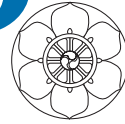


Primary Point

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**THIRTIETH
ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
SCHOOL**

**THREE
TEACHERS
RECEIVE
INKA**

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sa Nims, 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 free of charge, see page 30. The circulation is 5000 copies.

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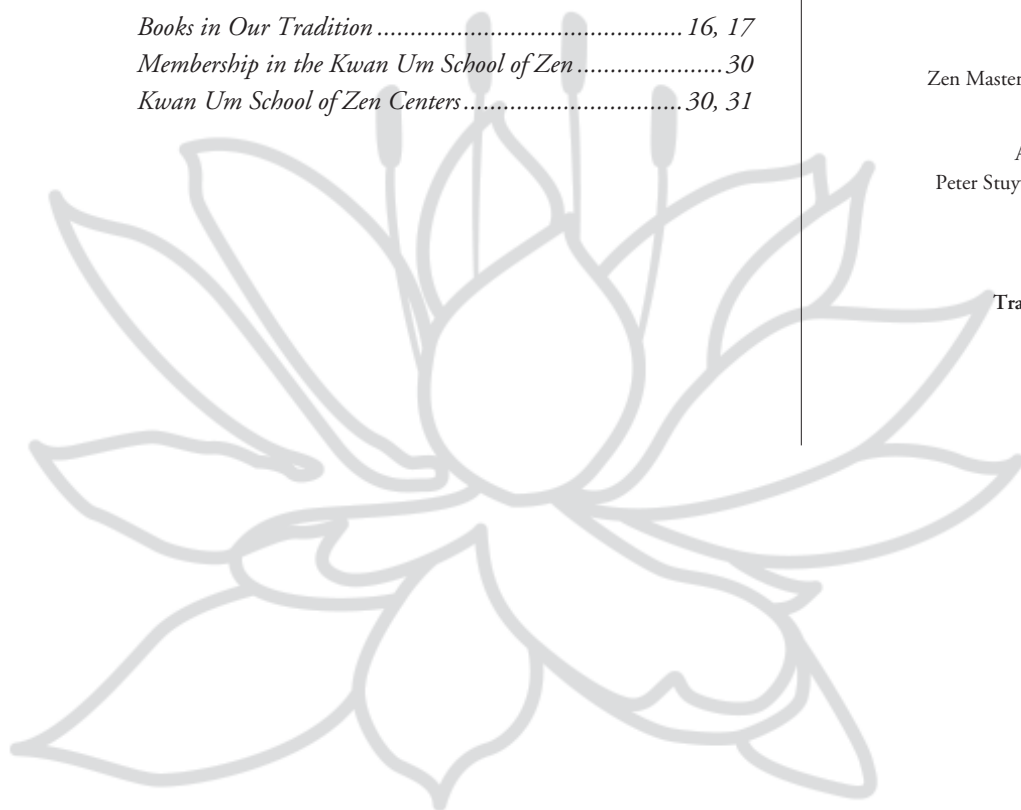
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Thirtieth Anniversary Poem

Zen Master Seung Sahn
April 6, 2002

祝三十二年
一念即是無量劫
是即三十二年
東々各國禪客性
春來百花滿苑中
壬午四月六日
崇山禪

One thought is the same as infinite kalpas
Thirty years is the same as one thought
Zen students are from everywhere, but where is their nature?
Spring comes, flowers blooming



Inka for Steven Cohen

D H A R M A C O M B A T

4]

Steven Cohen JDPSN received inka in a ceremony at Providence Zen Center on April 6, 2002.

Cohen Poep Sa Nim is abbot of the Chogye International Zen Center of New York. He has been a student of Zen Master Seung Sahn since 1974. Before moving to New York in 1984, he was a founding member of the New Haven Zen Center where he served as administrative director (1975-79) and head dharma teacher (1979-84). He became a senior dharma teacher in 1999. Cohen PSN is a Professor of Dermatology, Director of Residency Training, and Deputy Chair of the Department of Dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Steve and Phyllis Cohen have been married for 33 years; they have two children. Twice National Champion (1966-67) and a member of the US Olympic Team 1968, he was inducted into the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame in 1991.

Question: Last year this time you gave a talk at the New Haven Zen Center. Your daughter attended. And as I remember you said this was the first time that your daughter came to such a function where you were teaching. I ask you, if it took this long for your daughter to come hear you speak, how will you attract any students as a teacher?

Cohen PSN: How did you get here?

Q: Through the door.

CPSN: So I guess you found your way.

Q: Thank you for your teaching.

Q: Good morning, Dr. Cohen. My name is Cary, but some people call me Dr. deWit. I'm a doctor and you're a doctor. Are we the same or different?

CPSN: How can I help you?

Q: Is that all?

CPSN: Is that the same or different?

Q: [no reply]

Q: Every morning we bow 108 times. Traditionally it's said we do 108 bows because there's 108 delusions, and so we put them all down. But then, one of the sutras says there's 84,000 different delusions. But the bodhisattva vows say that delusions are endless. So how many delusions are there?

CPSN: Another delusion has just appeared.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Doctor Cohen, you probably make a lot of money. But as a teacher you won't make much money. So which one has more value?

CPSN: What color is the wall?

Q: The wall is white.

CPSN: How much value is there in that?

Q: Thank you very much.

D H A R M A T A L K

Enlightenment is ignorance. Ignorance is enlightenment.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

No enlightenment. No ignorance.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Enlightenment is enlightenment. Ignorance is ignorance.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Which of these statements is correct?

KATZ!

The dharma room is filled with kasas of many colors. All things are your teachers.

In this season of the Buddha's birthday of course we are drawn to reflect on his life... The young Buddha, Gautama Shakyamuni, was a prince whose life of privilege, riches, jewels, a palace, even a beautiful wife, and child could not dispel his inner questions about *why we are born; why we die; and what is the meaning of life?*

So, he spurned the life of material advantage and left the palace. He wandered in the forest as a beggar for many years before he came to sit in meditation under the Bodhi tree. Then one morning, Gautama Shakyamuni became Buddha, which means he awakened to his True Nature; he was enlightened about the answers to the great questions that had plagued him. Then he devoted the remainder of his life to teaching others. Without recounting all the details, it seems most important that Buddha was a human being from whose life we can all find parallels.

In 1974, my wife of five years, Phyllis, and I moved to New Haven. After a few relocation hiccups, we found our own palace... a two-story 'flat' on a quiet city street... surrounded by green trees, covered by blue sky, birdsong everywhere. Many nice neighbors became our friends. My new job at the Yale Medical School was very exciting... outside everything seemed great, but inside the young doctor was unhappy because he did not understand the purpose of his life.

In the autumn of that first year in New Haven, Zen Master Seung Sahn and his first Western monk, Mu Gak Sunim (now Stephen Mitchell) came to Yale. Mu Gak Sunim delivered a stunning dharma talk, followed by Zen Master Seung Sahn taking questions and answers. At one point he asked someone in the audience, "What is your name?" But after a response of 'John' or 'William,' Zen Master Seung Sahn laughingly retorted, "Oh, that is only your body name, but what is the name of your true self?"

An awkward silence blended with the look of confusion on everyone's face... until, in a barely audible voice, the unwitting dharma combatant whispered, "I don't know." "Yah," Zen Master Seung Sahn playfully said, "The mind that does not know *is* the Buddha." At the conclusion of questions and answers, Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Only go straight, don't know, which is clear like space, soon attain enlightenment, and save all beings from suffering."

After this dharma talk, a few of us started practicing meditation every morning. Zen Master Ji Bong was among the first small group. Before long, the New Haven Zen Center was founded. It was during those formative years of my own adult life that I often turned to Zen Master Seung Sahn for advice. He came to New Haven to lead retreats three or four times a year. I went to Providence Zen Center for ceremonies several times a year when the Zen Center was still on Hope Street. Among the more frustrating problems I faced in those days was the fact that my wife, Phyllis, was very much opposed to Zen.

Zen Master Seung Sahn at first told me, "Oh, your wife is your greatest teacher—never talk to her about Zen. Only give her good speech and loving action." Sometime later I told Zen Master Seung Sahn that she did not care about good speech and loving action... she often yelled at me that, "You're only being nice so I will approve of your being involved with that 'loony Moony.'" Zen Master Seung Sahn calmly observed, "I understand your wife's mind. She has very strong likes and dislikes. So *you* must do together action in the Zen Center with other people. Then this together action will take away your opinion, your condition, and your situation very easily. Then your wife will be 'no problem.'"

Zen Master Seung Sahn always asked about my family; however it was quite a few years later, when I was becoming head dharma teacher at the New Haven Zen Center, that we discussed how my wife felt about Zen. I explained that she was still very angry about my involvement, often reiterating words to the effect... "Going to the Zen Center all the time is your selfish, navel gazing, lazy mind running amok. That is bullshit Zen! If you are a real bodhisattva then you will be a correct husband and correct father and stay home with your family." Zen Master Seung Sahn then surprised me by shouting, "Your wife has 'number one' very bad speech and very bad action, so you must come and live for awhile at a Zen Center."

Later, I sheepishly told Zen Master Seung Sahn that I decided not to move into a Zen Center, and that although little had changed with my wife, it was most important for me to work things out with her. He looked at me in the most kindly way, put his hand on my shoulder, and spoke softly, "You like, I like!"

In the deepest sense, what Zen Master Seung Sahn has taught me derives from his living example that letting go of one's opinion, one's condition, and one's situation to

Continued on page 24



Inka
for
Darek
Gorzewski

Darek Gorzewski JDPSN received inka in a ceremony at Providence Zen Center on April 6, 2002.

Gorzewski Poep Sa Nim began studying with Zen Master Seung Sahn in Poland in 1980, where he co-founded the Lublin Zen Center, serving as abbot from 1981–86. In 1986, he came to train at the Providence Zen Center. He has participated in many retreats both in the United States and in Korea, in addition to visiting Eastern European Zen centers. He includes the Peace Pagoda at Providence Zen Center as one of his many projects as a contractor. Gorzewski PSN resides in Seattle, where he assists Zen Master Ji Bong with teaching at Dharma Sound Zen Center.

D H A R M A C O M B A T

Question: Zen Master Seung Sahn's number one teaching is, "Don't make anything." But you already constructed many things. So how do you make this correct?

Gorzewski PSN: I just built something. Why do you make something out of it?

Q: Thank you very much.

Q: A long time ago I heard that you were a psychologist in Poland. I don't know if that's true. Then you came here and you do lots of beautiful building. Now you're becoming a teacher. Which one do you like?

GPSN: Right now I'm just sitting here answering your question.

Q: Several years ago when I started practicing I came to Providence for the first time. And Zen Master Dae Kwang and you were giving a Foundations of Zen retreat. You're becoming a teacher, so I guess now you're qualified to answer this question. What are the foundations of Zen?

GPSN: What are doing now?

Q: I'm sitting here talking to you.

GPSN: On what?

Q: On a cushion.

GPSN: Oh yes, a solid foundation.

D H A R M A T A L K

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Hot is cold. Cold is hot.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

No cold, no hot.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Hot is hot, cold is cold.

If you like any of these three statements, then you are attached to something, either to your thinking, emptiness, or name and form. So please tell me, which one is correct?

KATZ!

Candles behind me are burning hot. There is cold wind outside.

I would like to start this talk by telling you a short story. Actually, it's been so long that I could start it, "A long time ago in Poland." It happened in the beginning of the eighties during Zen Master Seung Sahn's third visit to Poland. It was my second meeting with him. It happened that another important religious person, the Pope of the Catholic Church, was visiting our country, his home country, at the same time. Zen Master Seung Sahn had this very interesting idea. He wanted to get in touch with the Pope and ask him in person to call a meeting of important religious leaders from all over the world to get together in Rome and make real world peace. What Zen Master Seung Sahn had in mind was not only a conference with a lot of talking and exchanging ideas and opinions about the world peace, he also proposed that these spiritual leaders take a hot bath together where they would have shed their clothes, and along with them the distinctions and differences between various traditions.

Contacting the Pope was easier said than done; it proved to be very difficult to get through to him. Zen Master Seung Sahn tried sending letters, but there was no response. He knew that the Pope would be visiting Poland at the same time, so before he came he asked us, "Can we arrange a meeting?" And we said, "We'll do our best, we'll see." After quite a few phone calls and a lot of try mind, we managed to get a date at the headquarters of the Catholic Church. The only thing they didn't tell us was with whom we would be meeting. Obviously the Pope was kind of out of the question, but we were hoping that maybe one of the Cardinals would meet us.

On the day of the meeting, Zen Master Seung Sahn, Zen Master Wu Bong, Mu Sang Sunim, Diana Clark and a couple of American students and four Polish students went together in two cars. We came in, and after waiting for a few minutes, an old priest received us. He was some sort of, I don't know, undersecretary of an undersecretary, not quite what we hoped for, but that was the best we could do. He led us to the audience room and we sat around the round table and Zen Master Seung Sahn started talking, with Myong Oh Sunim translating for the priest.

And he was saying, "this is the very important thing, I would like to ask His Holiness John Paul II to call this meeting," and he just tried to explain the important points of the letter to the priest, but the old prelate was not listening at all—it was obvious to all of us. Zen Master Seung Sahn at one point brought up the name of Kwan Seum Bosal as the embodiment of compassion, and that was enough for the priest. He just interrupted him, cut into mid-sentence of Zen Master Seung Sahn's talk, and started to speak about Mary, Mother of God, because that was the embodiment of compassion in the Catholic Church. From this point on, Zen Master Seung Sahn couldn't get a word in edgewise. So he just sat patiently and listened to the priest who was just talking and talking and talking, and obviously the whole message we tried to deliver was lost in the process; it just didn't drive home.

Before the meeting started, the prelate told us how much time he could spend with us that morning, so we were checking our watches and it became obvious that the audience would be over very soon. Finally, Zen Master Seung Sahn at one point just interrupted the priest. His voice had risen; he was almost shouting, "Listen! This is very important thing!" And then he proceeded to repeat again what this letter was about and why it was so important. The old priest was stuck, he couldn't say anything, his jaw dropped and finally he was just listening.

And then after that, Zen Master Seung Sahn presented the letter and said, "please deliver it to His Holiness John Paul II." Then we thanked the prelate, we bowed to each other, and we left. As we were leaving, we obviously thought, "Okay, it's not over yet, what kind of guarantee do we have that this letter will be delivered?" So we asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "Sir, what can we do to help this message get to the Pope?" And Zen Master Seung Sahn just looked at us, and smiled, and he said, "We did our best, now, don't worry, put it all down, it's already done, finished."

That was a really interesting teaching at that point for me, because Zen Master Seung Sahn was really showing us how to do things one hundred percent, and absolutely not to get attached to the result of it. Just put your best effort, only do it, and forget about it. (As a footnote—the Pope organized such a meeting in Rome a couple of years later. Zen Master Seung Sahn was not invited to attend it and the idea of "true world peace in a hot bath" was not utilized.)

Then, I came to the United States in 1986 and I was here at the twentieth anniversary of our sangha in 1992, and I remember somebody, at one occasion or another, asked Zen Master Seung Sahn about the core of his teaching here in the West during the last twenty years. He said something like this in response: "For twenty years, I taught only two things: only keep clear mind—don't know—and if you do something, just do it. That's all, but nobody listens." That was also very interesting—it reminded me of the story I just told. Zen Master Seung Sahn actually lives the teaching and this whole Zen teaching really is very simple. If we could only do it, and not get attached to it, not get attached to the result of it, just put our best effort, only do it and keep clear mind, then everything is already complete, everything is finished the moment we do it.

In the opening statement of this talk, I was asking you about hot and cold. There is a kong-an that we use in our school, which I'm sure many of you have heard. It goes something like this, "When hot comes, hot kills you. When cold comes, cold kills you." But actually, if we make anything, then anything comes, anything kills us. If we don't make anything, just do it, then everything is already complete. In every moment, everything is already complete, without us making anything. If we make anything, it usu-

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Inka for Thomas Pastor

D H A R M A C O M B A T

Thomas Pastor JDPSN received inka in a ceremony at Providence Zen Center on April 6, 2002.

Pastor Poep Sa Nim is founder (1994) and abbot of Great Bright Zen Center. He began formal study in the Kwan Um School of Zen in the late 1980s with Zen Master Ji Bong. In addition to his teaching responsibilities at Great Bright Zen Center, Pastor PSN also teaches an Introduction to Zen Buddhism course at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He initiated a Zen meditation program at Federal Prison Nellis five years ago which now claims one of the highest attendance rates of any volunteer program at that facility. A former professional musician who now serves as secretary/treasurer of the Las Vegas Musicians Union, Pastor PSN has performed with over 100 recording and show business luminaries. He is married and the father of two children.

Question: So you're from Great Brightness Zen Center. Zen Master Chinul was talking about brightness. He said the whole point of practice is to trace the brightness back. So when you trace the brightness back where does it go?

Pastor PSN: The light above you is shining brightly.

Q: Thank you.

Q: So you live in Las Vegas and tickets to Cirque de Soleil are a hundred dollars a piece. Can you get me a free ticket to Cirque de Soleil?

PPSN: Get out your wallet.

Q: I was noticing during the ceremony that Olivia kind of wanders off and then returns to her mother, and also Justine is sitting with her father, and Kimball is sitting with his mother. So, how do children know to return to their parents?

PPSN: Where do your parents live?

Q: I don't know!

PPSN: Well, when you find out, come ask me again.

Q: Okay.

Q: Hi, I have a friend from Las Vegas. When I first met him I didn't know that people actually lived in Las Vegas, and so I said, "How can you live in Las Vegas?" And he said, "Oh no, it's okay, there are plenty of normal people there." And I don't know you at all, so how can you show me that you're normal, one of the normal ones?

PPSN: The floor is yellow, the cushion is blue.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Thom, earlier, I overheard a conversation in the hallway in which you were asked if maybe you would play the saxophone tonight, and you hesitated and it didn't seem like you would. Tonight will be a celebration and if tonight you don't play the saxophone, how will you celebrate?

PPSN: Be Bop Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

Q: Thank you for playing.

D H A R M A T A L K

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Cloud is mountain, mountain is cloud.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Originally no cloud, no mountain.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Cloud is cloud, mountain is mountain.

Which one of these statements is true?

If you find it, this stick will hit you thirty times. If you don't find it, this stick will also hit you thirty times.

What can you do?

KATZ!

Cloud is white, mountain is blue.

The third patriarch once wrote:

To deny the reality of things is to miss their reality;

To assert the emptiness of things is to miss their reality.

The more you talk about it, the further astray you wander from the truth.

Stop talking and thinking and there is nothing you will not be able to know.

Like many of us, my early years were characterized by strong attachments—not to just a few things, but to many things. Little did I realize that this was a harbinger of suffering—always wanting something, wanting something, wanting something. It never occurred to me that this very wanting was the source and foundation of unhappiness. Desire mind kills the resources necessary to find that which we are truly after, namely to find our center.

For twenty years I made a living as a professional musician, and even though I traveled and performed with top recording artists such as Frank Sinatra, Tom Jones, Sammy Davis, Jr. and the like, it was never enough. There was always something missing, something unsatisfactory about this life.

A few of my friends had recording contracts of their own, and for a while that became a driving force. More, more, more, was the insatiable cry.

Ironically, I had a nice home and family. I still have the same nice home and family. As a matter of fact, my daughter Jane made the trip from her home in Los Angeles to be here with us today. At that time, however, this emptiness kept gnawing at me. Although I was present for all of the important family functions and holidays those events usually found me lost somewhere in my thinking.

Lost in a search for something that although elusive, seemingly, or so I thought, had form and definition. If only I could find it.

Music can be a great vehicle for expressing *wu shin* or no mind. On a few occasions when a particular concert performance jelled, floating above mere technique, some interesting results would appear. It was like capturing lightening in a jar, but never quite knowing when it would happen again.

I read a little about meditation at that time and began a cursory, dilettante's search for meaning through books, hoping it would in some way contribute to my musical experience. Life seesawed along this path for quite a while until a telephone call one morning from my nephew revealed sadly that my brother Bob had died in his sleep the previous night. No warning, his heart just stopped beating.

In retrospect, his death became a strong teaching tool. As Zen Master Seung Sahn says, "This life guarantees you nothing."

I was not familiar with that term then, but certainly the truth of that teaching became immediately apparent. My brother was already dead, and here I was still hanging around the eastern philosophy section of Barnes & Noble bookstore. It hit me that I could someday be an old man still pursuing that same course, and for what?

Once again the third patriarch:

To return to the root is to find the meaning,

But to pursue appearances is to miss the source.

After a conversation with a long-time friend who many of you know as co-founder of the New Haven Zen Center, David Mott, I was introduced to the Kwan Um School of Zen. Through the wisdom and guidance of Zen Master Seung Sahn, guiding teacher Zen Master Ji Bong, and more Yong Maeng Jong Jins than I can remember, the clinging and attachment alluded to earlier in this talk, began to slowly fade away.

When we quiet the mind and look carefully at our experience, we see that this world is a world of constant change and insecurity. Anything that arises in our life, no matter how hard we try to stabilize it, will pass away. Whatever appears is transitory and thus can never last. Consciousness and object reveal themselves to be continually dissolving like snowflakes on a hot oven. Whatever appears is not dependable and there is no refuge, no anchor, no safe haven.

Again the third patriarch:

If there is even a trace of this or that, right or wrong,

The mind essence will be lost in confusion.

Just let things be in their own way

And there will be neither coming nor going.

To seek mind with discriminating mind is the greatest of all mistakes.

Continued on page 25

FOR
WHAT
AND
FOR
WHOM?



Zen Master Soeng Hyang

[Raises Zen stick over head.]

This stick...

[Hits table with stick.]

... this sound... and your mind.
Are they the same or different?

10]

*The Kwan Um
School of Zen
celebrated its
thirtieth
anniversary
with a ceremony
at Providence
Zen Center on
April 6, 2002.*

That was one of the first kong-ans that I remember being asked by Zen Master Seung Sahn. One of the really unique things I found about going to Doyle Avenue was the eagerness and the openness, the enthusiasm to teach that I received from him, like a magnet, pulling... come, come, come. And I had my doubts because this tradition wasn't Japanese and everything I had read and really been attracted to had been Japanese style, very simple altar, grays and little hues of black and gold but this *[pointing to the altar behind her]* is what we got.

One of the most important teachings is that form is emptiness and emptiness is form. So, from the very beginning Zen Master Seung Sahn always taught those very simple things: form is emptiness, emptiness is form; then no form, no emptiness; then form is form, emptiness is emptiness. And you can hear those words and you can try to understand those words, but again it boils down to practicing and perceiving these things.

This very simple kong-an—this stick, this sound and your mind, are they the same or different—some people don't understand that kong-an at all. Maybe at the end of this talk I might even answer this kong-an, but half the people in the room won't know I answered it, because they don't understand, and that's the practice. Some people will know I answered it and think, "I understand this kong-an." That's it, so simple, so wonderful. Yet, of those of us that understand the kong-an, most of us haven't really attained it. We always talk about, "understanding cannot help you." These are all things that I learned from Zen Master Seung Sahn. Within five weeks of learning a little English, he had learned how to say those things with so much enthusiasm.

Michael Konstan noted that if you feed a college student, they'll stay around. I wasn't a college student, I was a nurse, but I was staying around too. The food was really good. Zen Master Seung Sahn used to make us homemade noodles. He'd roll out this flour mixture

Thirtieth A

and take a knife and slice these big, flat noodles and he'd throw them in miso soup and he'd put in tons of butter and kimchee and peanut butter and tofu and potatoes. It would look gross... it would taste good, though. But I remember watching him cook one time and he was cutting up the onions and the skins were falling on the floor and he'd just kick the skins underneath the stove. I'd read all these books about Japanese style and Japanese cooking and I thought, "Oh God, he's kicking the skins under the stove, how do you justify that? It's not correct Zen, you know?" And the soup came out delicious. I started to get that point: for what and for whom. What do you do when you make a bowl of soup? Did it nourish you? What are you going to do with that nourishment? Get the housemaster to clean out the onions later. I was the housemaster.

It was mentioned that students come and go. When I was first asked to give this talk I thought, oh no, don't tell me I'm the one, I'm the oldest, I'm the thirty-year person. I thought, gee, where are all those people, I miss them. Some people left and if only we had done it this way, if only we had done it that way, if Zen Master Seung Sahn had only done it this way or that way more people would have stayed, more people would be here today. And that's what we call checking. That's checking mind. The most important thing is be here, be here. Just [snaps fingers] be here and be awake and be alive right now.

There are so many stories about my teacher. One time I was driving home with him from Cambridge. It was about 10:00 o'clock at night and we were both tired. It was summertime, so there were a lot of bugs in the headlights. One bug landed on our windshield. I was driving and going about 65 mph. The bug slapped against the windshield, and its wings kept moving. It hit at 65 miles per hour and it's just this little bug so my logical mind thought... it's dead. But it kept moving as if it were alive. Zen Master Seung Sahn kept looking at it and looking at it from the passenger seat and he suddenly said, "Stop!" I pulled over. He got out and crawled up on the hood and examined the bug. Cars were whipping by. Logically, yes, it was dead, but it looked alive. That little chance that maybe it was suffering, maybe there was a still a chance to put it over on the grass was in his consciousness. That's better than any dharma talk I have ever heard. Just that, live that life of "how may I help you." Is there anything I can still do, even though it looks like it's impossible? Maybe there's something, maybe there's something.

Right now he's very ill. I'm a hospice nurse. I'm hearing this story about him being in the hospital and he's on a respirator and he's on dialysis and he's on a lot of different machines keeping his vital organs running, and part of me goes, let go of that, what's the point, if your heart stops why get it going again. That's just me. I don't have his body. I'm not there, I'm not with him, people want

him to live and he wants to live for people. He loves medicine. Anybody who knows him... the pills, the bottles... he's always had lots of medicine in his room and around him and many, many doctors. So, of course that's what he's doing. He's using his doctors, he's using his medicine, he's using all those modern machines and doing it his way. And just like that bug on the windshield, maybe it's still there, maybe there's still life, maybe there's two, three more years, maybe he'll see the reunification of Korea, maybe he'll see the Korean sangha in New York move to Manhattan. We don't know. So, there's that don't quit, don't quit, don't quit mind. Again, it's not right or wrong, whether you just let go and phase out and die sitting up still in a mountain temple or you're in the hospital, that's not the point. Again, it's for what, for whom do you live, and what am I?

I'm just going to tell a couple of my favorite stories that are in *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*. This is a very, very beautiful book. Twice I've done long retreats by myself and taken that book. It has 100 titles in it, so every day I would read a chapter out of that book. One of them is about expensive dharma. It's called "My Dharma is Too Expensive." It's just a great little story, it reminds me of our journey here.

A student meets a teacher and says, "Please teach me. Give me your dharma." And the teacher says, "Oh, my dharma is much too expensive for you. What do you have?" And the student pulls out maybe 75 cents, whatever he has, and says, "This is all I have. This is all of my money. I give it all to you." And the teacher says, "If you had ten billion dollars it wouldn't be enough."

So, the student goes back and sits and wonders, why is that? What's this about expensive? Ah hah! So he comes back and says, "I give you my life. I'll work for free for the temple for the rest of my life. I'll do anything for you." And the teacher says, "Ten million lives like yours is nothing, that's not enough. My dharma's much more expensive than that." And then the student goes back and sits and thinks about it and ponders... ah, now I get it. "I give you my mind," he says to the teacher. The teacher responds, "Your mind is a pile of garbage, I don't want that. My dharma is much more expensive than that." Again the student goes back and sits... what is this? Really sits for a while, and then gets [claps hands] KATZ! Gets empty, don't know, that mind. Just that. Really clear, really good. The teacher says, "Oh, my dharma's much more expensive than that. Are you kidding?"

So then the student's really perplexed, really upset. What's better than emptiness? What's better than that one still moment together where there's no idea, no nothing? And then after six months or six years the student gets that second enlightenment that we talk about and he runs up to the teacher and says, "Now I have it." And the teacher says, "What?" And the student says, "The sky is blue, the grass is green." And the teacher says, "Oh my God! That's

awful. What kind of a student are you? Anybody can do that." And the master starts to walk away. And the student gets really upset, really angry and says, "You know, you can take your dharma and shove it up your ass!" The teacher keeps walking away, and then he turns around and says, "You!" The student turns around and the teacher says, "Don't lose my dharma." So that was the one genuine thing, just, "Shove it up your ass!" But the student was owning it. It came from his gut, just trusting and believing in himself.

When I think back about Zen Master Seung Sahn, it's that total encouragement to believe in myself and for each of us to be encouraged to believe in ourselves. What are you? What am I? What is this? And that's all he taught. Sometimes I've heard people through the years say, "What are we going to do when Zen Master Seung Sahn dies? What's going to happen?" That doesn't die... that we should be able to just work on believing in ourselves, knowing who we are, what to do.

He used to say to me, "You're going to be a nun." I said, "Well, I really like being a nurse." "Oh, there's tons of nurses. Nurses are a dime a dozen. How many women really attain the dharma and become a great teacher?" I was checking, checking, checking. And I just kept being a nurse. He told me not to do that, but, that's even better—that's believing in yourself. That comes from this [*points to her center*]. What are you? What is this?

I read once that the sign of a good teacher is when their students are clearer than they are. You believe in yourself and you stop listening to the teacher and you say, "what am I?", and do it. You don't stop listening to the *teaching*, that's different. So, paying attention, moment to moment, what am I? That's it. I'm very glad to see everybody here and very glad to stop checking and to be able to appreciate that each of us is coming and going and trying.

The other story I wanted to tell from *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* is about the boat monk. These two students were disciples of a Zen Master who was very old and dying, and he gave them transmission. One of them was described as being tall and strong and broad with great teaching, great technique, great dharma. He took over the temple when his master died. He taught hundreds of monks; he was just brilliant, a wonderful guy. And the other monk was smaller in stature and quieter and liked more solitude and a lot of people didn't notice him at all. Once in a while he would say something that people would remember, but he was very quiet.

So he decided to leave and just row a ferryboat back and forth across the river in another province. He let his

hair grow and stopped being a monk, stopped wearing monk's clothes. Never married; he was still a monk but he just didn't have any outside stature. Before he left the temple he had told his dharma brother, "I am very different from you, but at some point send me a disciple, send me someone and then I'll fulfill my obligation to my teacher."

The years went by and finally the monk that had stayed and become the great Zen Master found a student for this monk who just ferried people back and forth across the river. This student was very attached to words, but a very clear and wonderful person. So he went and met the boat monk and they rowed slowly across the river. They had a little dharma exchange. It was all words. It was OK, but lots of times dharma combat is just a bunch of words; it wasn't quite ringing.

Finally the monk took his oar and just slapped the student right into the water. And he said, "You know, even the greatest speech in the world is like a tether that you tie a donkey to, and it just goes around and around and it doesn't really hit the mark." The student was trying to crawl back into the boat, and the monk slapped him again into the water. And with that second slap, the student's mind opened and he got it. He got untethered from the words. Then they just sat in the boat together and spent some time and just connected.

Then the monk deposited the student on the other side of the river, rowed back to the middle, flipped the boat over and never appeared again. What's the teacher, what's the disappearance? It's not appearing or disappearing, it's just—can you listen, can you wake up and go beyond the words and [*claps hands*] feel the slap and then do your job.

I want to thank very much Zen Master Seung Sahn. I know he would like to be here right now, and he is here. I want to thank him for all that work and not giving up and just as he isn't giving up today, just taking it out to that last thread. And I hope that each of us finds our way, whether it's riding in the front of a truck, or whatever we need to do, but to do it wholeheartedly and do it not for ourselves but for all people. Thank you very much.

[*Raises Zen stick over head.*]

This stick...

[*Hits table with stick.*]

...this sound... and your mind. Are they the same or different?

[*Raises Zen stick over head and hits table with stick.*]

Thank you.

WE
WILL
MEET
IN
10,000
YEARS

Zen Master Ji Bong



It is a privilege and an honor to welcome you to the celebration of the thirtieth year anniversary of Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching tradition in America. When JW called and asked me to do this opening address he said, "We are asking you to do this because, among all of the students in the school, you are one of the oldest in terms of point of service." And that is, in fact, true. I have been around for twenty-eight years. However, he was too polite to also remind me that I am one of the oldest students in terms of the years that are actually on my head! During this past year I turned sixty, therefore we now have a teacher in our school, other than Zen Master Seung Sahn, who has passed that revered marker. Alas, as I look to my right and my left I notice that several of you are tracking very closely behind me. It is apparent that we will soon have many "senior" students and teachers among our sangha.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the early days of our school and offer a few general observations about our sangha at this time—our thirtieth birthday. For me, the journey started in January of 1974. At that time I was living in Boston doing research on a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. I received an invitation to come to New Haven, Connecticut to deliver a public talk about my research and, in addition, to interview for an academic position at Yale University. During that interview I met an interesting fellow named David Mott. After the job interview David and I struck up a conversation that eventually began to focus on our mutual interest in Zen Buddhism. It turned out that both of us had been attempting to practice alone for several years. And, we were both searching for a teacher.

During the course of the ensuing summer we corresponded and decided that in the autumn semester we would form a practice group and make a serious search for a teacher to guide that group. When I first got to New Haven we went and visited Eido Shimano Roshi at Dai Bosatsu Temple in upstate New York. Later, we saw Sasaki Roshi in New Haven. However, at that time, neither of those Zen Masters was able to take on the responsibility of guiding our Zen group.

Fortunately, in November of that year I was browsing in a rather famous bookstore in New Haven called Book World. In the basement of Book World there was a quite large collection of books on Eastern religions. That particular day I was perusing a book by Ramana Maharshi when suddenly a voice came from behind me and said, "So, you like Ramana Maharshi?" I turned around and said, "Yeah, I really like Ramana Maharshi." This person then said, "I know somebody that knows everything that Ramana Maharshi knows." I replied, "Well, that is, indeed, interesting. By the way, who are you?" He said, "I'm Mu Gak." Then I said, "Mu Gak?" He replied, "That means 'no enlightenment.'" Now that was really interesting, because I had been searching for enlightenment for a very long time and this guy was named "no enlightenment."

It turned out that Mu Gak Sunim actually was Stephen Mitchell, the famous poet and translator, who many of you in this audience know quite well. The two of us went out and had a cup of coffee. In the ensuing conversation he told me a great deal about Zen Master Seung Sahn and finally he said, "If you would like to meet him I can arrange for him to come to Yale and give a public talk." I, of course,

agreed and about a month later Zen Master Seung Sahn and Mu Gak Sunim came and gave a talk at Berkeley College. Zen Master Seung Sahn was answering questions after Stephen's opening remarks.

David Mott and I were sitting in the rear of the room directly underneath a light switch. In response to a question, Zen Master Seung Sahn asked the audience, "What is enlightenment?" Now, all of us familiar with David know that he is always looking for some way to get on stage if it is at all possible. And, I'm the kind of person that will always prod somebody to get on stage if I can do so and stay in the background. Therefore, I punched David lightly in the ribs and pointed to the light switch and gave him the sign to flick it—which he immediately did. The room went dark. Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Wonderful! Who did that?" Other people in the room began to complain and shouted, "Come on, turn the lights back on." David flicked the lights back on and waved his hands as the guilty party.

Zen Master Seung Sahn stared at the two of us and asked, "Lights come on, then what?" We were completely stuck. After a moment Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Your head is a dragon and your tail is a snake." I thought, wow, this guy is really cool! And from that point forward the New Haven Zen Center had its teacher. Another person who was there that night was Dr. Steve Cohen, who is sitting here today in the front row. Eventually, we became the "gang of three" and within a few weeks we rented an apartment and began a formal practice together each morning.

The story from there has a lot of interesting twists and turns. I remember coming to Providence Zen Center on Hope Street for the first time and encountering blue, green, yellow and red cushions; the stylized paintings and the weird pentatonic chanting—in short the beginning of my panoramic journey into the magic kingdom of Korean Buddhism. Of course, all of us who have been around for a long time can regale you with stories about those days. It certainly was a lot of fun. Zen Master Soeng Hyang once said to me, "In those days, Zen Master Seung Sahn used to wear a sailor's hat and after retreats we would sing Korean folk songs or Italian love songs, roll around on the floor eating popcorn and sharing all sorts of dharma goodies with one another." In significant ways that was what the first decade of our practice was basically about. It was like a parent teaching and playing with his children. And it was very wonderful. We, as his children, squabbled and scrambled for attention as we slowly grew emotionally, intellectually and spiritually.

As the second decade of our relationship with Zen Master Seung Sahn unfolded we became more like teenagers in our practices. And, like teenagers, we began to question and test the wisdom and authority of our spiritual parent. I was recently talking to one of our students who is currently practicing with the Dharma

Sound group in Seattle. She got very angry with the "old man" and left the school for seventeen years, only to return in the past five years. However, during the 1980s there was a lot of turmoil and many students left altogether. As I look out at this audience I see so many new faces, faces quite different from the majority of those that I saw when giving talks here in the 1980s. But, thankfully, some of us refuse to go away no matter how often we get hit by Zen Master Seung Sahn's stick or his tongue.

An interviewer once asked Suzuki Roshi, "How many people were originally practicing with you as a young man at your home temple?" He replied, "There were about 370 of us." The interviewer then asked, "How many of that group received transmission?" Suzuki Roshi's wife interrupted the exchange and proudly proclaimed, "Only Shunryu got transmission." The interviewer was quite impressed and asked, "Really? Only you? Why?" Suzuki Roshi was quiet for a moment, then meekly said, "Everybody else left." So there is something to be said for staying around and just being present.

Today we are marking the end of the third decade of our years together. This last decade has involved the process of taking responsibility. As our teacher's age has grown and his health has begun to falter, the leadership and teaching roles in our school have largely been assumed by the senior students. This process has been smooth in some ways and quite bumpy in others. It has, indeed, been reflective of all the stuff that comes up in peoples' lives as they accept the vicissitudes of adult life—divorces, sexual issues, ego attachments, etc. So there have been storm clouds and some heavy winds, but many of us are still here—not just surviving, but also continuing to mature and prosper. As my old jazz-playing friends used to say, "We're still cookin'."

It's very precarious to get into the prediction business, but I'll be brave and make two predictions about our near future. The first concerns how we are going to deal with an impending sense of loss. We have already lost Su Bong Sunim—it hardly seems possible that it was eight years ago. There is never more than a few days that go by when I don't feel the loss of my dharma brother, and I'm sure Zen Master Bon Yeon and others who were close to him also live with that pain. Zen Master Soeng Hyang's been sick and recently had major surgery. I've had a heart attack. Zen Master Wu Bong had a stroke. Many of us are no longer young and our founding teacher at this moment lies critically ill in Korea. Therefore it is apparent that one of the things we're going to have to face (with as much compassion and wisdom as we can muster) is this sense of loss—the loss of some of the most significant persons in our lives. As Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say in his early years in America, "Changing, changing, changing!" Some of us may not be here for our fortieth anniversary. Our founding teacher probably won't be here.

Secondly, it is quite apparent that the individual

members of our dharma family are going to have varying attitudes about how we should develop a uniquely American approach to spreading the dharma. Some teachers are going to want to be independent or loosely affiliated with a national organization (we have already seen this among some of our teachers in the past few years). Others will want to be tightly joined together within a large national organization. Having different outlooks is neither good nor bad; it's just the way things are among all collections of people, even families. My wish is that we as a family might find a sense of charity, genuine clarity, and most importantly, a real sense of wisdom and compassion in dealing with each other as these natural processes unfold. And one personal wish that I have is that our family finds it possible to accommodate a cranky and independent old uncle from California within the group.

Thirty years! Thirty years is a long time, particularly when it defines a crucial segment of the arc of our individual lives—our successes in our professions, our lives as monks, and our attempts as Zen teachers. All of these things are, indeed, important. But today, above all things, I want to personally thank Zen Master Seung Sahn for the wonderful teaching that he has given to me about time. It is obvious that when you study with somebody for thirty years you're going to receive all kinds of gifts, most of which you can never sufficiently repay.

I remember clearly a dharma talk given by Zen Master Seung Sahn in Los Angeles about twenty years ago. There was a fellow sitting in the back of the room—it was a big group like this—who stood up in the midst of the talk and posed a question to Zen Master Seung Sahn. Zen Master Seung Sahn interrupted his train of thought and began to seriously answer the man's question. The fellow stood up, stared at Zen Master Seung Sahn and after about a minute or so derisively muttered, "Huh!" and stalked out of the room. Zen Master Seung Sahn never changed his demeanor and completed the answer to the man's question. Then he returned to the general text of his talk as if nothing had happened.

Afterwards in his room, I asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, "How do you feel when you try to give this teaching to a person and he gives you this 'Huh!' kind of attitude?" Zen Master Seung Sahn smiled and said to me, "It's like this: You're planting seeds. Sometimes you throw the seeds out and it's like they are scattered in a very fertile area. In that kind of environment the soil is so rich you hardly need to water it, you just throw the seeds down and four or five days later 'boom,' the plant starts to come up." All of us who are teachers occasionally encounter students like

that—they immediately embrace the training and give a maximum effort from the outset.

Then Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Other times you cast the seeds of teaching and they land on cement." Have any of you ever felt like your brain is full of cement? Finally Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "We can hope that a good stiff breeze will come along"—maybe that wind might even be in another lifetime—"and blow those seeds into a more fertile area."

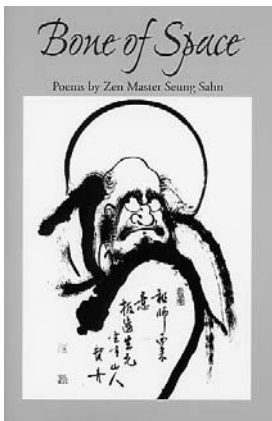
What Zen Master Seung Sahn is talking about here is acquiring a sense of cosmic time—eternal time. Once we get a glimpse of that time we begin to perceive all events from a different perspective. All of you present here know that Zen Master Seung Sahn is not a patient man in many ways. In fact, sometimes he can be a real pain in the neck. However, he does have an infinite amount of patience and time that he generously offers to people to help them find their original nature. Most importantly, he never gives up. Never! And that has been his incredible gift to all of us. Of course, there is a great paradox imbedded in this teaching. The only way that any of us can ever perceive cosmic time is through *[snaps fingers]*, just this moment. There is a wonderful capping phrase in our tradition that says, "I will meet you in 10,000 years." These phrases from "dharma combat" can be used in destructive ways, but they also contain profound wisdom.

"I will meet you in 10,000 years." When someone awake says that to another person it means that the moment in time 10,000 years from now in cosmic time is at one with this *[snaps fingers]* very moment. That's it. That's what Zen is about. That's all that it is. It's not about this robe, it's not about having a teaching rank and it's certainly not about being a monk, as opposed to being a layperson. It's not about any of that stuff. It's just *[snaps fingers]* this—being awake, having presence in the moment. As I suggested earlier some of us won't be here in our current form for the forty or, perhaps, the fifty or even the sixty years celebration. But, how about 300 years from now or even 3,000 years from now? My wish is that all of us meet *[snaps fingers]* again in 10,000 years. Thank you.

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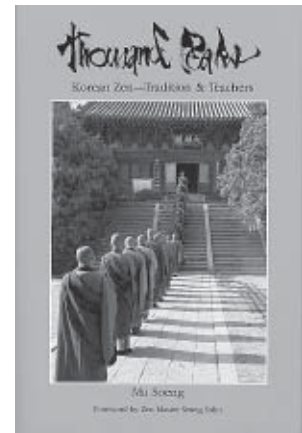


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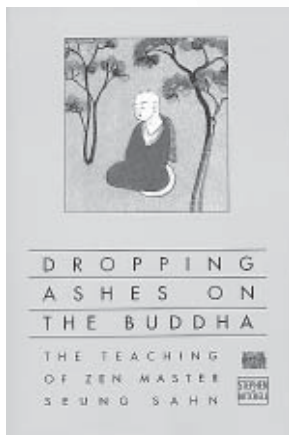
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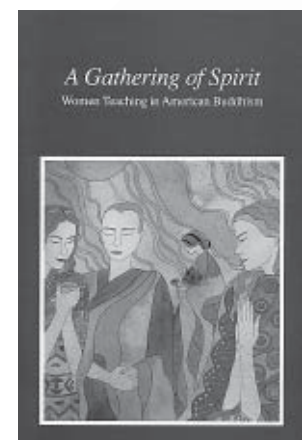
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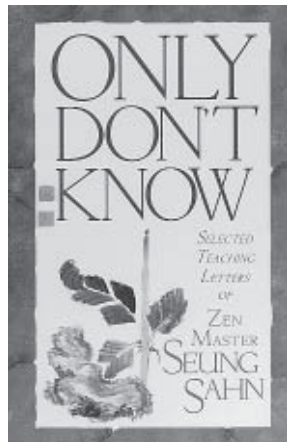
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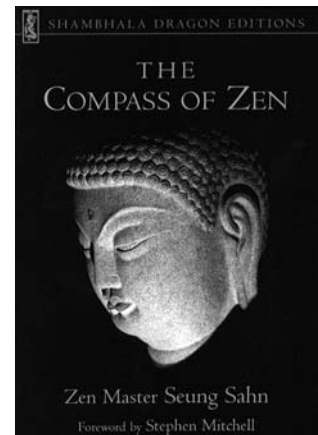
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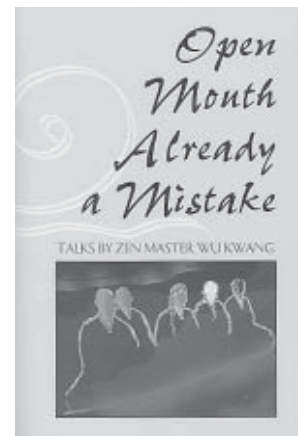


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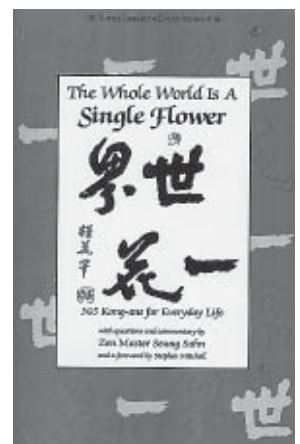


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It's hard to know what to say exactly. I only go back twenty-nine years so I take no responsibility for the year before that, but I have to take some responsibility for the years after that. Probably the best thing that I can do is tell you some interesting stories about the beginning.

I met Zen Master Seung Sahn when he had been here a year, and some people were starting the Cambridge Zen Center. Because Zen Master Seung Sahn needed to learn English, they signed him up for an "English as a Second Language" class at Harvard. The two people who signed him up were able to leave Providence and go to Cambridge so they could be on their own. They rented a very fancy house in Cambridge, and took Zen Master Seung Sahn there, and he started going to English classes. He would come home every day with assignments, such as going to the supermarket and buying ten vegetables and then writing about it.

My first adventure with him was taking him to the supermarket and buying vegetables, and then helping him write his homework. At that time I didn't realize what that would lead to. If I had known what that was going to lead to, I might not have done that.

In those days he had index cards because he was trying to learn English, so he kept these index cards with him all the time for his vocabulary. Whenever he was riding in a car or going anywhere, he'd take out his cards and try to learn some English. There was a very interesting group of people that showed up in Cambridge that summer. I was friends with some of them because I had been a graduate student at MIT. Jonny Kabat, Larry Rosenberg, and Jack Kornfeld were there, and others who thirty years later are teachers of Buddhism in various traditions. But back then nobody would know that.

We didn't wear robes. We didn't bow to Zen Master Seung Sahn. I went down to Providence, and there was a very interesting crew there: Alban, Zen Master Soeng Hyang, and some guy in the audience who is going to talk later. Alban was the first head dharma teacher. He used to bring a cup of coffee to the dharma room most of the time. He was a student at Brown, and most of the time he wore shorts and a fez, particularly in the winter time in the snow. He and a buddy of his, Nick, would go to school from the Zen Center dressed that way. That was interesting; there were some interesting characters. They'd go down to Manny Almeida's Ringside Lounge, which was right down the street, for a beer after sitting at night.

Every time Zen Master Seung Sahn introduced new things, like asking people to bow to him in the morning, half the people would leave. When he introduced formal meals, he couldn't speak much English. He said we had to buy these bowls and make these cloths and nobody knew what he was talking about. So we went to the store, and we found these black and red plastic bowls. Then he had us make these cloths. It was this big production and we're thinking, "This must be really amazing." The first time he had us eat a formal meal, nobody knew what to do and we're thinking, "What in heaven's name is this guy doing? This does not seem like an improvement on anything." So half the people would leave.

It's really quite amazing that some of us stayed for various reasons. I think I stayed because we did a lot of retreats and had a lot of interviews, and that was wonderful. But another reason I stayed was Zen Master Seung Sahn took me on many adventures. Nowadays we have Zen centers all over the world. You can go sit Kyol Che, you can sit this retreat, that retreat, you can go hear dharma talks, you can get it on cassettes, on CDs, on videos. We didn't have any of that. We just had Zen Master Seung Sahn back then.

We didn't have a lot of people, and some of us he took on adventures with him. My adventures included many very interesting ones, some not so interesting, some very unpleasant. When I think about some of the more interesting ones... I learned how to smuggle \$25,000 into Berlin and put it into a suitcase and get it to a guy who went into Poland and bought a building when Poland was

a communist country. That was very interesting. I didn't realize I needed to learn how to do that, but I did.

I went to Korea on what I thought was a vacation with Zen Master Seung Sahn. He took me to the Korean embassy with him the day before we left Los Angeles. I was used to going with him wherever he went, and people were talking in Korean, and so I didn't know what was going on. I'm sitting in the embassy having a cup of coffee, and he's talking to the ambassador in Korean and they're passing some papers around. Then he gives me this paper which said I was the president of a delegation going to Korea on the reunification of Korea. I don't take any credit for having to do those things. I have a PhD from MIT, which was a great thing in Korea... Korean people love all those things. So I was a very important person to lead this delegation. And I'm looking at this paper and I said, "Soen Sa Nim, what is this?" And he said, "Just sign this paper." And I go, OK.

So I went to Korea and we were on a mountain doing a retreat, and the Korean CIA came and took my passport and Zen Master Seung Sahn's passport and they left. I didn't know if I was going to get it back or what they were going to do to me. Then we went to a very big university and I was supposed to give a talk. I'm up on the stage and there's eight hundred people in the audience who don't speak English. As I look out the window all these buses drive up and these soldiers get out of the buses with rifles and they surround the building. And I have to give a talk in two minutes. I'm going, OK, this is interesting. Many, many things like that.



I lived in Los Angeles for a few years when we started a Zen center there, and all kinds of people would come and sometimes they were famous people and sometimes not. But one person that showed up was Werner Erhardt—I don't know if any of you know of him, but for a couple of years he was a somewhat famous teacher. He had these groups called "est" that you paid a lot of money to attend. I was living in this Korean temple where I was the only American. It was a house in the Wilshire district, and when people rang the doorbell I would answer the door. One of Werner Erhardt's assistants came one day and said he wanted to meet Zen Master Seung Sahn. So we arranged a time and Werner Erhardt came over.

So I'm sitting there with Zen Master Seung Sahn, and Werner Erhardt was there with a couple of his students, and we had tea. And Zen Master Seung Sahn asked Werner Erhardt what he did. Werner Erhardt presented himself to Zen Master Seung Sahn as a teacher of a new age Buddhism. So Zen Master Seung Sahn said, well, "What do you teach?" And I don't remember what Werner Erhardt said but he went on and on about enlightenment and emptiness and this and that. Zen Master Seung Sahn sort of listened to him. After Werner Erhardt got finished, Zen Master Seung Sahn looked at him and said, "What is emptiness?"

So, Werner Erhardt proceeded to give him an explanation of what was emptiness. I don't know what he said, but he went on for a while. Zen Master Seung Sahn waited for him to finish, and then he said, "OK, you ask me, what is emptiness?" So Werner Erhardt said, "OK, what is emptiness?" [Long pause.] Zen Master Seung Sahn didn't do anything. He just sat there.

There was a pause when I did that just now, and then some nervous laughter, because we don't know what to do with that. It was very good teaching to physically be there at that time with someone who knew what to do with that question.

I had a chance to be there for many interesting things like that. After thirty years we have a different situation, because people who come to our school still sit retreats, but don't have quite the opportunity for the adventures that I had. I can honestly say I'm glad I took advantage of it. It was wonderful teaching—all of it. The good and the strange. I've forgotten a lot of it, for good reason. But it's very wonderful to have survived twenty-nine years of it and to still be able to come here and talk about practicing with people, and to see your wonderful faces. Thank you.

THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

POEM

Poem

in celebration

of 30 years

of

Zen Master

Seung Sahn's

teaching

in the west

&

the coming-into-being

of the

Kwan Um

School of Zen

30 years is one minute.
Seeds grow where they will.
Animals gather at the gate.
We are no different.

Bodhidharma came to China for the food.
Zen Master Seung Sahn came to America for the food.
This food is feeding everyone.
Be careful what you eat.

Landing in LA he caught a plane for Providence.
This plane still circles above our heads.
Once you touch it you can't forget it.
Its wings span the universe.

In the mountain is a cave.
In the cave is a treasure.
For 30 years we've mined it,
coming out, going in.

Appearance is disappearance.
Disappearance is appearance.
Many centers, many ceremonies.
Many teachers, only one teaching.

The storm gathers its tail about itself,
dives into the ocean like a mother,
like an ice dancer, like a leaf,
shooting up again from the bottom like stars.

Dogs laugh and chickens cry.
Stone girls have plastic babies.
The still center of the universe
is reflected everywhere.

But armies are in dissension!
They march every which way.
They can't put their weapons down.
They can't even find the interstate.

Even the dharma room is like this.
Especially the dharma room is like this.
Did you come here for peace and quiet?
You'd be better off at the movies.

Go straight = don't know.
Don't know = do it.
The bone of space plays like a flute.
One flower = same direction.

All beings wait for us.
All being enfold us.
All beings need us.
In space the sun always shines.

*Judy Roitman JDPSN
April 6, 2002*

Thirtieth A

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Merrie Fraser JDPSN

When I moved into Providence Zen Center in the fall of 1978, it was already on Hope Street. It was a very interesting Zen Center because we lived in a developing neighborhood, so we always had to be wary. The dharma room was on the first floor. It was colorful with a dark blue rug and mats of many colors. There was a 'front door' but it was always kept locked. Although, one evening it was left unlocked and during sitting some neighborhood man walked in, saw us sitting there, then backed out. We figured later that he was going to see what he could rob. We also had a window next to the staircase on the first floor. One night one of the local kids got in, went upstairs and robbed all of us. It was my first lesson in watching Zen Master Seung Sahn's non-attachment mind. He had a really nice camera that was taken. One of the students who lived there at the time said, "Let us run down the street and see if we can find him." But he said, "No, not a problem, that's okay, that's okay." So that was a lesson: always keep the door and windows locked and don't be attached if something happens.

After about six months, we moved up here to Cumberland. I remember coming out, seeing this place and thinking, "There's only sixteen of us. How will we do everything?" The Providence house could only hold about sixteen people, but this place was much bigger. How would we do it all? I have since learned that we can do a lot with even fewer people.

Because the building was really old, the land hadn't been taken care of properly and nothing had been done to it for a while. The main dharma room and library weren't built yet. The upstairs dharma room was missing and only a ramp from the second floor existed in that space. Outdoors was right next to the lounges. The door to the upstairs dharma room opened to the outside—there used to be stairs there, but they were missing. The other door, by the little upstairs interview room, opened on the ramp which was under a roof but still outdoors. There was no dining room. We used to have our Yong Maeng Jong Jin

meals in the dharma room after it was built. Of course there was no monastery.

So we started from scratch. The first thing we built was the dharma room. That became part of our practice. We'd do evening chanting wherever the current dharma room was located, then we'd go into the new dharma room and sand the walls and do all sorts of things.

We sat in numerous places. When we first moved in up here, we took the blue rug out of the old dharma room in Providence and we installed it upstairs in that long hallway, otherwise known as the blue rug area. This is where the term came from and why when we put in carpet, we used blue for that area. We decided the hallway was the only open area that could contain our numbers, but we still needed extra room, so we broke out the wall on the end room and opened up the "L".

One day the announcement after dinner was, "Okay, we're going to put in the steel beam, everybody upstairs." So twenty people lifted this big beam to support the ceiling across the newly opened space. After much discussion, we set up the altar where the upstairs dharma room door is, and Zen Master Seung Sahn sat at the end of the narrow part where you enter the blue rug area. Then for some reason, we moved to the visitor's lounge area, only it didn't look as nice as now. It was unpainted and dull. We had wall-to-wall mats of various colors from the old center. The house was not sealed, so we had to put up curtains on the entrance way because the wind would whistle down the hallways and make it cold. We had black and green tile in the halls—good for marking straight lines for sewing, but cold to walk on.

The dharma room was put up, the walls first because the architect told us that the roof was aero-dynamically correct and would fly off without the walls. It was late fall, and we were all hoping that it wouldn't snow before they got the roof completed. Once the roof was on, we thought, "Oh, we could practice in the library underneath." Well, the library was so cold that it was the only place we had permission ever to wear hats and gloves while we were sitting! We were sitting on top of plywood and underneath that was the ground—no insulation. That's why we went up and sanded walls.

During this time, we got our wood stove going, but that meant we not only had to chop the wood, somebody had to get up in the middle of the night to actually feed the fire. If the furnace smoked when they put the wood in, there would be a few clouds that would seep up to the first and second floors. You could see the seepage on the baseboards in the guest rooms. We eventually had two wood stoves, one for the house and a smaller one for the dharma room. Until we got the upstairs dharma room, someone

had to go down at about 4:15 a.m. and start the furnace for the main dharma room, so that room would be warm enough to practice in.

Next we built the dining area, so instead of having to cart all the meals to the dharma room during retreats, we could eat near the kitchen and save time and mess. Eventually we built the upstairs dharma room which was used for Kyol Che. The back stairs were only for the Kyol Che people when it was in session. That's why the back door from the upstairs, to some of the older students, is called the Kyol Che door. One winter when most of the residents were in Kyol Che and the rest of us were bored, we decided to have a skating party. It had been snowing and was very cold, so one of the residents built a fire out by the pond and we went skating, had snowball fights, cooked marshmallows and made a lot of noise until about 9:30 p.m., when someone noticed that the Kyol Che retreatants could see us. Oops! Parties at the Zen Center never lasted late anyway because of the early morning practice.

In the early days, we were all a little bit left-over hippies. I don't think Zen Master Seung Sahn trusted us to do anything meticulously. If he needed a letter mailed, he would ask three or four people to mail the same letter. Then, of course, we'd have a discussion, "but he asked me," and then somebody else would say, "no, he asked me to mail it". Finally we figured out that he just wanted the letter mailed and he didn't care who mailed it, but he didn't trust any of us to actually mail the letter, so he'd ask three or four people.

Zen Master Seung Sahn used to refer to the Zen Center as only being five years old, then a "teenager" with all the attitude and stages of growing up. So, now we have made it through our twenties and are thirty. We get the letters mailed and do even more, so we are maturing nicely. Thank you very much to everyone for your efforts and your practice.

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Thirtieth A

STICKING AROUND

Michael Konstan

Today we are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of Providence Zen Center and the Kwan Um School of Zen. Going back thirty years, there was not much Zen practice in Providence. Jacob Perl—now Zen Master Wu Bong—and I were part of a small group that met at Manning Chapel at Brown University for daily meditation practice.

Then we heard about a Buddhist monk living out on Doyle Avenue. This was Zen Master Seung Sahn. He was new in the country and he didn't speak English, only Korean and Japanese. One evening I decided to visit. I went along with Brown's Buddhism professor, Leo Pruden. Besides speaking Japanese, Professor Pruden also understood proper etiquette. "When you visit a monk," he said, "you must bring a gift." So he bought a box of

Japanese bean-jelly candy. We didn't know at the time that Zen Master Seung Sahn was a diabetic. Zen Master Seung Sahn graciously accepted the candy and then served it to us with tea.

We visited for about an hour, with Professor Pruden translating. Zen Master Seung Sahn gave his cookie dough talk that night. I'm sure you've heard it. It goes, "All things are cut out of the same

universal substance, like cookies all cut out of the same dough."

Anyway, the very next morning I began practicing with Zen Master Seung Sahn. By the end of the second week, there were already three or four of us sitting regularly at Doyle Avenue. That's when we began chanting practice. Zen Master Seung Sahn brought out chanting books, all in Chinese characters, no English. He pointed to a character, "This 'Shim,' this 'Myo,' 'Jang.'" We wrote the sound in pencil under each pictogram. "'Ku,' 'Te,' 'Daranhe.'" That became our first chanting book.

Just like today, chanting and sitting practice were done very early in the morning. Maybe 5 o'clock. Then Zen Master Seung Sahn had to get ready to leave for work and we had to go to school. As you probably know, in those days Zen Master Seung Sahn didn't have a big donor base. Instead, he supported himself by repairing washing machines at a local laundromat. Before leaving for work he made himself breakfast and he invited us to join him. Breakfast was potato-miso soup. Very tasty! I don't know if it was intentional or not, but, if you feed college students, they will stick around.

Within a couple of months the two-bedroom apartment at Doyle Avenue was completely full. Other people began renting apartments nearby so they could come to practice every day.

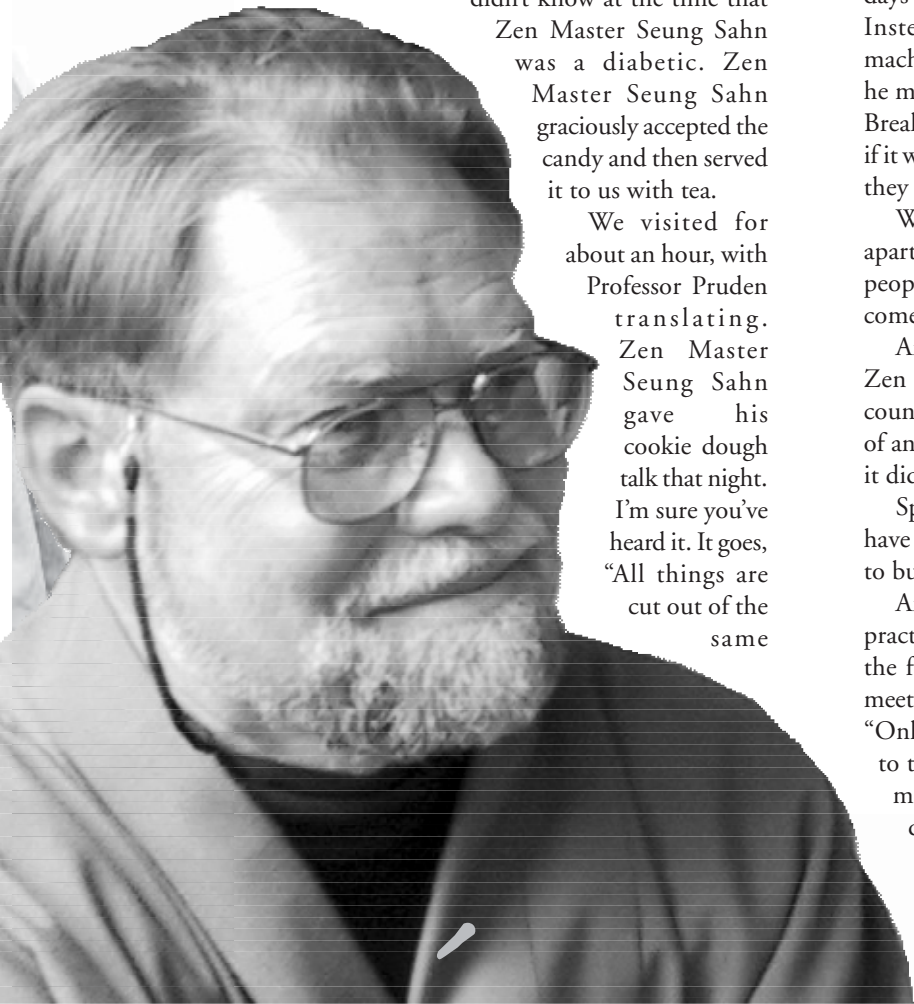
And today, thirty years later, the Kwan Um School of Zen has grown to over eighty temples in twenty-five countries worldwide. It's truly beyond the wildest dreams of anyone in those early days at Doyle Avenue. Of course it didn't happen without a lot of work.

Special congratulations must go to those students who have devoted fifteen, twenty, even thirty years of their lives to building our school. Thank you.

And, finally, for those of you who are new to Buddhist practice, I would like to extend a special welcome. You are the future of our school. Maybe today marks your first meeting with a Zen Master. In our school we have a saying, "Only try, try, try for ten thousand years." So I invite you to try this practice. And after just thirty years you, too, may find that the results are beyond your wildest dreams.

Thank you and again congratulations to the Kwan Um School of Zen on thirty years of Buddhist teaching.

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Anniversaru

Dharma Talk
by Steven Cohen JDPSN

Continued from page 5

help others applies to Zen Masters, too. Zen Master Seung Sahn was right from the start,

Phyllis has been and remains one of the more important teachers in my life, because she is always there reminding me to be genuine, and to be authentic above and beyond the trappings of Zen. In June, Phyllis and I will celebrate our thirty-third anniversary. There is no doubt that for his part, Zen Master Seung Sahn has been this remarkable vision of plain clothes, plain speech, and plain living transformed into Great Love, Great Compassion, and Great Action for all beings. We are all the beneficiaries of his teaching.

I have been very fortunate to be practicing the past six years under the guidance of Ken Kessel JDPSN and Zen Master Wu Kwang in New York, as well as the many mature and compassionate teachers throughout our school. Zen Master Seung Sahn always says “try, try, try for 10,000 years nonstop” when he refers to all aspects of our practice. Kessel PSN and Wu Kwang Soen Sa truly follow this example.

The Chogye International Zen Center of New York has an “Introduction to Zen” and dharma talk every Sunday night. Except when he was very sick with pneumonia, Kessel PSN hosted guests and answered questions following the dharma talk every Sunday night between 1996 and 2000. Despite living far away from the Zen Center, he made the long trip every week. Few of us appreciated the enormous commitment Kessel PSN made until the older students of our New York sangha took on the job after he moved to Virginia. Kessel PSN also came to the Zen Center on Thursday evenings to give interviews, as well as most Saturday mornings to share teaching interviews with Zen Master Wu Kwang. Always in good humor, with a little dash of dharma mischief in his eye, he once asked if I had any questions during an interview. When I said “not this morning,” he poked me in the belly with his stick and said, “A question means, you test me, I test you. No questions means you lose your dharma combat skills, then someday a keen-eyed lion will eat you.”

I have sat at the feet of Zen Master Wu Kwang now for nearly five years. He annually leads six or more retreats at our center plus retreats elsewhere, he gives a formal dharma talk in New York twelve months of the year, he practices four mornings a week at the Zen Center, and all this while working full-time as a psychotherapist, and being a full-time husband, father and grandfather. A penchant for scholarship is reflected in his book, *Open Mouth Already a Mistake*, with a new text upcoming. His fierce dharma combat skills are reflected in an experience which he shared with me recently.

Many years ago, Wu Kwang Soen Sa went to a retreat



led by Aitken Roshi. During dokusan (interviews) Aitken Roshi repeatedly asked him to manifest “mu,” and during each interview, the Roshi would say “something is still missing.” Finally, the last interview came and *again* Aitken Roshi said, “something is still missing.” At that moment, without thinking, Wu Kwang Soen Sa grabbed the Roshi’s stick and held it in the air while shouting, “You make missing and not missing, so I hit you thirty times.” Roshi stiffened his back and tightened his muscles visibly while indignantly snorting, “NONSENSE.” Wu Kwang Soen Sa put down the stick, bowed and said, “Thank you for your nonsense teaching.” So, I say to Wu Kwang Soen Sa, thank you for your “nonsense teaching” and your “nonsense wisdom.”

I want to thank all my teachers of the past, present and future, and all my dharma siblings, especially those in the New York sangha, for their friendship and support.

Fundamentally, our practice teaches us to pay attention. So I ask you...

[Raises Zen stick over head.]

Do you see this?

[Hits table with Zen stick then raises stick over head.]

Do you hear this?

[Hits table with Zen stick.]

This stick, this sound, and your mind, are they the same or different? If you say the same, this stick will hit you thirty times. If you say different, this stick will hit you thirty times. Why?

KATZ!

Today is April 6, 2002. How may I help you?

Dharma Talk by Darek Gorzewski JDPSN

Continued from page 7

ally results in suffering. Zen Master Seung Sahn teaches that if you make something, then wanting something appears, then checking something, then holding onto something, then getting attached to something, and the only result of that is suffering.

There is one teacher in Korea who is a very good friend of Zen Master Seung Sahn. His name is Byok Am Sunim, and somebody told me when I was in Korea that the only kind of calligraphy he makes is: “You make, you get.” Very interesting. I had heard a saying before which was somewhat similar to the teaching in Byok Am Sunim’s calligraphy—“Watch out what you want,” or “Watch out what you make, because you may get it. Don’t be surprised.”

When I was still living and practicing in Poland, we had many different teachers coming to visit and teach the Polish sangha. Zen Master Seung Sahn could come only



once a year, maybe once every two years, and some of our Ji Do Poep Sa Nims were coming, but also teachers from different traditions. At one time a very interesting monk came to visit us; his name was Muhen Roshi. He was an old Japanese monk and he was very kind, gentle and soft-spoken—it was really nice to be around him. He somewhat reminded me of Maha Ghosananda. And he had also very a interesting ability; he could heal people by touching their bodies.

At one of the meetings with him in Krakow Zen Center, we had some time to ask him questions. One person was going through some problems in her life at that time and she asked Muhen Roshi: “Roshi, if you have a serious problem, or if you want to help somebody, what kind of practice is good for that purpose; what can you do?” And the Roshi just smiled, and said, “Oh, that’s very simple, just do Kanzeon.” (Kanzeon is the Japanese name for Kwan Seum Bosal.) “Do a lot of chanting of Kanzeon, and then you will get it.” And then he smiled again, and he said, “You may get not what you wanted, but you will get it!”

So, it’s the same teaching. If you don’t make anything, then you can get everything, because this moment [*hit*] already contains everything and it’s already complete. If we want something, then we are just adding something to it. If we put it all down, then everything is ours. It is very, very simple, but often very difficult to do. So, it all comes from our mind. Keep it clear—no problem. Get attached to whatever arises in it—don’t be surprised!

So, one of the sutras says, when mind appears, then everything appears.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

When mind disappears, then everything disappears.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

But, when mind neither appears nor disappears, then what?

KATZ!

Standing here in front of you on this Buddha’s Birthday, finishing my talk. Thank you very much.

Dharma Talk by Thomas Pastor JDPSN

Continued from page 9

To attain this mind is to attain emptiness, or as we often refer to it in our school, 180° on the Zen teaching circle. This is not good, not bad and some practices actually stop there. Vilamikirti only taught that style. Samadhi can be quite intoxicating. But our school teaches that if we only do this practice for myself, to relieve some situation, personal dilemma, or pursue a special mind state, the teaching is incomplete.

We’ve all heard the story of Sul. This is the story of a little girl who, as a student of the famous Zen Master Ma Jo, grew up only keeping Kwan Seum Bosal as her practice day in and day out, and eventually became a great Zen Master herself. Outside, her actions were ordinary actions; inside, her mind was the mind of a bodhisattva. She married and raised a large, happy family. Many people came to her for her wisdom and teaching. One day when she was an old woman, her granddaughter died. She cried bitterly both at the funeral and at home. Someone finally asked, “You have attained the great enlightenment, so you then understand that there is neither life nor death. Why are you crying and why is your granddaughter a hindrance to your clear mind?”

Sul immediately stopped crying and said, “These tears are greater than all the sutras, all the words of the patriarchs, and all possible ceremonies. When my granddaughter hears my crying she will enter Nirvana.”

Obviously Sul’s tears were not for Sul. Just like Kwan Seum Bosal, her teaching clearly demonstrated, “One who hears the cries of the world.”

Ultimately we must abandon our I, my, me. After all, it was never about you in the first place. Whatever we do, the question should arise, “Is this for me, or for all beings?”

The Buddha once said, “This world is an ocean of suffering.” So our job, each one of us, is to be mindful, appreciate this moment, indeed this life, attain a mind which is clear like space, and help save all beings from suffering.

As for my late brother: only *Ji Jang Bosal*.

As for all of you: How may I help you?

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Appearing is disappearing, disappearing is appearing.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

No appearing, no disappearing.

[Raises Zen stick over head, then hits table with stick.]

Appearing is appearing, disappearing is disappearing.

KATZ!

Smiling faces appearing, [*turning around and facing the altar*] smiling faces disappearing. [*Turning back to the sangha.*] Thank you for listening.

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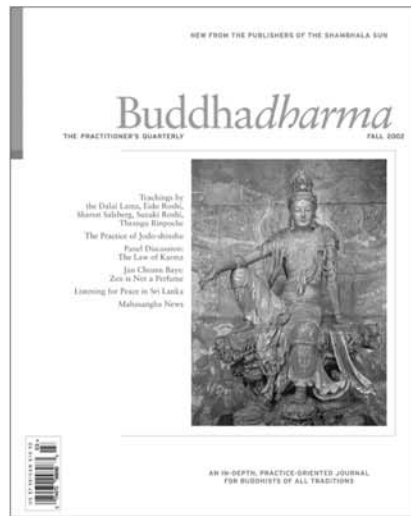
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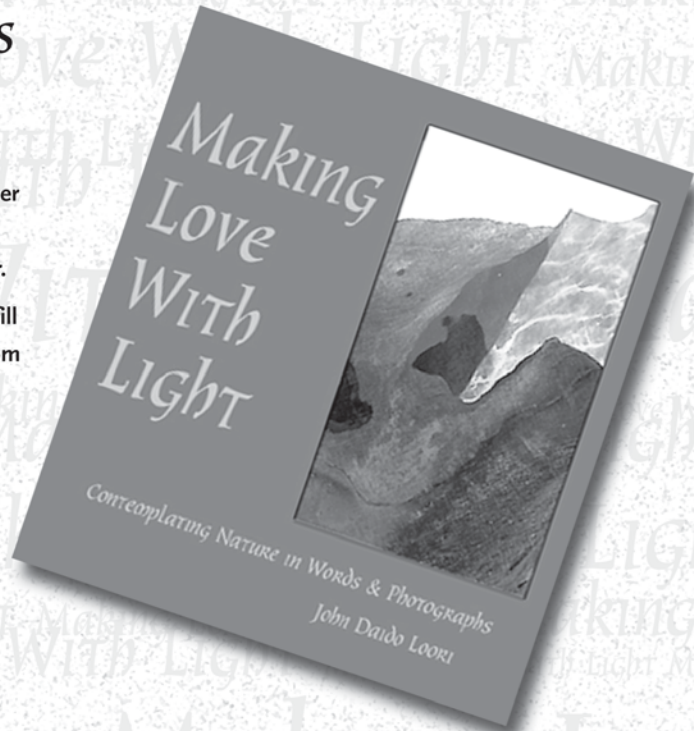
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*“Deep in the mountains,
the great Temple Bell
has been rung...”*



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