

Cedar Rapids Zen Center Newsletter

Volume 5, Number 4

Fall, 2004

Changing the Ren

It's October again. The sky is deep blue and there's a chill in the air here in Iowa. At Shogoji, October first is the traditional date for changing the ren, the curtains that hang at the front and back entrances to the inner sitting area in the sodo. The summer ren, installed on May first, are made of bamboo slats and they let the summer breezes through. The winter ones are made of canvas and they resemble the curtain that separates our zendo from the discussion area. Like our curtain, the ren are attached at the top. They are opened by rolling them up and tying them at the top.

So, October first would see three or four of us taking the two bamboo ren down, carrying them on our shoulders to their storage place and exchanging them for the canvas ones. The day was usually clear and a bit chill and the songs of the cicadas and summer birds had given way to the calls of the crows over the harvested rice fields below. It was a wistful time of saying goodbye to summer, of getting out the heaters, preparing the fire pit in the abbot's quarters, and preparing to be cold no matter what we did.

May wasn't much better. As we put the bamboo ren back into place we looked forward to the intense work of International Ango, rainy season mold and summer heat.

Change is like this, isn't it? We're often not sure we want it, no matter what's coming. It's disturbing, unpredictable. Even the most mundane changes bring new conditions, and that's not comfortable for us. We want what is predictable, certain, what we can control.

We often dislike change because we don't take it into account when planning our lives. We try to pretend that things will stay the same, so when they don't we're not prepared for the time and effort it will take to accommodate new circumstances. We feel overwhelmed, confused and anxious. "What happened to the time I'd planned to spend on the work I'd hoped to be doing?" we ask ourselves. We hadn't left time to accommodate crises, or even the predictable changes in our lives, so we try to stretch our time to cover both the crisis and the things we'd already committed ourselves to. Life gets intense and crazy and we are fearful and disappointed. Forgetting that change happens, as we human beings are prone to do, can cause big suffering.

Change, however, is one of the basic circumstances of this existence, and we can do nothing about that. True – we can have some influence on some of the changes in our life. However, we cannot stop such things as old age, children getting sick and the turning of the seasons, no matter how hard we try. We also cannot stop many changes that seem stoppable – friends leaving, sickness coming, disagreements with family members, auto accidents . . .

To remember in each moment that change is a normal and undeniable part of things is to stop suffering and begin to live successfully. When we remember – when we are aware – we can take the possibility of change into account in our plans and we won't be surprised by it. We include some room to deal with things not turning out as we wish and while we work wholeheartedly to realize our goals, we are ready for anything. If something unexpected happens, we can use it fruitfully.

I had a friend, Mark, at Minnesota Zen Center. Diabetes had robbed him of his legs and most of his sight by his early forties. Finding himself in a wheelchair, he became an activist for the rights of handicapped people. Since he often fell asleep in dharma talks and he spent much time at home alone, he helped transcribe Katagiri Roshi's talks. Mark was human and he mourned his losses but he made use of his circumstances.

To remember in each moment that change is inevitable is also to fully live in each moment. When we are aware of the reality of change, we look carefully at life in this moment – the blue sky, the pampas grass plumes, other people. They will not be the same when we next see them. We wholeheartedly participate in the present, knowing that we'll be giving it up in the next. We give our lives more life by doing this and we become more content and joyful.

In Iowa, October is the time to check the furnace filter and get out the winter coats. Let's treasure this activity of wholehearted, everyday life. It's not what we'd rather do, but this vivid, fully alive moment will not come again.

- Zuiko Redding

Without High Heels

*Without high heels
or high hairdos
be as tall as all the height
ordained to you.
Find space to grow in between each rib.
Stretch apart all twenty-four vertebrae.
Uncrowd your heart.
Breathe room around each molecule in your being,
holding them apart with light.
Make room for questions that have no answers,
events that have no purpose
and people who have no relevance.
Then, no matter your DNA potential in inches,
you will be as tall as the distance from the heat
of Earth's center
to the birthing of a new star.*

- Paula Duvall

A Thought While Driving

*It seems to me that
People are impatient and angry because they suffer.
But,
People suffer because they are impatient and angry.
Where's a stop-light when you need one?
Maybe people would just run it anyway.*

- Kristin Lenertz

Precepts Ceremony

We will have a precepts receiving ceremony on Sunday, July 10, 2005, as three members have asked to receive the precepts. This ceremony is a public declaration of one's intention to follow the Buddha's path. Those who participate in the ceremony sew a rakusu (a small form of the Buddha's robe) and study the precepts with the preceptor beforehand. Sewing will begin in March. Precepts study has not yet been scheduled.

If you think you might be interested in receiving the precepts, please consult with Zuiko.

*Viewing the moon
Of the mind in the great sky
Is loving the color
By straying in the darkness*

- Dogen

from *Limitless Life: Dogen's World*. Translated by Rosan Yoshida. St. Louis: Missouri Zen Center, 1999.

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

ROHATSU SESSHIN

December 3 - 5

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

Bookstore – New Developments

After a period of relative dormancy the bookstore is becoming active again.

We're starting a used books section donated books can be sold. This gives older books a good home and helps those who can't afford new books. At present we are seeking books. If have some to donate, let us know.

We also have a good selection of new books. The most exciting recent addition is the revised edition of Kosho Uchiyama Roshi's *Opening the Hand of Thought*. It's a readable, jovial, no-nonsense introduction to zazen and Zen practice - highly recommended for both beginners and long-time sitters. We also have Thich Nhat Hanh's *Creating True Peace* and *No Death, No Fear* as well as titles by Katagiri Roshi, Suzuki Roshi and others.

Finally, we need a manager to order books, take care of the shelves and do the accounts. Managing the bookstore takes two or three hours a month on average and it's pleasant work. If you would like to do this, contact Zuiko.

Membership

A number of new people have begun sitting with us and it's been a long time since we mentioned membership, so maybe now's the time.

Criteria

- ✓ General - \$30 per month
- ✓ Student/Fixed income/Out of town - \$15 per month
- ✓ Practice – attending zazen at least twice a month
- ✓ Traditional – contribution of 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. To take advantage of this option, please speak with Zuiko or one of the Center officers.

Membership benefits

- ✓ 10% discount on books from the bookstore
- ✓ Borrow books, tapes, or videos from library
- ✓ Vote at April annual membership meeting

We invite you to make the commitment and become a Zen Center member

Notices

Work is complete on this summer's renovations. We now have new siding on the second story exterior, three new windows in the zendo and entry and a variety of other smaller improvements.

Thank you to all who participated in this summer's effort – Dave Benn and Judith Pedersen-Benn, Gina Crissinger, Deal Construction, Carleton Goodwin, Tom Hess, Jan Karnegis, Kristin Lenertz, Tim Macejak, Mary McCulley, Janet Powell, Phoebe Reinhart, Brian and Mary Reynolds, Dick and Diana Sloan. If you've contributed but your name is missing, you are included in our gratitude.

Change your calendar – the date for the November all-day sitting has changed to November 21. This is to permit Zuiko to lead the dharma activities at Anamosa prison.

Anamosa sitting group – Zuiko and Tim now lead zazen and dharma study at Anamosa State Penitentiary on the second Sunday of each month. The schedule consists of zazen, a short service and dharma discussion. Around ten men usually attend – about six regulars accompanied by four or five interested visitors. We welcome them to the sangha.

The group needs between five and ten zafus. Missouri Zen Center is providing the shells, but we'll need to buy the kapok and stuff them. The kapok will cost about \$6 per zafu. If you'd like to contribute to either the cost or the stuffing, talk with Zuiko or Tim.

Poems, essays, artwork – We're running low on essays, poems, artwork and other things to go in the newsletter. We encourage you to submit practice reflections or stories, poetry and simple drawings. You can send them either by email or regular mail to the center.

Japanese cooking – Zuiko is considering offering a one-session Japanese cooking class on a Saturday afternoon in February as a fundraiser. Participants would learn two or three simple dishes that could be made with easily-obtainable ingredients. If you are interested, let Zuiko know. If there's interest, we'll do it.

Credits	Artwork	Tom Rauschke Steven Spiro
	Editing	Brian Reynolds
	Writing	Paula Duvall Kristin Lenertz Zuiko Redding Rosan Yoshida

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	(319) 247-5986 email: crzc@avalon.net www.avalon.net/~crzc

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P.O. Box 863
Cedar Rapids IA 52406-0863

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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

October	17	All-day sitting
	20	Zazen instruction
November	21	All-day sitting
	17	Zazen instruction
December	3 - 5	Sesshin (Rohatsu)
	15	Zazen instruction
	31	New Year's sitting
2005		
January	19	Zazen instruction
	23	All-day sitting
February	16	Zazen instruction
	20	All - day sitting
March	16	Zazen instruction
	18 - 20	Sesshin