✓ General members pledge \$30 per month
- ✓ Associate members pledge \$15 per month. This type of membership is for out-of-town people, students and those on fixed incomes.
- ✓ Traditional members contribute time or needed items to the center. A traditional member might do office work, do maintenance chores, or bring tea treats or other useful items. This was the way in which lay sangha members contributed in the Buddha's time.

Members also receive benefits:

- ✓ A 10% discount on books from the bookstore
- ✓ They may borrow library books, tapes, or videos
- ✓ They may vote at April annual membership meeting

We invite you to make the commitment to Zen Center's future and become a member.

Opportunities for Generosity

Zen Center currently needs a weed whacker, a pizza cutter, shelving for the garage and basement and shelves for the library. We could also use a volunteer to make periodic recycling runs to the city landfill.

Credits	Artwork	Tom Rauschke
	Editing	Ellen Wetzel
	Writing	Tim Macejak David Ray Zuiko Redding

News Notes

Christa Brusen-Gomez, David Ray and Brian Reynolds received the precepts on July 10. Congratulations on your effort and dedication in taking this step. It was especially good to have Christa, who now lives in Ashburn, Virginia, participate with us. Thanks to all who helped with the preparations and the ceremony.

Great Sky sesshin in late August at Hokyōji was a fine practice time. Twenty-five participants sat and worked together in peace and good cheer. The teachers' dharma talks supported and encouraged our effort and everyone left feeling that he or she had sunk a little deeper into the practice. Pictures will be going up on our web site soon.

Thanks to all who made Great Sky a success – the teachers, especially Dokai Georgesen, Genmyo Smith and Rosan Yoshida. Also to Kōshin Cherin, Tōjun Cobb, Ian Fretheim, Hōkō Jan Karnegis, Tim Macejak and others without whose preparations things would not have gone so swimmingly. Finally, to Tonen and Zuiko for their efforts in organizing the whole thing.

Zen Center's pesto is now for sale. It comes frozen in an attractive, re-useable canning jar and its sale benefits Zen Center. The cost is \$5 for four ounces and \$8 for eight ounces. Contact Zen Center if you want some.

The Anamosa sangha dedicated a Buddha for their altar on July 10. Zuiko performed the eye-opening ceremony for the brass Thai Buddha, who sits on a wooden altar made by the members in front of a beautiful mural. The altar and the Buddha provide a place of peace in the midst of this confusing world, and they are a sign of the steadfastness of this small sangha.

Tim is now visiting the Anamosa sangha on the fourth Sunday of each month. Zuiko still visits on the first Sunday, often accompanied by Tim.

The Anamosa chapel library could use some Buddhist books and tapes. If you have items you no longer need, please let Tim or Zuiko know or bring them to Zen Center.

New printer Thanks to a kind donor, Zen Center has a new printer which also serves as a scanner and copier. Our old printer has gone to Catherine McAuley Center, where women in transition with few resources can use it to print resumes and letters.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

October	16	All-day sitting
	19	Zazen instruction
November	16	Zazen instruction
	20	All-day sitting
December	2 – 4	Sesshin
	21	Zazen instruction
	31	New Year's Eve sitting
January, 2006	18	Zazen instruction
	22	All-day sitting
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