

Mt. Equity Zendo Zephyr- March 2011

Third Lay Head Seat Ceremony

February 19th marked the end of our three month practice period and of the Dharma Combat ceremony of our Lay Head Seat, Tokuen Gray. The theme of these three months centered on “Keichu Makes Carts”, case 8 of the *Mumonkan* or “*Gateless Gate*.” The koan reads, “Master Gettan asked a monk, “Keichu made a hundred carts. If he took off both wheels and removed the axle, what would he make clear about the cart?”

Tokuen’s dedicated practice had her driving two hours from State College once a week to practice at MEZ in order to learn the various duties of the Head Seat position. In expounding on the koan case, she used the metaphor of a cart without wheels and axle to demonstrate the impermanence of the body and the limitations of striving for titles and degrees. She spoke giving examples from her own life as to how the “wheels and axle” have been removed.

The taking off of that which gives us meaning and identity, while initially painful, has the potential to reveal glimpses of one’s own True Self. In Tokuen, this stripping away of purpose has taken the shape of pending retirement and in a most recent fall which broke her knuckle, incapacitating her right hand. When you lose that which enables you to function, then who are you?



Co-Directorship After 14 Years of Nirvana Sesshin

Rev. Daishin first came to live in residence at Mt. Equity Zendo shortly before Nirvana Sesshin of 1998. Throughout the ensuing 14 years, he has practiced faithfully learning to be a care-giver of others through skilled nursing, a Zen priest, a Zen cook, a calligrapher of Japanese, and now an administrator. In acknowledgement of all these efforts, NiOsho presented the officiant’s *hossu* inherited from grandfather teacher, Daishun Shimbi DaiOsho to mark him equal in the ability to direct Mt. Equity Zendo.

Abbess To Brazil

Abbess Dai-En has been invited to teach in Florianopolis from March 26th - April 2nd. Until recently she was uncertain if her health was up to taking such a trip due to her asthma. However, after her return from the dry climate of Arizona she felt she would be fine in the journey south and in the warmer climate. She will be accompanied by Senior MEZ student Keien Boutselis.

Beautiful Secrets – by NiOsho

E, who has been sitting with us on Thursday evenings, came this morning after her 45 minute-drive, to sit with us for the 6:30am zazen, service, oriyoki breakfast and work practice, as she has been doing more and more. Over tea break, she listened intently to the comments of the senior students. She ventured forth gently with some comments on her own, and we felt very grateful for her additional perspective of how we try to open our Zen practice up to more and more people. “The tastiest soup has the most variety of veggies,” I told her. “Thank you for making our soup even tastier with what you add to it.”

Having spent most of a week recently in Tucson, AZ in a one-floor home of a friend who had requested a memorial service for a departed one, I felt the difference returning to MEZ, finding I could not double-step the stairway the way I usually do to keep hamstrings flexible to guard against falls. And my waist and stomach had softened from not doing my usual daily zazen and bowing while officiating at service.

A seed catalog had come in recently, and I noticed the cover again, seeing a young woman using a long-handled rake. Aha! That’s what I wasn’t seeing in Japan. There, people hunkered down or bent over to work in the fields. And they had less flab and more flexibility and muscle. I did not see heart-threatening paunches. I mentioned to E. as she was about to leave. “Do you do the Sun Pose of yoga, or bow every day if you can?” We think, ‘I haven’t become enlightened in my practice yet!’ as we sit at a table and chair, eating three meals a day, a roof covering our head. We want the prize or the paycheck of enlightenment, not experiencing consciously that our practice is enlightenment, moment to moment, breath to breath, not separate from the whole universe.

“I do bow,” E. said. “Remember when Daishin went into Ango practice in Japan and you asked us to support him in every way that we could? I couldn’t sit on my own, but I decided to support Daishin by sitting every day, and then added bowing every day. Over time I lost 40 lbs and quit smoking—of course, that doesn’t stay forever; there are relapses, but I want to continue these practices.” E. can see and feel her practice, and is being supported by it.

E. is quiet. If she had not come for Work Practice Morning and shared this with me, I might never have had the chance to hear this beautiful secret that lay in her heart. As westerners, we are loathe to bend, stoop or bow, unless it is done fashionably.

An earlier translation of the first of the Three Refuges goes: “I take refuge in Buddha, together with all beings, *understanding through this body* the cosmic life leading to the awakened mind.”

Please take very good care of your body, for in good health, it can take the best care of your mind. And taking care of mind takes care of body. Body and mind, together are the abode of our satori, emanating out in all directions for the benefit of all beings.

Sitting Cushions for Shounji Zen Temple

Thank you everyone for so speedily offering donations to buy 20 colored zafu shells to Fuukan-San to start a zazen group at her temple. As the first anniversary of the March 11th Great East Japan Triple Disaster approaches may the warm colors of the zafu help to warm the hearts of those coming together to face the future to renew bonds in the community.



Fuukan's handi-fone photo of 1st four zafu samples.

A total of \$475 has been collected. The cost for the 20 zafus came to \$358.75. The left-over donations of \$116.25 is earmarked for Japan for a future time.

Green Corner

Be sure to recycle your used compact fluorescent lights (CFL's). These bulbs, while saving a lot of energy and reducing carbon emissions, have a down side: mercury. This is not something we want to put into a landfill. Mercury leaks into water sources and, with enough CFL's in the landfill, can become a real public health hazard. Fortunately there are places to recycle these bulbs including Lowes and Home Depot. Consider "all beings" before discarding your CFL's.

Bob Weiskopf In Memoriam

The father of our neighbors, Don Weiskopf and his wife Deb, used to come watch Buddhist films with us and share wonderful stories about Java and China. After finishing Harvard, he graduated first in his class from Columbia University Graduate School. He was first in his class with us, too. Bob left our realm February 13th. May peace be with him.



Work Practice Days Before the Long Summer Sesshin

We have planned four Saturdays for Work Practice to choose from before the LSS: **April 7th**, (before Easter); **April 28th**, **May 19th** (and/or) **Su. May 20th**, and deadline: **May 26th**.

Work practice days are great for Sangha building in a very informal and fun way to help maintain Mt. Equity Zendo. Volunteers are welcome to come any time from Fri. eve. for an 8:30pm sitting, bed, 6am wake-up, zazen, short service, home-style breakfast and work practice, with a buffet or picnic lunch, finishing up by 3pm. Arriving from 10am is also fine. If coming locally, volunteering for even two or three hours is a huge help to us. Any of these combinations will be fine with us if we know your starting and stopping times in advance so as to know best how to assign work. If two, three or four volunteers from each of the satellite sanghas of Long River, Six Rings, or BDG could come for two, three or four hours that you set for yourselves, many hands would make light work. Please consider these dates with your Buddha buddies and let us know, so that we may have all preparations completed to serenely greet our teachers from afar.

Special/Upcoming Events

Half Day of Zen (1:30 - 4:30 pm)

Dogen's Guidelines for Practicing the Way

Part II, March 31st

Buddha's Birthday, May 6th **10am - 2pm with potluck lunch**

Zen and Yoga: Freedom in Body and Mind, July 7th

August 4th

September 1st

Full Day of Zen (10:00 am - 4:00 pm)

Unlocking the Power of Rebirth, April 1st

True Freedom, July 8th

August 5th

September 2nd

Work Practice Day

Saturday, May 19th, 9 am - 5 pm

Sesshin Schedule

33rd Ordination Anniversary Sesshin, March 16th - 18th

Earth Day Sesshin (Celebrating MEZ's 21st anniversary), April 20th - 22nd

Long Summer Sesshin with Doyu Roshi and Rev. Tom Wright, June 1st - June 9th

Mid Summer Sesshin, July 20th - 22nd

Obon Sesshin, August 17th - 19th

Early Fall Sesshin, September 14th - 16th

*Note that there will be no Sesshin in May due to the Long Summer Sesshin beginning earlier in June than past years.

Registration for Special Events: daishin@mtequity.org or (570) 546-2784

Note that Sesshin requires prior approval by the Abbess.

Weekly Practice Schedule

Tuesday Evening 7 - 9:15pm
(Includes prayer service*, zazen, reading and discussion)

Thursday Morning 6:30 - 8:00am
(Includes breakfast with Gyohatsu, or “The Practice of the Bowls”)

Thursday Evening 7 - 8:30pm
(Includes zazen, reading and discussion**)

***On the first Tuesday evening of the month we recite the precepts and do the Beginning Anew ceremony in lieu of evening service. This is followed by two sittings, and ending bows. On the third Tuesday evening of the month we recite “Invoking the Bodhisattvas' Names”, followed by three 30 minute sittings and closing with three bows.**

****On the first Thursday of the month we study the Five Wonderful Mindfulness Trainings, reading them and fielding questions about them. On the third Thursday of the month there will be three 15 - 20 minute sittings including one guided meditation based on Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings.**

***There will be no Thursday evening schedule on March 29th because it is a 5th Thursday. 5th Tuesdays and 5th Thursdays are reserved for other events. This is the same for May 29th and May 31st.**

Gratitude to the following people for making offerings of food and related items the month of February: Baltimore Dharma Group, Dr. Steven Gambert, Patricia Deridder, Nanshin, Tomei, Bob Weiskopf, Dan Washington, Tokuen, Daijun, Susan Gresens, Dendo, Kevin Gaughen, Teijun, Koen, and all others we may have inadvertently missed. Our heartfelt gratitude.