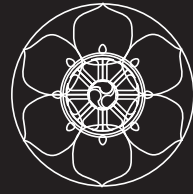
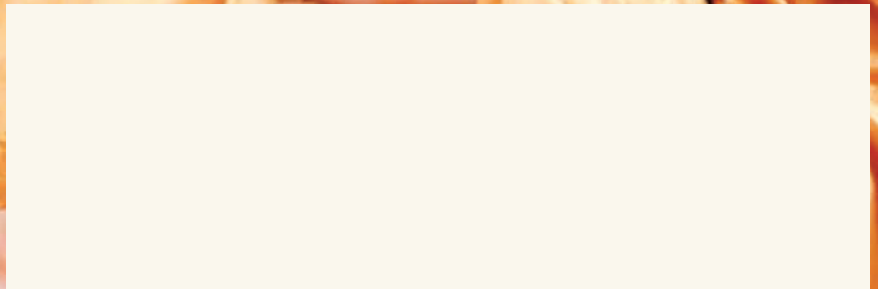


Primary Point



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Gye Ryong San International Zen Center

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive Primary Point, see page 31. The circulation is 2,800 copies.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Editor's Note	4
Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim <i>Zen Master Ji Kwang</i>	4
Pure Love <i>Zen Master Bon Shim</i>	6
Still Helping You <i>Zen Master Dae Bong</i>	7
<i>By Deok Hyeon Sunim:</i>	
The Chants at the Funeral Ceremony.....	8
Tathagata	9
Poem in Tribute to Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim.....	10
<i>By Zen Master Wu Bong:</i>	
If We Stay Awake	11
Tomorrow Is Too Late	12
Master and Dog	13
This Kind of Vow	14
Bodhisattva Bird	18
The Attendant <i>Sasha Rymar / Dorota Drączyk</i>	18
Crazy Zen Master <i>Sasha Rymar</i>	19
Always in Front of You <i>Zen Master Seung Sahn</i>	19
Caring for Us	20
Last Meeting <i>Arne Schaefer JDPSN</i>	22
Gratitude <i>Soo Hyang Lee</i>	22
Mind Cures.....	23
Poetry	25
Kwan Um School of Zen Centers	28, 29, 30
Membership in the Kwan Um School of Zen–America.....	31

[3



Cover: Elisabeth Illgen

Editor's Note



On April 17 of this year, Zen Master Wu Bong suddenly died while leading a retreat in Paris. In the tradition of our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, he spent his life as a teacher traveling and teaching, not settling permanently in any one place, and dedicating his activities to spreading the dharma. As the head teacher for the Kwan Um School of Zen in Europe, he shepherded the growth of the school. His efforts persist in the flowering of our school in Europe and the teaching activities of the Zen masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, who were so close to him and continue his works to guide the practice, made now more poignant by his death. We offer this issue as a tribute, compiled from around the world by the European sangha. It contains excerpts of his teachings and offerings by students and colleagues. In the Korean tradition, Zen masters who have died, as well as those over 60, are referred to by the title *Dae Soen Sa Nim*, which means "Great Zen Master." In recognition of the title conferred on him, we refer to him here as Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim. May his example sharpen our own appreciation of Zen practice as the great work of life and death.

Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim

4]

Zen Master Ji Kwang



Our dear Zen master, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim, was born on June 22, 1950, in Wroclaw, Poland, into a Jewish family who suffered through the German occupation during the Second World War. In 1964 the family decided to leave Europe and they emigrated to the United States.

Jacob Perl, as he then was called, finished high school in 1968. When he was 20 years old, in 1970, he started practicing Zen with the famous Soto Zen teacher Suzuki Roshi at the San Francisco Zen Center. The questions of life and death were very urgent to him. Continuing his

search for a teacher, he went to a Tibetan lama, Tarthang Tulku, for one year to practice Tibetan Buddhism.

While he was a student at Brown University in Providence, he trained in Shim Gum Do and became a master in this martial art. In 1972, during his time at the university, he met Zen Master Seung Sahn and became one of his first students. In the same year he did his first hundred-day solo retreat. He was 22 years old. Also he took five precepts and received his Buddhist name, Poep Mu, which means Empty Dharma or No Dharma.

In 1973 he graduated from Brown University with a bachelor's degree in mathematics. Afterward he did more retreats, and in 1978, together with Zen Master Seung Sahn, he returned for the first time to Europe—to Poland, his motherland—where from that time onward a sangha developed that grew and became the largest sangha in our European school.

In 1978 he did his second solo retreat in America. He suffered poor health during that time because of the restricted diet and very strong practice.

In 1984 he received inka from Zen Master Seung Sahn and, despite still living in the United States, he became the principal supporter for the Polish sangha. From that time onward he traveled frequently to Poland.

In 1988 he married Grazyna, and soon afterward adopted his son Nicholas, who was about 10 years old at the time. The next year his son Matthew was born. In 1992

he was officially named the European head teacher by our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn.

In 1993 he received transmission from Zen Master Seung Sahn, and was given the dharma name Wu Bong, which means Universal Peak. At that time he lived at Providence Zen Center with his family, where he was abbot for many years. Shortly afterward he moved to Paris with his family and established the Paris Zen Center, but still he had business in the United States, so he travelled often between the continents.

Between his inka and transmission he was active teaching in Asia, South Africa and America, but most of his teaching work was in Europe.

In 2000 he gave his first inka, to Mukyong (Roland Wöhrle-Chon). In 2006 he gave his first transmission, to Zen Master Bon Shim (Alexandra Porter). In 2012 he gave his second transmission, to Zen Master Ji Kwang (Roland Wöhrle-Chon). In total



he gave transmission to two students and inka to seven students.

In 2008 he moved to Korea to prepare himself to become a monk. In order to keep a place in Europe he also maintained a residence at the Berlin Zen Center, which from that time onward became his home in Europe. In 2009 he was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Korea.

Until the end of his life he continued to guide and teach the European sangha while also focusing on teaching in Korea. He led several Kyol Ches in Korea at Mu Sang Sa Temple, Hyang Choen Sa Temple, Hwa Gye Sa Temple and Boep Hwa Do Ryang. This last temple is that of his Korean student and friend Deok Hyeon Sunim, and is where he lived since 2011.

Wu Bong Sunim left his body after a cardiac arrest on Wednesday,

April 17, 2013 at 1 p.m. while leading a Yong Maeng Jong Jin at the Paris Zen Center. ♦



Pure Love

Zen Master Bon Shim

Speech given at the funeral ceremony, Paris, April 23, 2013.



6]

It's so hard to accept that our teacher is gone, while not so long ago we were sitting, chanting, eating and laughing together.

But to tell you the truth, I am not really worried about him, because he has already entered nirvana. I am concerned about our sangha, about our staying together, keeping together, helping one another, loving one another. That is exactly what our beloved teacher did for so many years: he took care of us—in the spirit of being very tolerant and very open, not rejecting anybody. And I really hope we will continue this way.

On behalf of the European sangha—the whole sangha—I really would like to thank our teacher so much for all those years, for this straightforward, straight-to-the-point teaching, for his wisdom and compassion.

On one side, this last teaching that he gave us is very, very sad. But on the other side, the fact of being here together in this profound moment is an uplifting experience. In this kind of moment there is no life; there is no death; there is no coming; there is no going; there is just pure love.

Thank you. ♦



Still Helping You

Zen Master Dae Bong

Speech given at the funeral ceremony, Paris, April 23, 2013.

We are all gathered here in great sadness. Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's death was sudden and shocking, even though most of us knew that he had serious health problems for many years, and especially because in the last few years—and recently in particular—he was looking brighter and stronger and better.

Zen Master Wu Bong was a strong person, and his teaching was strong, his action was strong, so his death was strong. He just did it. He has given us all a very great and powerful and important and difficult teaching. Big medicine takes time to digest. Even though we talk about impermanence and we all know that, when we experience it with someone who is so close to us, it becomes real.

Zen Master Wu Bong has no problem. He is fine, and I have no doubt about that. And I'm sure none of you doubt that at all. Maybe we have a problem. If we have a problem, then it just means that we were attached to his body, his voice and his form, and we didn't completely digest his teaching. But if your teacher has power, then even after he dies, he is still helping you.

A great Zen master is like a sun shining. They keep our mind warm, help wake us up. A great Zen master dying is like a supernova: all the material goes out. So all his dharma energy, all his dharma power is coming out to us even more now than when he was alive.

So cry when you are sad, and grieve and feel bad, but I'm sure if you continue practicing as he taught us, you will more and more feel his great dharma energy filling you, even more than you felt when he was alive. This is completely my experience with Zen Master Seung Sahn, and I'm sure it will be yours with our dharma brother, our great teacher and our great friend, Zen Master Wu Bong.

Gary Snyder is a famous American poet and Zen student who was a monk in Japan. He tells a story about working in the monastery garden with one of his brother monks, a Japanese monk. One time his brother monk leaned over and said, "Our teacher passed away five years ago. Remember how during his dharma speeches he used to speak so softly that you could barely hear him? Well, I'm just beginning to hear him now."

So the interactions you have had with Zen Master Wu Bong and the things he said to you, none of that's gone. His energy, which continues to come to us, will be more strongly inside you and more beneficial. I have no doubt about that.

Wu Bong Sunim lived a great deal of his life as a layperson. I think he and his wife were sunims on the inside. I call them undercover sunims. Undercover people are important—we have some sunims who are undercover lay-

people! *[Laughter.]* So if we all do our job correctly moment to moment, being undercover just makes our minds wider.

But Zen Master Wu Bong understood this life is not simply about getting happiness. Our great grandteacher, Man Gong Sunim, was once asked, "Why don't more people practice Zen?" He said, "Everybody wants a good thing, but most people don't understand that when you get a good thing you also get a bad thing. If they understood that, then they would practice Zen." So our life is not about getting good things and avoiding bad things. It is about attaining how to correctly use each thing that appears. Good things come, we use them to go the correct way; bad things come, we use them to go the correct way.

This was Zen Master Wu Bong's life. It is why we met him, and why we all feel sad that he seems to be gone. We have an obligation now to deeply digest his teaching and his efforts for us; it is our own true nature. Then his most recent teaching to us will help us greatly. We are not going to waste the shock that we have experienced. Then he will be very happy.

The first time I met Zen Master Seung Sahn, as soon as he opened his mouth I thought, "This is my teacher." Then I sat a three-day retreat with him and had private interviews with him each day. At the end of the interview on the last day, he looked at me for a moment and asked, "Do you have any more questions?"

I was 26, but I felt 3 years old. I said, "When will I see you again?"

He immediately took his stick and hit me strongly across the thigh. It was 36 years ago but I still feel it today! *[Laughter.]* I was shocked. Then he leaned forward and looked at me deeply in the eyes and said, "When you keep don't know mind, you and I are never separate."

So if you want to be with Zen Master Wu Bong now, just keep don't know mind. Don't know where he is; don't know who you are; don't know where you are; don't know what you are doing; then you'll suddenly be together with him, and that moment's direction and action will become very clear.

I am sure his teaching will continue to be even more powerful for us than before. We are lucky because your teacher and my dharma brother had power, so he will continue to help us even though his form has changed.

Everyone, everything, returns to the original point.

That is the universal rule.

Clouds are always coming and going.

The high sky is always blue.

Thank you, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim. ◆

The Chants at the Funeral Ceremony

Translated and chanted by Deok Hyeon Sunim

Ceremony to Move the Coffin

Now listen to me, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's
enlightened spirit:
Wonderful enlightenment is in front of you,
the light of samadhi is feeding you.
South, North, East, West,
Everywhere you go you are so happy.
Even though everything is like this,
I dare to ask everyone gathered:
Where is the starting point of the
way to nirvana
of Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's
enlightened spirit?
Every green willow tree
is good to tie the reins of the horse to.
Every road from every house leads to the capital city.

Mantra to Clear the Way (all together)

*Om Soshitji Najaritara Najaritara Moradaye Jarajara
Manda Manda Hana Hana Hum Patak*

Boep Soeng Gye—Song of Dharma Nature (all together)

To Prepare the Fire

Now listen to me Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's
enlightened spirit!
This fire is not of three poisons,
But it is the fire of the Buddha's samadhi,
The fire of the supreme samadhi.
Its light is so brilliant that it reflects the past,
the present and the future,
Its flame is so alive that it pierces through
ten directions.
If you attain the light,
You become like all Buddhas in one moment.
If you lose the light,
You will follow the stream of life and death
For ten thousand kalpas.
Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's enlightened spirit!
Turn toward the light and reflect yourself,
And then you will abruptly realize that there is
nothing to be born,
And then you will leave all delusions and sufferings,
And you will attain the happiness of Buddha when
he went into parinirvana



To Start the Fire

Now listen to me, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's
enlightened spirit!
When the three causes get together,
The body comes into existence for a moment.
Then the four elements are scattered
And it abruptly goes back to emptiness.
How many years have you floated in the
sea of delusions?
This morning you are out of it.
It is joyful and blissful, but it is not yet completed.
You who gathered here—answer me:
Where is Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's enlightened
spirit going to?
He is riding the wooden horse but facing its tail.
He flipped over once.
At that time from the huge red flame
Comes out a cold wind.

To Say Good Bye

Sincerely
We do *dabi* (cremation) following the dharma
As Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's enlightened spirit
goes into nirvana
According to the causes.
We committed to the fire the body that wandered
around for a hundred years,
And he is getting to the gate of nirvana
without hesitation.
I wish Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim's enlightened
spirit will be assisted by our help
on the way to nirvana. ◆

Tathagata—

Waiting for Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim

Deok Hyeon Sunim

What is it to live as a human being?

This is a question I have striven to forget, yet one that always returns like a chronic disease in the face of someone's death.

When we are alive, the fact that we are alive seems so natural, a reality without a single doubt. And yet all this can come to an abrupt end at any moment.

In particular, the death of a person that has come so close to completeness is all the more unacceptable and absurd, something that seems preposterously unbelievable. More so when that person is someone that you have become one with in all genuineness, one whom you have come to love and respect with all of your heart, from whom there is no distance. Then, the death of that person cannot be easily accepted or consoled. Even though that death is not our own, it shakes the very root of our existence.

And it is only after days and days of deep retrospection, taking to heart the meaning of this painful parting, that it all becomes clear again.

Regardless of you or me, death, like the reverse side of a sheet of paper, has always been one with life. Rather, life is like a fragment of a transient wave rising above the ocean of death.

What wave can be free from its destiny to subside from its rise and return to its origin, the water? The fact that a wave rises reaffirms the truth that it never existed in the first place. When we calmly face up to this truth, then we are able to slowly accept the fact that all deaths are predestined, natural, and nothing to be taken aback about. We are able to let go of our tenacious attachment to life. Our mind becomes free from all things and at last rests.

In fact, life and death are not separate. Life and death are one.

The two sides of a sheet of paper cannot be separated, just as the two poles of a magnet coexist in dependency: no matter how many times it is divided, two new poles appear every time. As such, even if we were to separate the two faces of a sheet of paper, we can never attain a paper missing its reverse side.

When we look deeply right through into the whole,

even though countless waves appear to be billowing in the ocean, in fact nothing has risen. It is merely the movement of the boundless seawater. When we look at the waves, they appear to be rising and falling, but when we look at the entire ocean, it is and has always been only water.

Water by nature has no fixed form and therefore changes indefinitely. Change, moment to moment, gives birth to transient waves, and now in the course of *hetu-pratyaya* (direct cause), merely takes them away. Even though it appears to us that the wave that seemed to have appeared is now disappearing before our eyes, in truth, that disappearance itself is nonexistent. Those that have opened their true eyes, have they not said, “No life. No death”?

Tathagata (one who has thus gone, or one who has thus come), one who has come from tathata (thusness) with *maha-pranidhana*, the resolution to save all sentient beings from the suffering of life and death, and one who returns to tathata by the course of *hetu-pratyaya*, is the Buddha who is beyond all coming and going. When seen through the world of tathata, all sentient beings are no different than the Buddha, with innate Buddha nature, whereby being born is not being born, and dying is not dying. And there is no Buddha apart from sentient beings. As the boundless expanse of water is in itself just water, it is nonsense to search for water apart from the waves.

“Life is correct. Death is correct.”

It is when the eyes that pierce the truth are blinded by ignorance and offenses that life and death become a problem and lead to great suffering. For an enlightened one, all things living and dying are the manifestation of truth, the profound mind of nirvana.

When alive, live to the fullest. And when you die, leave with no regrets or attachments. Live beautifully and leave light-footedly. This is Buddha's great transfiguration and great passing, the endless paramita of the bodhisattva path, and the essence of us living and dying as human beings.

Wu Bong Sunim thus lived and thus departed. The final curtain has come down on one beautiful life.

Poem in Tribute to Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim Presented at the Funeral
Deok Hyeon Sunim



10]



Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim!
All Buddhas of previous worlds have passed away like this.
Shakyamuni Buddha also passed away like this.
And only a week ago, you too have passed away like this.
Life is like a cloud appearing in the sky.
Death is like that cloud disappearing without a trace.
But every buddha and patriarch has said that there is one
thing that doesn't belong to life or death.

Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim,
What is that?
Everyone is missing you in great sadness.
Where are you now?
Don't try to hit the floor.
If you do that, people will be very surprised.

Don't try to drag your feet out of the coffin.
Then they won't be able to go on with the funeral.

Don't try to get back to the East with only your right shoe
on your shoulder.
Then the left shoe would be useless.

Where are you, Sunim?
Let me answer this for you.

(Ringing the hand bell three times)

Listen to the listener.
This is the Zen of Wu Bong (Cosmos Peak)
and that of Kwan Um (Avalokitesvara).

In Zen, there's no coming and going, no life and death,
no right and left, no east and west, no good and bad,
no suffering and salvation.

Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim! You said we cannot rest on
our way to nirvana as we have vowed to save all sentient
beings, even though they are numberless.

So, take a brief breeze around the Pure Land and return
to this impure land as soon as you can.

I plead you to walk with us again in the path to saving
all sentient beings.

If We Stay Awake

Zen Master Wu Bong

One time when I was small child, I thought I would drown because I physically started to drown. At that time, I remember, I was intensely curious. What is it like? Well, I will die. What is it going to be like? I wasn't in a panic. I was actually feeling quite peaceful. And I had no inkling of practicing then at all. But to me it was like when I was a child reading about some exotic places, and I wanted to see them. It's like that.



When I was a young man, always at that time I was chasing after happiness. But no matter how fast I ran after happiness, always it was ahead of me—I could never reach it. Then I met my teacher, and my life changed. As part of my training, as part of my practice, since that time I have always been running away from happiness. But the problem is, no matter how fast I run, it is always catching up to me!

I looked at books: philosophy books, also religion books and psychology books, and among these books I found some books about Buddha's teaching. And Buddha's teaching made a big impression on me, because his teaching was not asking anybody to believe in anything special; in fact, I remember specifically one quotation where he was admonishing people not to believe something only because some great person said it, not to believe something only because some great book said it, not to believe something only because most people in society believe it, but he asked people to take anything—any of this stated or written or believed truth—and test it in their life. And only when one tests it in one's life, to one's own experience, only then if it really works, if one finds it to be really true, then one can believe it, accept it and say that it is the truth.

My friend Michael also told me, "You know? Just a couple of days ago I was in a supermarket and I met this Korean Buddhist monk." So he asked me, "Well, I have his address, do you want to go visit him tonight?" I said, "Not tonight, I cannot, but let's go tomorrow." The next day we got together and we went over to this address, which was in a ghetto area of Providence. That's how I met my Zen teacher with whom I have stayed since.

There was nothing special. He just looked like a nice monk, a nice man, very friendly, smiling, a little fat. He had these round glasses. But then, the first time we met, he sat

both Michael and me on the floor in the dharma room, and right then and there he explained the Zen circle to us. And it was great. It was wonderful teaching. I said, wow, that is great. This guy is really good.

Yes, I wanted to be a teacher. But at some point this wanting to be a teacher disappeared. And then I became a teacher. By the time he gave me inka I really didn't care. He asked me. I didn't push for it. I didn't ask

for it. It didn't seem to be important.

I have great confidence in my students' true self. That's correct. But mostly, I think what it means is that I try not to treat people like children. I don't look at them as children. They are adults. Adults are responsible for their own lives. And even when they make mistakes, when they do something wrong, that's their life, that's their practice, that's their experience.

I love my brother, but he made many mistakes in his life and he also got much suffering, and somebody once said to me, "Oh, your brother has so much suffering!" And I said, "Not enough. More necessary." This person was really angry at me: "Why did you say this? He is a nice man! Don't you like your brother?" I said, "No, quite the opposite: I said that because I love my brother. For him more suffering is necessary. So far the suffering he got is not enough: he still hasn't woken up."

I really believe in the power of practice. If you do it, that means someday you can really do it. And if you really do it, that is what the practice is about. It comes from experience. I have seen how it works, in working with people. I'm not so old, but you have to understand that I've been teaching in a formal way since 1984, so it's already 27 years, a nice chunk of experience! So that's where this confidence in practice comes from. I have seen how it changes people.

At university I came to the conclusion (this was my great "intellectual enlightenment") that we live in order to die properly. In a way, our life is a preparation for our death. I still think this is not a bad conclusion. There will come a culmination of this vehicle when we have to put it aside. If we want something or are attached to something, this process can be very painful. If we can stay awake, this process can be very wonderful. ♦

[1]

Tomorrow Is Too Late

Zen Master Wu Bong

Nobody guarantees our life. So if there is anything that you think may be useful, just now is the time to use it. In our life, past mind cannot be attained. Present mind cannot be attained. If you say “present,” it is already not present, already gone. If you lose this moment, you can never regain it.

We follow Buddha’s example. Buddha means awakened. If you are going to awaken, tomorrow is too late. One hour from now is also too late. Even one second from now is too late. Just this moment, wake up. I hope each of you will make correct practice in your life and attain this wake-up. Then one more step is most important: use this wake-up to help all beings.

The only thing, the only true thing, that we ever have is this moment. The past we cannot touch. The future we cannot grasp. And if we try to catch the present, it’s already gone.

We do not need something special, some great teaching from someone. What we need to do is cultivate the question, the fire, that we all have within, and not let it go out. All the wisdom is already there.

Try, try, try. Do not check your feelings. Do not check your understanding. Can you swim? Yes, that is good. Could you swim the first time you entered water? So what happened in between not being able to swim and swimming? That’s right: practice. It is the same with saving all beings. Decide this, then try, try, try, and one day you will completely attain it.

Each time you are faced with this kong-an situation, it’s new. It’s just now. So it doesn’t matter if you answered before, or didn’t answer before. Even if you start thinking, “How did I answer before?” that’s already a mistake. It’s this moment. It’s new. Even if you had this question a hundred times, and you answered a hundred times, and you remember the answer, answer this moment. This moment is very important.

What is important is not small don’t know, what is important is big don’t know. If you have this great question, then this big don’t know will appear. This big don’t know means your mind becomes more clear, and when this mind becomes clear then everything becomes clear. Then correct action, correct speech, all can appear.

If you continue to return to this don’t know, then this don’t know will start to grow up. Then slowly, slowly your desire, anger and ignorance will become less and less and less. Then continue to practice, which means to continue to return to this don’t know, then one day—boom—infinite in time and infinite in space! Then you can say “Aha!” Everybody is getting older every moment; maybe soon this body will die. Before this body dies, one time this “Aha!” is necessary.



Everybody wants peace, but everybody wants my idea of peace. Then you cannot have peace. But when I take away my idea, then already the whole world is at peace.

You look at this wall, then you and the wall become one. You look at the sky, then the sky and you become one. That means: nothing in between. No I, my, me in between. That is very important, because in this world we have many problems. If we look at these problems, what causes them? If you go deeper and

deeper, then finally you find three things that are causing these problems: I, my, me.

I wish for you to make correct practicing in your life. Then moment by moment become more clear, and finally one day become completely clear, attain enlightenment and save all beings from suffering. And do it quickly!

Keeping a don’t know mind means cutting off all thinking. Cutting off all discursive thoughts takes us to the wellspring of our true nature and brings us to the present moment. What are you doing just now? Paying attention to this moment is what Zen practice is all about.

You take anything that you cannot do, then you try, try, try, and then you can do it. So today you cannot do this moment-to-moment, then you try, try, try, then you can do it. Actually already you can do it! Because you can do it for a few seconds, right? Can you do it for a few seconds? Just try. There you go. But even two seconds is not necessary. Even one second is too long. It is enough to keep clear just for one moment. Everybody can. One moment and then again one moment and then again one moment. Then many moments, then a whole day. This practice is very easy.

While there are many approaches to practicing, practicing with a sangha—together action—is the most powerful. It forces us to confront our limitations, which in turn helps us to overcome our limitations. In the Heart Sutra it says, “The Bodhisattva depends on Prajna Paramita and the mind is no hindrance; without any hindrance no fears exist.” This no fear is our human heritage. If you like this, then throw away all thinking; throw away all liking and disliking; throw away even the most profound understanding.

These words are just expedient means to help our life, to help our practice. The next step is to leave these words behind, and simply to do it.

Master and Dog

From a question and answer session at Berlin Zen Center, April 2011.

Question: One thing is very clear to all beings on this planet: they will disappear in the next 150 years, at most. The question is: What is important, keeping in mind we all die? When I am angry or sad or something, inside me it is very strong, and then a little later this knowledge appears: I am dying. Then everything looks unimportant. And this question remains: What is really important to do? But this question disappears when I feel easy and relaxed. Then it is OK, nothing is too much and nothing is missing. But when I start thinking, I always ask myself: What is really important in this life? So my question is: What is important?

Zen Master Wu Bong: That is up to you. What do you want?

Q: I want to know: Who am I? And I ask this question all the time, and still I don't know, and maybe I will die before finding the answer.

ZMWB: So if that is really the most important thing, then do everything for that.

Our life—we decide. The name for that is vow. You decide: make a vow. If this vow is deep and strong, then naturally everything in your life will start to support this vow. You know this shepherd dog: this dog likes to run all over the place. This is like our mind also running here and there. But the master is going straight. Then the dog still runs here, there, here, there, but always also going straight. So, you make a strong vow, then no matter how crazy your life is, everything will go with that, in that direction.



[13

So don't ask me what is important. This is your job. And if somebody does not know, that is no problem. Then that is your job to find out.

Question: If this master has no clear direction, then it is not the master walking the dog but the dog walking the master. So, how to become the master and not the dog?

ZMWB: Be the dog, no problem! Become dog, OK? If you think "I want to be the master," then you make "I," you make "master," also you make "dog." All this talk, master, dog, and so on, this is all teaching speech; it is all thinking. If you heed this thinking, then you will have more headache.

All this talk is just pointing to something. So don't catch the words; catch the point. Otherwise, you become like a dog chasing after a bone.

Thank you for your questions. I just want to say, even if Buddha came here and gave you the most perfect answers, it is really useless unless you apply these in your life. So the most perfect medicine is just garbage unless you take it. All these answers had one point, and that point was to return to your practice. Always returning to great question. So I hope you use this answer in your life, everybody. Thank you very much. ♦

This Kind of Vow

A dharma talk given in answer to questions on December 4, 2004, at the Paris Zen Center, less than a week after the death of Zen Master Seung Sahn.

I want to welcome everybody, and also at this point I welcome any questions you have . . . No questions?

Student: You feel sad about the passing away of your master. Can you speak about how you feel about it?

Zen Master Wu Bong: In the past couple of years, every time I saw my teacher, it was very sad after each visit. Of course I was happy to see him and talk to him, though talking was one-sided because he just kept silence. Sometimes he did respond, which was unusual because normally he couldn't respond to anybody. So as happy as I was to see him, every time I left I was very sad, because he used to be a very energetic, very active person.

I'm not so sad for Zen Master Seung Sahn. I'm sad for us, because even though he was pretty much retired and didn't really participate so much in our school for the last few years, still, if there was something that needed to be asked then at least we had the illusion that well, maybe he can help us. But now no such illusion.

So our great teacher is gone, but as I said today at our retreat closing talk, his dharma is not gone. I've known him since 1972, but what really struck me during all these years is this great vow that he followed of helping others. I believe that this vow of his will continue to function. His death doesn't stop this kind of vow. So again he will practice with us in the future and again one day will teach us. And I only can wish him a better rental car than he had this time.

Any other question?

Student: Once I asked Zen Master Su Bong, before he had a heart attack in 1994, about how he thinks about his relationship to his body and keeping his body healthy. He talked like this: the body is just a rented car.

ZMWB: Yes, so you take care of your body. If you lose your body then you cannot practice, cannot get enlightenment, and cannot help others. But if you attach to your body, also you cannot get enlightenment, cannot help anybody. So take care of the body: no problem. Attach to the body: that's a problem.

Student: The great masters have this vow to help others. The bodhisattva vow I like is, "I will be the last one who enters nirvana." So is it true that masters have extra responsibility to keep their body alive? To help, should you be the

last one?

ZMWB: Actually, a teacher's responsibility is not to be the last to die. A teacher's responsibility is to give correct teaching. So, living-teaching is correct, dying-teaching is also correct.

In China long ago, Zen Master Ma Jo was sick. At that time the housemaster came to visit him and asked, "How is your venerable health lately?" Then Ma Jo replied "Sunface Buddha, Moonface Buddha."

Now this housemaster's question is not a casual question. This housemaster had some idea: this is a great Zen master, Master Ma Jo, very famous, very big master. *Great Zen Master* means great energy, so this person is supposed to have all this great energy, great enlightenment. So why is he just lying

helpless, sick? Maybe the housemaster's question was a little similar to your question: maybe the Zen master should be the last to get sick, in order to be helping everybody.

Ma Jo said, "Sunface Buddha, Moonface Buddha." If you attain this Sunface Buddha, Moonface Buddha, then also you understand Zen Master Seung Sahn's death, his death teaching.

Now I know many people were expecting his death to be something special. Not long ago, for example,

there was a monk in Korea who announced his death. He was healthy, then he told everybody, "One week later I will die." Then one week later he sat down for meditation and he died just exactly how he predicted. There were reports in all the newspapers saying, "Wow, wow . . ."

So maybe people were expecting Zen Master Seung Sahn also to make some special show. He will maybe tell everybody, then when the day comes he will sit down and maybe recite a poem and then die. But he died in a very ordinary way; that's his teaching style. Always, his whole life, that was his teaching way. Is special? No good.

We were visiting a monk in hospital in New York, a monk who had had a stroke and was very sick. Half his body was paralyzed, so only half was working. When we were in his hospital room, Zen Master Seung Sahn was talking Korean to him, but I could understand he was asking, "How are you?" And then this monk was answering very strongly, "Yeah! Great! Fine!" But of course he was saying this "great" with half his body. When we left the room, Zen Master



Seung Sahn said, “Oh, stupid man . . . if you are sick, then hundred per cent just sick. Why say ‘I’m great, I’m fine?’”

So these last years, every time I telephoned him from Paris and got him on the phone, I would ask, “How are you, sir?” He never said “I’m fine.” He would just say, “Not dead yet.”
[Laughs.]

OK, any other questions?

Student 1: I think you touched on a difficult subject for people who grow up in a Western, Christian environment, and that’s the point of reincarnation. So I would be interested if you could say some words about that.

ZMWB: OK, I will explain reincarnation for you.
[Laughs.] It’s not so mystical, it’s not complicated, and if you think about it you can see how correct it is. For example, your body is changing moment by moment. If only one cell falls off, then already that’s a different body, right? Correct!

So, moment by moment, a different body. Not only your body, but also your thinking is changing. Your feelings are also all the time changing, changing, changing. So, moment by moment that is a different you. You think “I,” but this I in this moment—that’s not the same I as a moment ago.

That’s reincarnation. OK? So, you already experienced this.
[Laughs.]

[Long silence.]

Student 2: Wait a minute! [Laughs.] What about actually changing from one body into another body?

ZMWB: I already explained! That’s changing, one body

Student 2: No, but . . .

Student 1: Can I add a comment to that? I understand what you are saying, but even though the cells are being regenerated, it’s the same thing looked at perhaps from different sides.

ZMWB: No, what I’m saying is it’s not the same. You say same but it is not the same! I cut a piece off this stick. Is it the same stick?

Student 1: Hmmm. Yes and no.

ZMWB: Yes and no. OK, I will wait. If you say yes, I’ll hit you thirty times, but if you say no I’ll also hit you thirty times.
[Laughs.] If you say both, yes and no, that’s sixty times!
[Laughs.]

Student 1: Same answer.

ZMWB: But if you really understand that point I just made with the stick, then you can understand this idea of reincarnation. You think “I,” but look deeply: what is this I? I ask you, what are you?

Student 1: Based on your answer I’m a moment in time—

ZMWB: That’s only understanding. I’m not asking about your understanding. What are you?

Student 1: Then I don’t know.

ZMWB: Don’t know. Correct! That’s good idea. Keep this don’t know, then one day, from this don’t know this answer can come. Then all these things can become clear for you. Not just somebody’s idea, OK? So, for Zen students this idea of reincarnation is not important. It is just some idea.

There are these four kinds of teaching from Zen Master Seung Sahn, the four don’ts. He said don’t make, don’t attach, don’t check and don’t want. If you follow these four teachings very well, your practice can grow up, because our usual habit is to always make something, then we attach to what we make, then we keep on checking that and then of course desire appears, so we want, then because of this desire we continue to make and attach and check and make more desire. That’s the usual human habit.

So our practicing is to get rid of this kind of habit. If everybody has this great question, “What am I?” very sincerely, soon this don’t know appears. This don’t know cuts off all thinking. “Cuts off all thinking” means before thinking. If you keep your mind before thinking then you don’t make, then also there’s nothing to attach to, nothing to check, then of course this desire will not arise, so nothing to want. So actually four teachings are not necessary; you find them all in this great question, “What am I?”

The last time I heard a dharma talk from Zen Master Seung Sahn was a year ago. I went to Korea to sit one month of Kyol Che, the last month of the winter Kyol Che. When Kyol Che is finished all the students come to Hwa Gye Sa Temple, and the tradition was that Zen Master Seung Sahn would meet everybody, everybody can bow to him, and then he always gave a talk.

So we were all brought to a big room. Once we were all seated, people brought him—they had to carry him—into the room. Then we bowed to him and he gave just a short talk and he asked for questions. It was very interesting because the way he taught was really the way he was teaching in America when he first came: almost every question that somebody raised he would say: “Who is asking?” His whole teaching was basically “What are you?” It didn’t matter what kind of question—“What are you?” Actually, it was a great talk.

So, keep this “What am I?” and then all of his teachings will be with you. They are all inside.

It seems that because of the death of Zen Master Seung Sahn, for us and our students this is a big thing. It is basically the end of an era. Actually not only for our school; because of his relationships and the openness of his teaching, he has had a very profound effect on the Zen world in general.

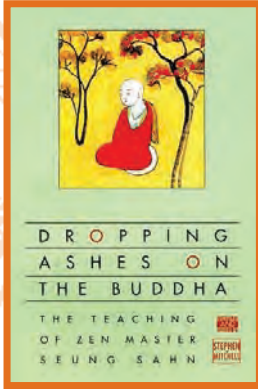
But now we are on our own. It’s our responsibility, so to speak, to carry the torch. In spite of all his effort, the world still has much suffering. As much as he tried, he did not finish that job, and it is up to us to complete it.

The core of his teaching was helping others. He never talked about technique. He always talked about direction, about the practice. So, direction always means for others, for others, for others.

I hope everybody will practice hard, attain your true self, and then you can really be of service to this world.

Thank you for your attention tonight, and I hope we meet sometime, and not just to talk about dharma but to practice together. Have a good night, everybody. ♦

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Compass of Zen. Zen Master Seung Sahn. Compiled and edited by Hyon Gak Sunim JDPS. Simple, clear, and often hilarious presentation of the essential teachings of the main Buddhist traditions—culminating in Zen—by one of the most beloved Zen Masters of our time. 394 pages. *Shambhala, 1997. ISBN 1-57062-329-5. \$24.95*

Ten Gates: The Kong-an Teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Zen Master Seung Sahn. Presents kong-an practice in action, through real interactions between the beloved Korean Zen Master and his students as they work via letters. 152 pages. *Shambhala, 2007. ISBN 978-1-59030-417-4. \$14.95*

Open Mouth Already a Mistake: Talks by Zen Master Wu Kwang. Teaching of a Zen Master who is also a husband, father, practicing Gestalt therapist and musician. 238 pages. *Primary Point Press, 1997. ISBN 0-942795-08-3. \$18.95*

The Whole World is a Single Flower: 365 Kong-ans for Everyday Life. Zen Master Seung Sahn. The first kong-an collection to appear in many years; Christian, Taoist, and Buddhist sources. 267 pages. *Tuttle, 1993. ISBN 0-8048-1782-0. \$22.95*

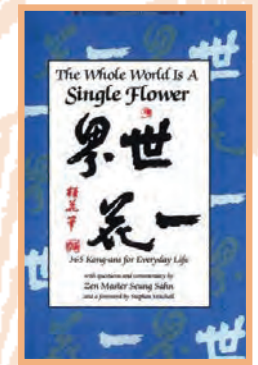
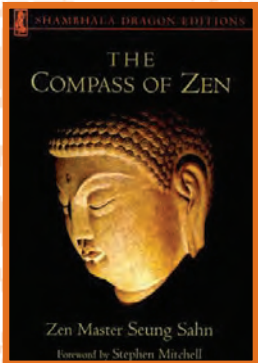
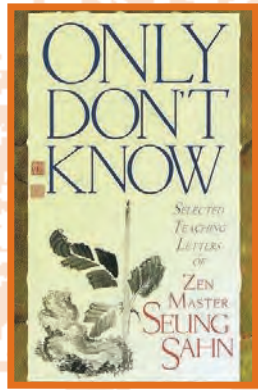
Wake Up! On the Road with a Zen Master. An entertaining documentary that captures Zen Master Seung Sahn's energy and presents the core of his teaching. 54 minutes. *Primary Point Press, 1992. VHS: ISBN 0-942795-07-5. \$30.00 DVD: ISBN 0-942795-14-8. \$30.00*

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16]

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Bodhisattva Bird

Zen Master Wu Bong

In one of the dharma talks during the winter Kyol Che 2012–2013, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim told a story:

Once I read in the Jataka tales the story of one of the Buddha's previous lives. He was a little bird then, and one day the forest where the bird lived caught on fire. For the bird, in fact, it wasn't such a big problem, because she could just fly away. But looking down on the forest while flying above, she saw all the other animals caught in the fire and struggling to get out. And the

bird couldn't just fly away. She felt so compassionate for the other animals that she decided to help. She flew to the lake—quite far away—took some water into her beak, flew back to the forest and poured it down on the fire. And then she flew again to the lake and brought some more water, and then again, and again. And so she continued until she got completely exhausted. When she couldn't fly anymore, she fell down into the burning forest and died.

Once I read this story, I could never get it out of my head. ♦

The Attendant

How Can I Do Nothing?

Sasha Rymar

The attendant entered the master's room and asked, "Can I do something for you?"

"Mmm . . . I guess, today—nothing," said Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim.

"How can I do nothing?"

"Ah! That is a very good question!" Zen Master Wu Bong replied.

The next day, coming into his room: "Can I do something?"

"Do something!"

The attendant took out his trash and came back. "Something else?"

"Yes, you can do something else," with a big smile.

The attendant picked up a dirty plate from his table, looking around to see if there was anything else that needed to be done. "Maybe something else?"

"Aren't you tired?"

"No, why would I be?"

"You did something and something. You could be tired." Big smile.

Another time he asked "Do you know how to iron?"

"Of course," the attendant replied.

"I washed my robe," he said. "But it's all ruffled, as you can see. Could you iron it for me, please? I can do almost everything for myself. I know how to wash clothes, and I can cook. But I don't know how to iron."

"Have you ever tried?" the attendant laughed.

"Yes, I did. But somehow it doesn't work out for me," said Zen Master Wu Bong apologetically.

Another time: "Hmm . . . What can you do? What can you do?" asked Zen Master Wu Bong. "I guess, there is nothing to do. What do you think?"

"Maybe I can do some dusting? It's been a long time . . ."

"You think so? Is it necessary? Do you see any dust?" asked Zen Master Wu Bong.

And so both of them started to look for dust, but on his table there didn't seem to be any, probably because he would wipe it off with his sleeves.

"Well," he said finally, "for sure there is some dust, but as long as we cannot see it, it's all right. There is nothing to do."

Another time he said, "I'm sorry. It's really difficult for me to think of something that you could do for me. There are really no particular needs."

Together they checked if he had some laundry, or if there was maybe some trash. Finally, he gave the attendant some sweets. "Here! Here is something to do—eat this!"

You Are Making Something

Dorota Drążczyk

In our sangha many of us had a good and long relationship with Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim; many were his friends. We have hundreds of memories of different situations, and gained a lot of wonderful teaching. The stories are fascinating.

I knew Zen Master Wu Bong for a significantly shorter period. Twice I had the honor to be his attendant during Yong Maeng Jong Jin in Falenica (in Warsaw), and so I had the opportunity to experience some moments of his full attention for me. Every one of these encounters contained teaching.

Zen Master Wu Bong was a difficult person to attend to—there was nothing that he needed except for morning tea and the tea for the personal interviews: no fruits, juices or sweets. I haunted him sometimes and tormented him with my questions, asking whether he needed something after all.

Not a thing. I was disappointed. But I risked myself once. With the next tea, I brought a piece of cheesecake. It was eaten! So I brought a piece with the following tea, and the subsequent one. The next day I again entered Zen Master Wu Bong's room with tea and cake. He glanced at me with his penetrating gaze and said, "You are making something!"

I was frightened, because you know what that means as a teaching. "But, Soen Sa Nim, I said nothing . . ." I managed to mutter.

Then he laughed and said, "Easy—you are making cheesecake, Dorota! A lot of tasty cheesecakes!"

With tea I had also a problem. No matter what kind of tea I served in the teapot, it always diminished by only a small amount. I tried all possible sorts but it was always the same. One day before a round of personal interviews, I again brought a full teapot. I put it down and took the previous one. I took a look in it—it was full. In desperation I asked, "Soen Sa Nim, I bring you different types of tea. Which of them do you really like?"

"This one you fetched *just now!*" he said without hesitation. I really took this teaching to heart. ♦

Crazy Zen Master

Sasha Rymar

The last full Kyol Che with Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim was at Bonghwa, Boep Hwa Do Ryang, November 2012 – February 2013.

On the first day of Kyol Che, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim gave a dharma talk in which he spoke about the importance of silence.

But actually there was not so much silence, and Zen Master Wu Bong himself would often start some conversation. Besides, there was an hour-long teatime in our schedule, which was officially free for communication.

Originally during this time, Zen Master Wu Bong was supposed to give a short dharma talk, and we could ask him questions and also discuss some organizational matters. But on the second day, when asked by our head monk to give a dharma talk, Zen Master Wu Bong said, “What dharma talk? I already gave one yesterday. No, better let’s get to know each other.” And so, with Zen Master Wu Bong’s initiative, this tea break turned into the time for telling jokes and stories and having fun.

Very soon one sunim stood up to protest. He demanded silence and the cancellation of teatime. After his long speech in support of silence, Zen Master Wu Bong smiled and said, “Well, actually, when I was speaking about the importance of silence, first of all I meant inside silence.”

Then he told us a story. Once he was head dharma teacher during Kyol Che at the Providence Zen Center. The person leading this Kyol Che was very sick, so in fact he—the head dharma teacher—was the actual leader of the Kyol Che. At that time, the rule during Kyol Che was to observe complete silence—not even looking each other in the eyes. Very strict.

But at this Kyol Che there was some talking and some laughing, and Zen Master Wu Bong didn’t try to stop it.

The work period was taking place outside in the grounds of the Zen center, so people working in the Zen center office could see and hear what was going on. After some time they sent a note to Zen Master Wu Bong asking him to bring back Kyol Che discipline and stop people talking. But Zen Master Wu Bong didn’t do anything. Some time later he got a second note, but also ignored it. In the third note that came, it was said that if he didn’t change the situation, the office would complain to Zen Master Seung Sahn about it. Again, Zen Master Wu Bong didn’t react. So soon he got a note that Zen Master Seung Sahn was waiting for him in his apartment.

“This time,” Zen Master Wu Bong said, “I got a little worried. But I went and as soon as I entered Seung Sahn Sunim’s room he came out and hugged me and said, ‘Wonderful Kyol Che! Great job!’ Seung Sahn Sunim hated it,” Zen Master Wu Bong said, “when everybody was walking around, sad, looking down, never smiling. He suffered; he really didn’t like this strict style.”

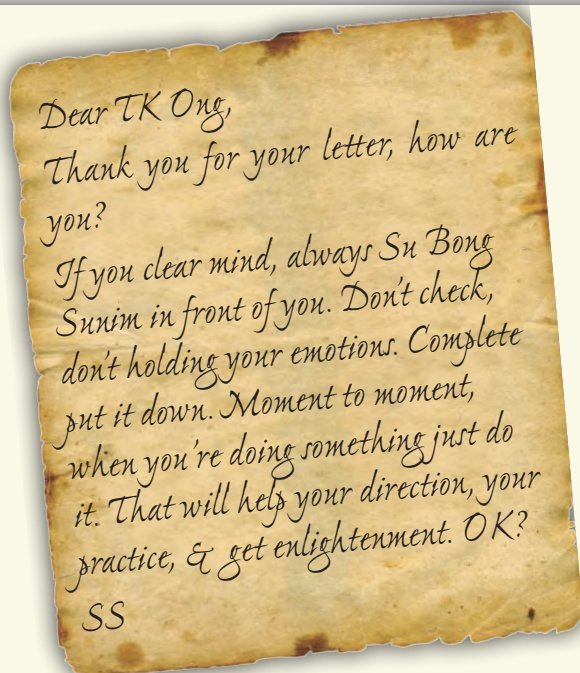
I guess this last Kyol Che at Bonghwa was also very different from the regular Kyol Che in the Kwan Um school. It was very joyful, relaxed, with a lot of fun and much freedom. One sunim who was used to practicing in a more strict style came to Zen Master Wu Bong and said, “This is crazy! What kind of Kyol Che is this?”

And Zen Master Wu Bong answered him, laughing, “Yes, this is crazy! Because I’m a crazy Zen master!” ♦

[19

Always in Front of You

Many students, colleagues and monks around the world mourn the passing of Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim. This situation has occurred once before, in 1994, when Zen Master Su Bong passed away in similar circumstances while leading a retreat in Hong Kong. One student, TK Ong, wrote a letter to Zen Master Seung Sahn at that time, lamenting that he was sad about Su Bong Sunim’s passing. Zen Master Seung Sahn replied (in his exact words):



Dear TK Ong,
Thank you for your letter, how are you?
If you clear mind, always Su Bong Sunim in front of you. Don't check, don't holding your emotions. Complete put it down. Moment to moment, when you're doing something just do it. That will help your direction, your practice, & get enlightenment. OK?
SS

Caring for Us

Students and successors of Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim

I was staying at New York Zen Center by myself. Then Wu Bong appeared. He brought his lunch with him from a Chinese restaurant. He said, "Hi!" to me and started eating. I was starving, trying to hide that, but he did not pay attention anyway, he was just eating with a huge appetite. I thought, what kind of man is this? He should share his lunch with me! He finished his lunch and then he asked me, "Are you hungry? If you are hungry, you can buy Chinese lunch at the corner, it's delicious."

—Zen Master Bon Shim

I finally was able to arrange my life in order to attend the entire three months of the intensive Zen retreat called Kyol Che, which took place in a temple called Mu Sang Sa in Korea. The day came to board the plane to Korea. One hour before boarding, I got cold feet and murmured to him: "I don't think I should go . . ." At that very moment Zen Master Wu Bong took my hand and said "Then don't," and pulled me in the direction of the exit. Such a simple tool, but it caused me to react with a strong "No! I have to!" and push through to the boarding gate. I turned back to see his beaming face and we laughed with each other across the gate.

—Zen Master Bon Yo

One day I mentioned to him that I wanted to start painting again, to which he only said, "Uhhh." But shortly thereafter, he came home from work with watercolor paper and paints for me. No need to talk about it, just do it!

—Zen Master Bon Yo

One time, after my dharma talk I felt sad. I was not so happy with my talk. Zen Master Wu Bong noticed that and he said, "Don't worry. After one hour nobody will remember your talk. It doesn't matter if it's good or not."

—Zen Master Bon Shim

Our first meeting happened during summer Kyol Che, 1990, in Warsaw. I had an interview with him that left a strong impression on me. I am still able to visualize Zen Master Wu Bong in front of me, shaking his head and saying, "No-o-o-o! Just keep don't know!" But it didn't feel bad not to know the answer to the kong-an. It was more like he cared about me; he wanted to help me experience don't know and digest my understanding.

—Zen Master Ji Kwang

For a long time I could not understand how it is possible that we all at the same instant got enlightenment, as is told in many sutras. So I asked Zen Master Wu Bong



during one dharma talk by him, "How can we at the same time get enlightenment?"

Zen Master Wu Bong immediately asked me, "What color is this floor?" I told him that it is brown. At that he said, "Yes, for me the floor is brown too." I was overwhelmed by his simple and plain answer. For me the floor is brown and for him the floor is brown too. What a wonderful enlightenment together at

the same time! His teaching was always like this: simple and sharp like a knife blade. With not many words he was pointing to the essence.

—Muchak JDPSN (Namhee Chon)

During an interview, Zen Master Wu Bong told me something which radically changed my direction and eventually my life. He said, "If you have a bad teacher and you are a bad student then this is a bad situation. If you have a good teacher but you are a bad student then this is also a bad situation. But if you have a bad teacher and you are a good student, then this is a good situation. In your case, Jo, you might have had bad teaching, but you were a good student."

—Jo Potter JDPSN

It was a very interesting feeling, when I first saw Zen Master Wu Bong. It seemed as if I had known him for a long time. He is such a relaxed person! He was sitting there, smiling, and with his big eyes he looked inside of me, as it seemed. I just felt good with him.

—Muchak JDPSN (Namhee Chon)

With his constant teaching, numberless Zen events, and mostly with his clear mind, integrity and credibility, he has reached many, many people and has encouraged them to practice Zen. A lot of them stayed, practiced with his guidance, and handed on their experience to others. Zen Master Wu Bong had a good talent for organizing the Kwan Um school of Zen in Europe—this is one main reason why the organization has developed so well and has constantly grown. But probably most important was that he has always granted his students space so that they can grow.

—Zen Master Ji Kwang

I told Zen Master Wu Bong, "While I was sitting in the dharma room during Yong Maeng Jong Jin, I saw a big spider. I was sitting and thinking, I really want that spider to go out!" Zen Master Wu Bong said, "You kept sitting. You didn't run away."

—Ja An JDPSN (Bogumila Malinowska)



The KUSZ Western Conference 2013
Where: Zen Center of Las Vegas
When: November 8 - 10th, 2013

At 5:00pm on Friday, November 8th, the conference will begin, and an informal dinner will be served. Conference will end Sunday, November 10th with an informal lunch served at 12:00pm.

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Photo by Sven Mahr

Last Meeting

Arne Schaefer JDPSN

My last interview with Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim occurred during the one-week Yong Maeng Jong Jin in Berlin in April 2013. I wanted to check my answer to a kong-an about moving mind and he agreed with what I presented. “Yeah, that is the style how we handle that.” Then after a little pause he asked, “But what is wrong with moving mind?” I was surprised and asked, “Isn’t it that we say if you have a strong center, your mind is not moving?” “Yeah,” he answered, “but sometime strong center means moving mind is no problem.”

“Wow, that is a good teaching!” I heard myself saying and just loved Zen Master Wu Bong for his simple and so very helpful reflection on this question, which is also a part of my personal struggle in life when I am not just accepting what is. I am sure I will remember this teaching all my life.

After the one-week Yong Maeng Jong Jin, Zen Master Wu Bong was our guest in my home for the first time. Knowing how much he liked Korean food, I had invited him the week before for dinner in a Korean restaurant. After the visit I asked him if he liked it. He said it was OK, but the next time he would like to have German cooking. So I suggested he come and taste traditional homemade noodles called spätzle, a southern German speciality, made by boiling small lumps of dough.

I picked him up in the afternoon. We just sat in the living room, had some tea and talked about anything that came to mind. Then my wife and I started to prepare dinner and asked Zen Master Wu Bong to have a rest. He went to his room but shortly afterward he came to the kitchen and asked how he could help. He cleaned the salad, and after that I asked him if he would want to try to do the spätzle. He tried to fill the spätzlepresse, a kitchen utensil to press the sticky dough through into the cooking water. You have to be fast,

otherwise the noodles stick to each other. We both worked together: he loaded the press and I took care of the noodles in the hot water. It was fun!

After the dinner we kept talking until midnight. He was so relaxed, sharing memories of the early seventies when he was beginning to practice and had not met Zen Master Seung Sahn yet.

We enjoyed the time and it felt so much like just being good friends.

Early in the morning I brought him to the airport to fly to Paris. On my way back I saw the sun rising like a big red balloon and I was very grateful and happy about this wonderful time we had together. I felt a new quality in my relationship to Zen Master Wu Bong. Just three days later he was gone.

Thank you, Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim, for everything. Your simplicity of just following the situation was always inspiring. Your sincerity in practice, your devotion to the dharma, also your calm but sharp mind, your wonderful sense of humor and your kindness were always and still are an inspiration for me. Somebody once called you the “Nothing-Special Master” and I think that was true: you never made something special out of you or your life. You were just yourself—whatever that is. (Ouch! I can feel your stick hitting me as I write these words.)

There is so much I am grateful for and I feel a big loss. You gave us so much and left a big heritage. Now it is our turn to honor you by continuing with trying to give our best and do the job we all share: to help this world of suffering.

I am also very grateful for having our sangha family which is also a merit of your life’s work!

Thank you for everything, my dear teacher and friend,
Arne

22]

Gratitude

Dearest Soen Sa Nim,

I thank you so much for your teachings and encouragement. Was looking forward to seeing you in May, and just cannot imagine not being able to see you again. I feel that I had taken your teaching and presence for granted as you have guided me from the very beginning, and so somehow thought you would always be there to help. I am sorry. There is just much gratitude and sadness . . .

Be in peace, Suuim.

With much, much love, your student,

Soo

Mind Cures

Question: Can my Buddhist name be picked by my guiding teacher instead of just going by the list?

Zen Master Wu Bong: In Zen we don't like special that much.

Question: What is beyond all doubt?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What color is the floor?

The same student asked, ten years later:

Q: What is "every perverted view," in the Heart Sutra?

ZMWB: What color is the mat?

Q: Gray.

ZMWB: So that fixes every perverted view.

Question: I would like to be more sure of myself. Can you tell me what I can do?

Zen Master Wu Bong: That means your center is not strong enough. So do a thousand bows a day.

Q: A thousand bows? How can I do it? I have a child and no time to do this!

ZMWB: It is only two hours a day.

Question: What do you do while sitting in the dharma hall?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Just sitting.

Q: But do you also have a kong-an to resolve?

ZMWB: Yeah, I have a kong-an. *[Staring at some paper.]*

Q: How to fill out this application form?

ZMWB: Yeah.

Question: When I am meditating and something appears, should I try to look deeper into it?

Zen Master Wu Bong: No, that is not the correct way. You should look deeper into don't know. What is it that is experiencing this?

Question: How can we go beyond life and death?

Zen Master Wu Bong: We are life and death.

Question: What do you think about euthanasia?

Zen Master Wu Bong: People always want something.

Question: Sometimes I come to practice regularly but other times I don't come. Why is that?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Ignorance.

Question: When can we call a human being a bodhisattva?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Any time you like.

Question: A lot of terrible things happen in the world. Who is responsible?

Zen Master Wu Bong: You are.

Question: How many precepts do you have?

Zen Master Wu Bong: One.

Question: How can I know what is the best thing to do?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What are you doing right now?

Question: What is the meaning of your Zen stick?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Come closer . . . If you want to find out, you have to come closer!

Question: How can one take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What are you doing just now? *[Student hits the floor.]* Is that all?

Q: I am sitting on this cushion, talking to you.

ZMWB: Wonderful. That is taking refuge.

Question: What is your advice to someone like me who thinks about watching a movie when eating, and when watching a movie thinks about the girls?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Don't waste your time.

Question: Have you ever been in love?

Zen Master Wu Bong: I still am.

Question: One of our oldest members decided to stop practicing and coming to the Zen Center . . .

Zen Master Wu Bong: And if this man dies tomorrow, then what?

Question: I don't like kong-ans. That is why I come so rarely to interviews.

Zen Master Wu Bong: If you don't like kong-ans, then you must drop dead.

Q: I don't understand.

ZMWB: A kong-an is not special. Any of your everyday life situations is already a kong-an. If you don't like kong-ans, you don't like life.

Question: Aaaaaahhhhhhhggggggg! *[Student grabs his neck, shouting.]* Give me the money!

Zen Master Wu Bong: How much do you need?

Question: Why did the Buddha give many more precepts to nuns than to monks?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Women are much more high class than men and they are able to keep more precepts than us.

Question: I am unhappy with my American teacher, but I am not sure if I should break off with him. What do you



advise? If I end the relationship with him, will you be my teacher?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Don't attach to the teacher.

Question: I have trouble deciding things.

Zen Master Wu Bong: I have a secret technique which I've been teaching for several years now. Take a coin and throw it up in the air. By the time you catch it, you usually know what way you want it to come up. You don't even have to look. Just do it!

Question: How can one be Buddha and not be Buddha?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What is Buddha?

Q: I have no idea.

ZMWB: That's correct. That's Buddha.

Question: How do we stop thinking?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Don't try to stop thinking. Thinking is never a problem. Only if you are attached to your thinking it becomes a problem. So, simply don't attach to thinking—then your thinking becomes truth.

Question: Is Zen simple or is it complicated?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What is Zen? *[Student claps loudly.]* Only that?

Q: Sitting here listening to you.

ZMWB: Is that simple or complicated?

Question: How can we all together at the same time get enlightenment?

Zen Master Wu Bong: What color is this floor?

Q: Brown.

ZMWB: Yes, for me the floor is brown too.

Question: You have this wonderful, clear don't know mind, but what use is it?

Zen Master Wu Bong: How can I help you?

Q: Good question. How can you help me?

ZMWB: What do you need?

Q: Huh! I need a clear don't know mind like you. Can you help me with that?

ZMWB: What are you?

Question: I try to keep my don't know mind always, but I fail a lot. I try to come back to it again and again, but it's not easy. So, how can I keep myself full of that don't know mind only?

Zen Master Wu Bong: You want to keep don't know mind. That's the mistake. Don't keep anything. Just use your great question and you will naturally return to don't know.

Question: I read somewhere that great enlightened masters are reborn 49 days after their death in order to continue their job of bodhisattvas helping all beings. Is this true? How long does it take to be reborn after death? What is the rule for great masters?

Zen Master Wu Bong: $1+1 = 2$

Question: When a Zen master gives transmission, what is it?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Transmission is a tale for fools!

Q: *[Stares incredulously.]*

ZMWB: But when you become 100 percent fool, I'll give you transmission.

Question: You said once that a woman cannot be a Zen master.

Zen Master Wu Bong: *[Silent.]*

Q: Why? Why can't a woman be a Zen Master?

ZMWB: A man cannot either.

Question: It seems like, on the whole, good people practice Zen.

Zen Master Wu Bong: Only bad people practice Zen. And the worst of the worst become Zen masters!

Question: Please teach me how to sit.

Zen Master Wu Bong: You are sitting already.

Q: No! Please teach me to sit correctly.

ZMWB: The body is not important. It's important how you keep your mind when you sit.

Question: What is Buddha?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Who is asking?

The student said nothing. The next day, the same student asked:

Q: What is Buddha?

ZMWB: You already understand.

Question: Can a person who is dead practice?

Zen Master Wu Bong: No body, not possible to practice.

Question: How can we get rid of our expectations?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Just don't do it.

Question: What is fear?

Zen Master Wu Bong: When you want something.

Question: What is the cure for lazy mind?

Zen Master Wu Bong: Suffering.

Question: How can I know if I have got direction?

Zen Master Wu Bong: You can decide. Then do it.

Question: What is the function of a bodhisattva teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen?

Zen Master Wu Bong: It is up to you. You decide.

Question: I don't understand how Zen and compassion—helping others—go together.

Zen Master Wu Bong: Without compassion there is no Zen. Compassion is what it is all about.

Zen Master Wu Bong: When the Buddha was dying, his student Ananda was upset and worried what would happen to all the students when the teacher was gone. The Buddha told him that already the students had dharma and, very importantly, they had each other. *[And he ended our retreat with a smile.]* ♦

Poetry

Morning mist settles down on Su Dok Sa.
Tears silently streak down the face.
Why are you so sad?
Universal Peak (宇峯) pierces through the fog
And basks in the sunlight,
Standing witness
To the infinite blue sky

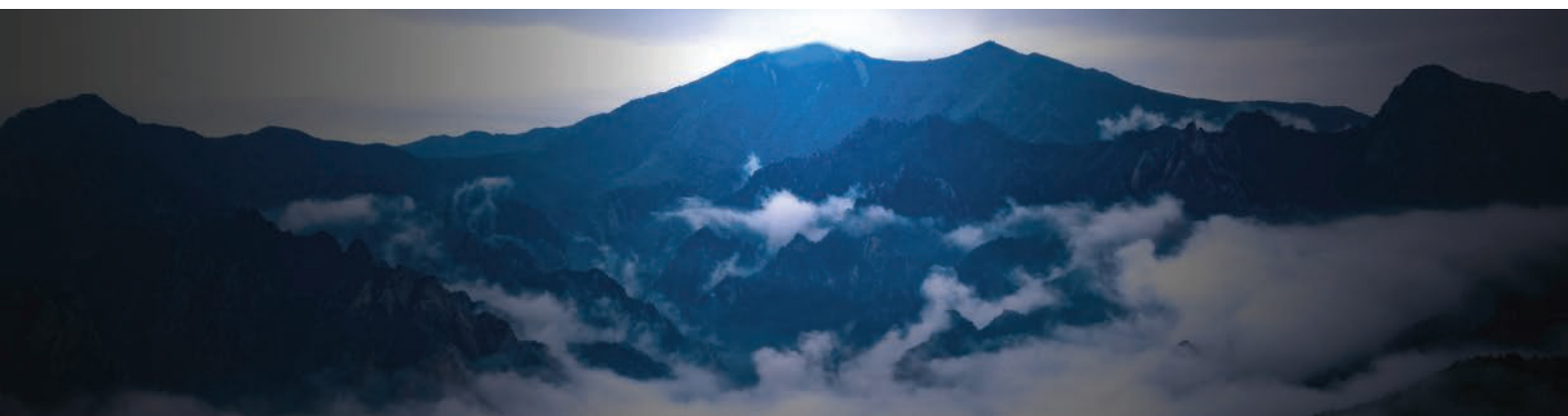
*On receiving the news of Wu Bong Dae Soen Sa Nim
entering Nirvana
Doksung Mountain, Su Dok Sa Temple, April 16, 2013
—Chon Mun Sunim JDPS*

Three Kong-ans

*In memory and gratitude for my teacher, Wu Bong
Dae Soen Sa Nim.*

After walking meditation at Paris Zen Center you
folded your robe properly and left your body. To
which urgent business have you gone?
I couldn't say goodbye to you as I wanted to do. Now
how can I pay you my respects?
We haven't finished our chess tournament. When will
we continue?

—Zen Master Ji Kwang



The great keen-eyed dragon is seated smiling on the Universal Peak.
“Don't kill time! Don't kill space! Just save all beings from suffering!” he says.
His KATZ! terrifies saints and demons,
His dharma eyes penetrate flesh and bones, time and space;
His sword tongue gives life and death without hindrance.
In heaven buddhas and bodhisattvas are laughing with joy: Ha! Ha! Ha!
On earth all beings are crying with sadness: Aigo! Aigo! Aigo!

—Eduardo del Valle

What You Left
for Zen Master Wu Bong
—Ken Kessel JDPSN

We can't know
Why
Today
You didn't
Say you had
Somewhere else
To be
Or
We didn't listen

From Universal Peak
Our tears fall
We could only do
Something with you
Now we have
To do something
Without you
Namu Amita Bul

Deep Meaning

Poem for the inka ceremony of Mukyong JDPSN, 2000

In all Sutras there is only one meaning
But behind this meaning, a deeper meaning;
Behind this meaning, an even deeper meaning.
Cracking thunder, bright lightning,
And all meaning disappears.

What are you?

Swallow the red hot iron.

Auuu!!!

If you find a tree without shadow

In a valley with no echo,

Then it will be clear:

Today is Sunday, 6th of February;

In the Dharma room, a new bright light.

—*Zen Master Wu Bong*



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A complete listing of Zen centers can be found beginning on page 28.



"Clear mind is like the full moon in the sky. Sometimes clouds come and cover it, but the moon is always behind them. Clouds go away, then the moon shines brightly. So don't worry about clear mind: it is always there. ... Thinking comes and goes, comes and goes. You must not be attached to the coming or the going." -Zen Master Seung Sahn

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Gateless Gate Zen Center

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Great Lake Zen Center

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Zen Master Dae Kwang
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Isthmus Zen Community

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org

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