



Water Wheel

Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

On Descending the Mountain

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



While tidying my bookshelf, I came across *The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*. The tale “The Frog Prince” prompted my reflections of my twenty years as Abbot of ZCLA. This is my telling of the tale:

Once upon a time, a young princess dropped her favorite toy, a golden ball, into a pond. Heartbroken, she sobbed uncontrollably beside the pond. Hearing her pitiful cries, a frog offered to retrieve the ball for her, but first, she must promise to let him be her friend and playmate, eat from her golden plate, and share her bed. “Yes! yes!” she replied. She got her ball back and promptly forgot her promise.

Later that evening at dinner with her father, the King, she heard a “slurp, slurp” from the frog eating from her golden plate. Mortified, she tried to ignore the frog, but the King was curious, so she explained the events of the day to him. Upon listening to his daughter, the King said, “Now, my dear, you made a promise and you must keep it.”

With great reluctance and loathing, the princess let the frog eat from her plate. When she retired for the evening, the frog went along. His very presence disgusted her. Hearing the frog remind her of her promise, she picked him up and slammed him into the wall! When the frog hit the wall, it turned into a prince.

The tale of the Princess and the Frog particularly resonates with me for I find that it aptly describes the workings of vow—a promise that recedes into the background of one’s life until it doesn’t. I have learned that vows have power. It doesn’t matter that we ourselves may not feel empowered or that we don’t know how to live our vow because, as I have learned, the power of vow makes itself known in surprising ways.

Over the past twenty ears, my vows took the form of the Abbot’s Seat. During my tenure, the Abbot’s seat



Roshi Egyoku descending the Mountain.

encompassed several key positions: abbot, head teacher, resident teacher, head priest, and preceptor. When all of these are collapsed into one position and one person, people may not discern that each of these functions requires its own unique transmissions, capabilities, and skills. It’s a huge amount of work and responsibility for one person, so as we address the Zen Center’s future, we are experimenting with Three Seats in order to create a more sustainable situation.¹

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DESCENDING THE MOUNTAIN (*Continued from page 1*)

During my tenure, I learned that as long as I remained on the complaining side of the vow, I was miserable. Not fulfilling the vow was a miserable way to live because I knew that I was not living the fullest life of which I was capable. I was not manifesting my potential, regardless of real or perceived limitations. When the vow caused me to hit a wall, so-to-speak, those were waking-up moments. I woke up—again and again—to what my work was regardless of whether I was well qualified or not. I simply put my shoulder to the wheel and the life of vow unfolded.

I love the King in this fairytale when he says, “Uh, uh, you made a promise”—you made a vow. When my work felt too much, I would hear “this is the vow” coming from somewhere. This does not mean unhealthy overworking,



although many times this was the case due to circumstances, but rather a reminder that I was being turned by the vow. I was all in—all in for whatever the position brought—and surrendered to new territories within myself. So whenever I thought to myself, “This is too difficult,” I would remember that my vow was unfolding me in this way.

Whenever I thought, “I don’t know how to do such and such,” I would remember that the answer is in the vow. Right here, now, in the challenging places, the power of vow is calling me forth.

Although I had no idea what circumstance would manifest, I learned to trust that when a vow is awakened, a momentum is unleashed so that one’s life eventually becomes the vow itself. One’s life is then lived as vow and repentance. I would remember in the midst of challenging times that the vow was unfolding; then the effort became somewhat effortless, no matter how physically tired I was. Then the energy of the vow carried me, and I felt deep peace and gratitude for the work of Dharma.

So, having thrown myself and having been thrown into the role of Abbot for the past twenty years, I would like to comment briefly upon a few main themes that stand out for me from my tenure.

The first theme is purification. When I returned to ZCLA in 1997 at the invitation of Roshi Bernie to “heal the Sangha,” ZCLA was in terrible upheaval due to scandals and the death of its founder, Maezumi Roshi. My first twelve years were spent purifying. The implication of the

word “purify” is “to make clean by removing impurities.” However, the work of purification for me meant to reveal the causes of harm and suffering at ZCLA, to sit down in its shadows and hurts, and to attend to them. Then came the work of atonement, of integrating the shadows into ourselves and the Zen Center in a life-affirming way. There have been several significant developments as a result of doing this messy work, the most obvious being the creation of the *Sangha Sutra*, the weaving of the threads of our history, misconduct, wisdom, and goodness that informs who we are today and how we will move forward.

The second theme is protection. Specifically, protecting the purpose and vow of the Zen Center itself. I like to think of the organizational being of the Zen Center as the fourth Treasure, the first three being Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This means clearly articulating the Zen Center’s mission and vision and consciously structuring and operating it in order to create the best possible conditions for us to awaken together and flourish. When I returned in 1997, among the many facets that needed attention was the resident training community, a unique aspect of the Zen Center. At that time, the resident community had lost its focus—people lived here without any sense of responsibility for its purpose. It took a tremendous and fearless effort by a few people to turn this around. Over the years, we have developed skillful means for maintaining a strong and vibrant practice community.

The third theme is the creation of new skillful means. As the Zen Center moved past the heady early days of its founding, we were challenged to create skillful means to wake us up right here, now, within the unique circumstances of our lives. We brought the Precepts front and center into our everyday lives. We began Days of Reflections and adapted the Atonement Ceremony so that we each publicly atone for our behavior. We began in earnest the practice of Council, learning to truly listen and include diverse voices. We developed a Many Hands and Eyes approach when facing complex situations. We developed a Women Ancestors chant. We took up the practice The Three Tenets as a path to social action. We created a Three Tenets Mala practice. Perhaps one of our most significant skillful means is the ongoing development of Shared Stewardship, an exploration of Sangha development as Zen training.

I bow to the Frog Prince for the reminder that when a vow is made, new territory opens up in all directions. So when you feel squeezed tight and hit a wall, remember the vow. Going forward, I recall the words of my root teacher Maezumi Roshi: “In our profession, we don’t retire. We just get better.” May it be so!

¹ <http://www.zcla.org/Programs/Retreats/documents/AbbotSuccessionProposalFeb102019webversion.pdf>

Frog Prince image by Couleur from Pixabay.

Roshi Egyoku is Abbot Emeritus and Head Teacher. This article is adapted from her Teisho “On Being Abbot,” May 5, 2019.

Ascending and Descending

by Roshi Gerry Shishin Wick



I left work early to drive to the campus of University of California San Diego to pick up Joko Beck for the commute to ZCLA. It was a Thursday afternoon in 1972 and we were headed to a three-day sesshin two hours up the freeway. When we pulled onto Normandie Avenue, the han was signaling the beginning of sesshin. We jumped out of the

car and scurried to the zendo in time for the first period to begin. We repeated this scene almost monthly for the next five years until Joko and I and a large number of our San Diego Sangha members moved to LA to live and practice at the Zen Center.

In 1972, the Zen Center had just bought the Sangha house to add to the former dentist's office that was used as the zendo, which was purchased in 1967. At that time, the zendo was L-shaped. The current southwest corner was a kitchen where meals were prepared before that function was moved to the Sangha house. The altar was in the window alcove on the north end of the western wall.

Most of the sesshins were attended by fewer than 15 people, but that rapidly changed toward the end of the decade as the Zen Center purchased more and more properties. Eventually, we owned four apartment buildings and six houses on the block. The residents numbered close to 100 and for some sesshins, we sat in three locations: the remodeled zendo, the Godo (now the Buddha Hall), and upstairs in the Sangha house.

All of this growth was engineered by Head Monk Bernie Tetsugen Glassman with the encouragement of Maezumi Roshi. At that time, Bernie was a very serious fellow. He ran a very tight zendo while Maezumi Roshi was the warm heart in the dokusan room – mostly, but not always. I shall never forget the first Ango at ZCLA in 1974 and Bernie's Shuso Hossen (Head Monk ceremony). He talked about the koan Kasan's "Knowing How to Beat the Drum" and then took Dharma challenges from the Sangha. While Bernie masterfully responded to all of the questions, I looked over at Maezumi Roshi. He was silently weeping tears of joy.

Recently, Eve Marko, Bernie's widow, came across a letter that Maezumi Roshi had sent to Bernie in the late 1960s. He wrote, "PLEASE DO NOT FORGET [caps

are his] that my major concern is to have the handful, even less, truly awakened dharma successors in the United States before I leave this world." His concern was being allayed by Bernie. The only other time I saw Maezumi Roshi weep in the zendo was when he was talking about his mother after she died in the 1980s. Some of you may know that Maezumi Roshi changed his name to honor his mother. His father's family name is Kuroda and his mother's family name is Maezumi.

The Zen Center thrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Dozens of serious practitioners, including me, were willing to work on staff in exchange for room, board, \$50 per month for living expenses, and all the zazen and Zen training we wanted. We had a number of skilled craftspeople who developed businesses and donated all the profits to the Center. I recall Zen Landscaping, Zen Plumbing, Zen Carpentry, Zen Electrical, Zen Painting, Center Medical Clinic, and Center Publications. We also created the Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism which sponsored academic conferences and published scholarly Buddhist books.

Everything seemed to be going swimmingly. By the mid '80s, Maezumi Roshi had empowered four successors: Bernie, Genpo Merzel, Joko Beck and Chozen Bays. His "major concern" was not so major any more. But major concerns arose in the Sangha as Maezumi Roshi's drinking habits became more of a problem. When it became public that he had been secretly sleeping with some of his female students, the fabric of the Zen Center started to unravel.

The Center did not have guidelines in place for dealing with abuses of power and unethical behavior. At that time, awakened meant to have a clear eye into the mysteries of the Dharma but had nothing to do with insight into one's character flaws and bad habits. This problem was endemic in Buddhist communities all across the country. It was a problem that needed to be addressed and ZCLA, through its retiring abbot, Roshi Egyoku Nakao, has now been addressing it for years.

In the mid-1980's, more than half of ZCLA's members dropped out and ZCLA's cash flow was in dire straits. Those of us who remained put our energies into encouraging Maezumi Roshi to enroll in an addiction recovery program and into restructuring the Center's finances. We also brought in community counselors and therapists to try to heal the deep wounds that had opened up.

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ASCENDING AND DESCENDING *(Continued from page 3)*

We had to sell buildings on half of the block. The grandiosity had vanished. After he had returned from a substance abuse clinic, Maezumi Roshi was mostly contrite and apologetic. He continued to teach but was subdued. He kept his eye on his “major concern” and eventually transmitted the Dharma to a total of 12 successors. Maezumi Roshi’s only concern was helping humans to become Buddhas. He had no training in the other part of the formula: helping Buddhas to become fully human. It fell to his successors to develop that part of Zen training.

Maezumi Roshi embodied all of the paradoxes of being an awakened human. He was charming, warm, and a stern taskmaster. He helped me to awaken to the subtleties of the Dharma. For those serious about pursuing the Zen path, he was always available to share his understanding of the Dharma. That is his legacy as first abbot. Before he died, I heard him say, “I cannot develop American Zen. That is up to my successors.”

Maezumi Roshi died in 1995 in rather sad circumstances. He was in Japan visiting his brother and after a night of drinking, fell asleep in a hot tub and drowned. Overnight, Bernie Glassman inherited Maezumi Roshi’s Dharma realm and became the second Abbot of ZCLA. Just before he died, Maezumi Roshi completed the paperwork for Bernie’s Inka which gave him the title of Roshi.

Bernie was busy with his work in New York developing the Greyston Foundation and the Zen Peacemakers. Taking responsibility for ZCLA was more than Bernie could absorb. After a few bumpy attempts to reorganize, Bernie asked Egyoku Nakao to take charge of ZCLA, which she did in 1998. Bernie’s contribution as abbot was extending our practice into the wider community through his socially engaged work and street plunges and bearing witness retreats.

Bernie also assumed the presidency of the White Plum Asanga, the lineage of teachers emanating from Maezumi Roshi. Bernie would have been a great president of ZCLA, but due to his other responsibilities, he handed the Center’s presidency to Genpo Merzel. After Maezumi Roshi’s death, we could have easily fractured into separate, non-interacting units like some other Zen lineages did when their founder died. Even though we went through years of dysfunction, we still loved one another. Our main focus for the next ten years was healing the wounds that afflict the children of an alcoholic parent.

When I first came to ZCLA, there was a plaque inscribed by Maezumi Roshi hanging in the back gaitan of the zendo. In part, it reads:

Those who wish to realize and actualize the Buddha’s Way are welcome.

Otherwise you better keep out.

Let us be harmonious like milk dissolved in water. Temporarily, there are the relationships of guests to master and juniors to seniors; however, eventually all of us will be Buddhas forever. We should maintain the Buddha-Mind, moment after moment.

When I became president of the White Plum Asanga in 2007, we tried to let go of the patriarchal hierarchy and get rid of distinctions of senior and junior, which is tricky when the relationship between some members is teacher-student. We did manage to flatten the hierarchy and create statements of ethical behavior for White Plum teachers. They were a precursor of The Sangha Sutra created by Roshi Egyoku Nakao and her students. A few teachers who could not maintain proper boundaries with their students dropped out and are now independent with no affiliation with our lineage. The current president, Roshi Seisen Saunders, has extended this boundary work and the grievance process. Starting from Maezumi Roshi, there are now more than 180 empowered teachers in the White Plum Asanga.

When Roshi Egyoku took over at ZCLA in 1999, many unresolved issues started to surface from hurts people suffered previously at the hands of teachers and seniors. Just as the teachers were healing their wounds, the first years of Egyoku’s abbacy were taken up healing the wounds of the Sangha. The Sangha has the ability to regenerate itself. Through the years of processing the emotional side of practice, new upayas, such as council and the Gate of Sweet Nectar, took hold and have become a regular part of the healing practice.

In many fields, such as science, for new ideas to appear, there has to be a paradigm shift which can only take place when the old guard passes on and the new guard takes charge. The old narrative of the patriarch and the samurai is no longer relevant for our Zen practice. Deep appreciation to Roshi Egyoku for planting the feminine lineage and the collective wisdom of Sangha as firm cornerstones for the continued growth of ZCLA and the American Dharma. Many benedictions to new Abbot Sensei Faith-Mind Thoreson to carry this Dharma forward.

Roshi Shishin is the Abbot of Great Mountain Zen Center in Berthoud, Colorado.

On Living An Authentic Life

by Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen



Good morning. Happy Mother's Day! How many mothers are here today? I hope you have a beautiful afternoon and evening with your families. I want to express my gratitude for your showing up and sharing this event for ZCLA.

It's a custom for us at ZCLA to preface our talks by appreciating the indigenous people who lived on this land for thousands of years before us. As Roshi Ryodo said the other night – they lived here before the Buddha's time. Let us pay homage to the Tongva people who occupied these Southern California lands until they were colonized by the Spanish. To their elders and ancestors in the past, present, and future, we bow in respectful acknowledgment and offer deep gratitude.

A lot of what is happening here at ZCLA is gratitude to our founders and our ancestors and especially to Roshi Egyoku. Also a big thank you to Roshi Ryodo who has been a very important teacher for me for 19 years or so.

As you may know, ZCLA is currently involved in Ascending and Descending the Mountain ceremonies when, as Roshi Egyoku has said, we've been deconstructing the Abbot's seat into three seats. One will be the administrative abbot – that will be me. Another will be the Head Teacher – that will be Roshi Egyoku. And the Preceptor or Head Priest seat will be determined later. In the interim, Roshi Egyoku and I will serve as Head Priest/Preceptor.

Roshi has carried the three seats for the past 20 years. It's time for her to have a little respite. But I want to make it very clear that Roshi Egyoku is staying on as head teacher. She will reside here at ZCLA. And I will continue to appreciate and honor her and her guidance and won't be shy about asking for her help. I think anyone who knows me knows I'm not shy about asking for help.

Today, I'm here to answer your questions about my Ascending the Mountain, Receiving the Temple Seal, and becoming Fourth Abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, Buddha Essence Temple. I feel very humble in this endeavor and deeply appreciate all the help I've been receiving from you. May we continue on this journey together. I will be here to help you with your practice in every possible way that I can and to continue the hard work that Roshi has done for all of us.

Show up! I've held this mantra since my beginning days. Wherever you are, take the practice and show up for that. Show up for your children. Show up for your grandchildren, for your parents, your job. And it won't hurt if you show up here at the Zen Center and in the zendo. For myself, certain questions have developed my practice: What brought me here? What kept me here? What has kept me coming back? And I listen to some of you and know your questions, too. But if you don't show up, it won't be answered because it needs to be experienced, it needs to be embodied. And then you can go home and read all about it. Unfortunately, I'm not a reader and student, and I encourage you to come into this practice experientially. Then it becomes real, it becomes authentic.

When I took the precept class in the beginning, I realized that I wanted to live an authentic life. A life of intention and vow. That was one of the first important breakthroughs I had. I really wanted an authentic life. That's been my journey.

So I continued in this practice. I started showing up. Things unfolded slowly. I had no goals to be anything. In fact, it was a struggle to be anything here. Even jikido. But who knows really what my underlying motivations were. What kept me here? What has kept me coming back? I just allowed things to happen organically.

When Egyoku Roshi offered her Descending the Mountaintop talk, she spoke of four themes. The first was purification, and in her talk, Roshi referred to the three fires that broke out in the Dharma Hall shortly after her return. Then the atonement ceremony was developed along with precept studies. All to purify the space she returned to in 1997.

Roshi's second theme was to protect the vow. This is where I say I started to open up to appreciating life and wanting to live an authentic life. The third theme was the creation of new upayas and expansiveness. Out of this, Shared Stewardship developed. Soon we shall be hearing more about the Open Palm school. The fourth theme is carrying on the lineage, carrying on ZCLA however that will manifest. We plan, we save, we do the hard work, and we don't know what might happen. To keep that foundationally is, I think, most important.

One of the key points is trusting vow, the power of vow. To be present for the suffering and to meet it with integrity and openness. Don't have a fixed idea of what Zen practice is. Everything changes like it or not. Standing on the right side of vow, be one with what you're doing.

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ZCLA Mountain Seat C



Receiving the Temple Seal.



Lilly Brodie and Eberhard Fetz.



Bodhi-Song (left) and Kaizen on drums.



Our hosts Soji (left) and Meiho.



Mitch Bradford and Radiant-Joy singing.



Myoho during rehearsal.



Ceremony, May 19, 2019



Our kitchen Bodhisattvas: (Left) Enju, Luminous-Heart, Oetsu, True-Joy and Reishin (Steward).



Egyoku Roshi with Seisen Roshi.



Sensei Faith-Mind with family and friends.



(Left) Roshi Shishin Wick, Roshi Shinko Perez, Roshi Egyoku, and Eberhard Fetz.



Master of Ceremonies Dharma-Joy Reichert.



Senshin during rehearsal.



ON LIVING AN AUTHENTIC LIFE *(Continued from page 5)*

I received the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts and vowed in three different ceremonies – jukai, tokudo, and denkai. Understanding Vow was a very, very important concept for me. It took time for me – ten or 15 years – to really discover and hone my own personal vow: to serve others with an open heart.

Throughout my life, I have served others in many ways. For years, I was an airline flight attendant, so it wasn't always with an open heart. Sometimes it was begrudging, being annoyed, or whining. I encourage all of you to continue exploring your vow. See what comes up for you. What speaks to you?

Today, my vow to you as a Sangha is to be fully in. And I will say, it probably won't be without some complaining. I vow to work on that. So I am fully in. You know the old story about Michaelangelo. When asked about his creativity, he said he didn't actually create images. He just released them from the stone. He would patiently chip away until the perfect figure that had always been there was revealed. So we have a big shop and lots of hammers and chisels and zafus and sutras and upayas – there's plenty of opportunity here. For me, it happened just at the right pace. It couldn't be rushed. Not saying I didn't get impatient, but it couldn't be rushed. It wouldn't have been authentic to me. So what are we doing here? We're trying to awaken.

After Roshi Egyoku walked into a toxic center in 1997 – as she said in her talk – it took her 12 to 15 years to create and purify and atone and to heal the Center. To integrate all the shadows. Now it's our turn. We've been part of her vision and her creation. And we want to continue to offer Roshi Egyoku space and energy to teach, and that's what I'm doing here today. To honor her, her work, all of you, and the Zen Center. So we can all awaken together.

And we need to be ever diligent. We need to be the many hands and eyes. We need to not be complacent and think that we're above and beyond. Forget that. We're all human. So please, be diligent and listen and come forward if you feel you need to. Talk to someone.

Buddha's awakening was the beginning of his journey. Change takes time and it only occurs, in my experience, to the extent that we actually do the practice. So I promise – it's the last time I'll say it – show up. Be fully in. And see what arises. We'll do this together.

This mountain being ascended literally means the ceremony of installing a new abbot. Recently, one of my spiritual friends sent me this –



“Climbing up to the unfathomable mountain peak, I feel I also climb into the lap of all the ancestors and teachers that have inhabited this place before me. Supported and helped by them, I'll leap freely into that emptiness.”

That energy of leaping and being free speaks to me. I was just talking to someone about how important it is to make close spiritual friends, Dharma brothers and sisters. That connection is very important. And to be able to have them to support and help you in a different way than other people in your life. It's a very important aspect of our growth. I encourage you to nurture those aspects of your growth.

My spiritual friend also shared this with me: “The only limits that exist are the ones we have set for ourselves. Take off the blinders, break the chains, push down the walls of your cage, and take a step forward. When you've taken that step, acknowledge it. And take another step. And when you finally arrive at enlightenment as whole body and mind, acknowledge it, let it go, and you guessed it... take another step. This kind of practice always is, always has been, and always will be the ceaseless practice of all the Buddhas and Ancestors.” As we chanted today – I am the Buddhas and they are me! You will be a Buddha.

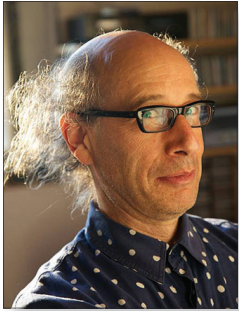
Recently, I was reading Roshi Chozen Bays' book *The Vow Powered Mind* in which she shares that Maezumi Roshi, ZCLA's founder, was asked by an interviewer: “Christians believe in a soul that continues after this life. Do you Buddhists believe in something permanent that continues after death?” Maezumi Roshi considered for a moment and said, “No, rather we believe in vow.” I find that to be a really appropriate statement today.

The energy of vow does not die with the person but lives through time, changing as it is picked up by new people, always continuing to bear fruit.

Sensei Faith-Mind is the 4th Abbot of ZCLA. This article is adapted from her Dharma talk given on May 12, 2019.

A Vow on Bernie Day

by Moshe YooWho Cohen



*"Can we meditate?"
"Would you like to?"
"Oh, yes, Please!"*

Celio and his taxi were waiting for me at the Guatemala City airport as planned on a late night in early March. He's there as promised by Ricardo, the Payasos Sin Fronteras (Clowns Without Borders, Spain) logistician who has planned this 12-day project. I am there to teach five workshops and to create a show collaborating with local clowns. My ultimate destination is Escuintla where the Volcan de Fuego erupted last year. Celio whisks me off to the Hotel Panamerica, an old stately downtown hotel, which is certainly a step up from the cement floors I had slept on with Desastrosus Cirkus when we played the Bhutanesse refugee camps back in 1997.

Then again, I'm not sure if there even was a hotel in Damak, a town that the Lonely Planet Nepal guidebook only dedicated one paragraph to. Escuintla, a trucking town on the Transamerican highway, had plenty of hotels, and innumerable long haul trucks rumbling through town. It too probably only has one paragraph in the guide books – there was not a gringo in sight during my four days there.

Clowns Without Borders had been invited a few months after the eruption last June to come and do shows for those displaced by the volcano's lava flow. We also did a number of workshops for the first responders, and for the teachers from those communities. My trip is a follow-up visit as CWB had received numerous requests to return, especially to come back with more workshops. Some of the workshops are to take place in Guatemala City, first with Procuraderia Desrechos Humanos (Provider of Human Rights), and then with local clowns. Then a show-creation day with several of the clowns, after which Celio will drive me to Escuintla. There I will offer several more days of workshops, one for health care workers and

one for teachers. After that, the clowns come join me to do two shows in the school, and one for the community. Of the 4,800 people left without homes (and community) by the eruption, 1,200 remain displaced.

It was at ZCLA on Bernie Day that I made a vow to go on another Clowns Without Borders project. Still lodged in my memory were scenes from 2001, when I had knocked a cigar out of Boobysatvah's mouth after he disturbed Smedley'O and YooWho's club passing pattern. That was Bernie's second intervention in the show. In the first, his disruption resulted in being chased by the clowns – the folks in the Chiapas highlands loved chase scenes. They found it quite hilarious that the payasos (clowns) were chasing the elder gringo. When we "caught" Booby,

we would sit him down on a broken fishing stool that would then collapse. The audience reacted with strong laughter to the bearded guy falling on his butt in the dusty earth. So 18 years later, in Bernie's honor, I've brought the chair with me on another CWB project, planning to put it back into action.



Lucho, Sayda, Noemi and Stef were the team that traveled to Escuintla two months after the volcano erupted. I had a long talk with

Sayda before coming down, mostly quizzing her about the workshops that they had offered. I wished to determine what could I possibly offer workshopwise that would prove useful. "We played games (theater games, clown based play) all day and the participants absolutely loved it" is what Sayda told me. No doubt that the games offered needed opportunities to laugh together, to let off steam due to tensions and trauma resulting from the disaster. The volcano lava flow had run right through a good number of communities, completely decimating their homes, communities, and perhaps more importantly, growing fields and livelihoods.

Offering shows, bringing laughter where it's most needed, is the main thrust of Clowns Without Borders

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A VOW ON BERNIE DAY *(Continued from page 9)*

projects. As the organization grows and expands (15 chapter countries, over 100 projects each year), there is also a strong push to involve/collaborate with local artists. Hence the plan to create a show with Miguel Angel, Xexa, and Pablo. Figuring out how to include the fishing stool, its seat all taped up and ready to break under weight, was a delightful problem to solve. We developed a strategy where Xexa, the smallest and goofiest of the clowns, would sit down on it. When we played in the dusty school playground and the stool broke, Xexa ended up on his behind in a contorted position and the kids broke into fits of hilarity. Laughter was plentiful, and so was the dust. Little clouds followed one's footsteps everywhere. The earth was poor, silty and undesirable, clearly they would not be able to grow crops there. The compound that had been designated for the displaced was no substitute for their lost lands.



This certainly contributed to the tensions that were palpable at my first Escuintla workshop with the health care workers. I had encountered similar energies with human rights workers (psychologists and social workers) in Guatemala City. They supported clients facing every kind of abuse situation you might imagine. Listening to them in the opening circle, I had a strong wish to lighten their loads. I had an agenda: Fun and Funny, trauma/stress release exercises, vulnerability affirmations, enjoying frustration, reactivity/response games, and more. Yet, being wise to the Three Tenets, it made sense to come in Not Knowing, and to hear what they wished to work on.

Before sending the talking stick around the circle, I offered a menu of possibilities for the day, and asked what resonated, and what wishes did they have? To my great surprise, relaxation exercises (Feldenkreis-based practices) were high on everyone's list. Hearing that, when the



talking stick came back to me, I added yet another possibility: zazen meditation. To my surprise, the response was quite enthusiastic; in fact, all five workshop groups were of the same mind: "Yes, please."

I had hesitated to mention zazen, figuring that meditation might be a little too far outside their comfort zone. Yet there it was, and so with chings from a small Burmese bell, sitting in straight-backed chairs, we meditated for short seven-to-eight-minute stretches, several times in each workshop. The practice was well received. I took it a bit further, introducing the possibility of three breath practices, as a way to shift one's state of being when they became aware of stress.

With the teachers, I wondered if they might try to bring that quiet into their classrooms. A video shared with me the day after our workshop suggested otherwise. It was a short clip of a teacher trying out the monster/victim exercise in his classroom. The practice, developed for a CWB Burma project, offers the kids a chance to have great fun reacting with playful/funny fear (enjoy being afraid!) to a supposed monster scaring them.

In the video, the teacher has taken on the monster role and the kids are fully enjoying his absurd monster-like attempts to scare them. They scream in playful fear, followed by collective gleeful laughter. Then as the students transform into monsters, switching roles according to the game's design, their eyes fill with mischievous delight. As the posse turns on the teacher, the video suddenly cut off! Uh oh, what kind of mischief did I instigate?

Only the nose knows...

Moshe Cohen is a Purveyor of Sacred Mischief and Closbi of the Order of Disorder.

Your Gifts are Received with a Heartfelt “Thank You!”

The Zen Center is maintained by the hands and eyes of each one of you.

To **Roshi Egyoku** for giving the Descending the Mountain Teisho and for her 20 years of service as Abbot;

To **Sensei Deb Faith-Mind** for offering her Ascending the Mountain Dharma talk;

To all those who helped on the Mountain Seat Ceremony: **Jitsujo Gauthier (Head Steward)**, **Darla Myoho Fjeld**, **Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert**, **Sensei Jeanne Dokai Dickenson**, **Nan Reishin Merritt**, **Ty Jotai Webb**, **Rosa Ando Martinez**, **Lorraine Gessho Kumpf**, **Dharma Holder Katherine Senshin Griffith**, **Diane Enju Katz**, **Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown**, **Jane Radiant-Joy Chen**, **Conrad Butsugen Romo**, **Reeb Kaizen Venners**, **Dan Wilner**, **Tom Yudo Burger**, **Geri Meiho Bryan**, **Gemma Soji del Barrio**, **Dylan Neal**, **Bob Doetsu Ross**, **George Mukei Horner**, **Tim Taikan Zamora**, **Mark Shogen Bloodgood**, **Jim Dojun Hanson**, **Frank Genku Martinez**, **Mitch Bradford**, **Bob Nyosui**, **Ryo Akasumo**, **Robert Diaz**, **Pat Suigen Way**, **Mary Rios**, **Nancy Teiju Marquez**, **Jenny Jusen Bright**, **John Kyogen Rosania**, **Jonathan Kaigen Levy**, **Chris Hackman**, **James Bodhi-Song Graham**, and **Jolene Beiser**;

To **Hiromi Sensei** and **Arthur WaYu Kennedy** for offering the Tea Ceremony;

To our Hosts: **Brian Sotetsu Huff**, **Scott Horne**, **Harlan Pace**, **Reigen**, **David Randall**, and **Glenn Gikai Davis**;

To **Roshi Kipp Ryodo Hawley** and **Sensei Faith-Mind** for co-leading Buddha’s Birthday Sesshin;

To our 2nd Quarter Day of Reflection leaders: **Dojun**, **Jitsujo**, and **Etsugen**;

To **Mark Shogen Bloodgood** for his Dharma Holder presentation and exchange;

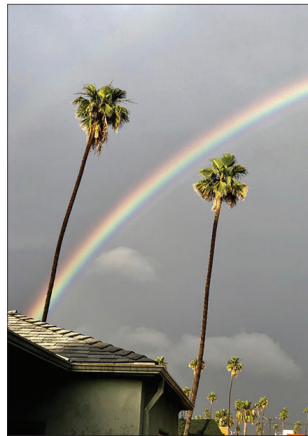
To **Ando**, **Jitsujo**, and **Genku** for Wednesday night instructions in Spanish of Introduction to Zen Meditation;

To **Roshi Joe Bobrow** for leading the Buddha’s Dream Workshop to benefit the Dharma Training Fund;

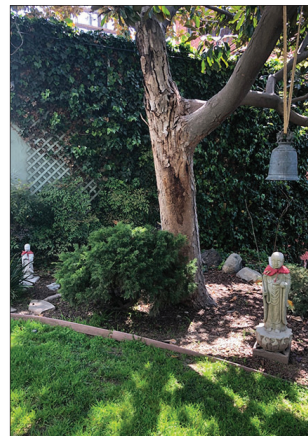
To the **Brown-Green Circle** for leading the Earth Day event: Ritual Arts and Scraps at Play in the Fields of Debris;



Roshi Enkyo giving her Dharma Talk.



Somewhere over the rainbow.



Jizo Garden.

To **Mukei** and **Senshin** for giving their Dharma talks;

To **Nem Etsugen Bajra** for leading his ongoing class in Meditation for Career Development;

To **Mukei** for leading the Garden Zazen;

To **Roshi Ryodo** for Buddha’s First Sermon classes;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for leading Growing a Plum Blossom May Sesshin and the June Priest Retreat;

To **Sensei Faith-Mind** and **Yudo** for instructing the Rakusu sewing classes;

To **Myoho** for leading the Bearing Witness Council on What Divides Us;

To **Radiant-Joy**, **Jitsujo**, **Yoko Gyokuren Bajra**, **Meiho**, **Doetsu**, **John Heart-Mirror Trotter**, and **Julie Getsuan Suhr** who helped clean the kitchen;

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To **Pat Enkyo O’Hara** for her Teisho;

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To **Roshi Egyoku**, Preceptor, for the Jukai Ceremony;

To **Reishin** for leading a Dharma Chat;

To **Sensei Faith-Mind** and **Myoho** for leading the Sangha Forum;

To Our 2nd Quarter Tenzos: **Radiant-Joy**, **Karina Beltran**, **Ryo Akasumo**, **Taikan**, **Reishin**, **Diane Enju Katz**, **Diane True-Joy Fazio**, **Jessica Oetsu Page**, **Kane Buzen Phelps**, **Kathy Myoan Solomon**, **Myoho**, **Chris Daian Fields**, **Harlan Pace**, and **Ty Jotai Webb**;

To our Tea Snack Tenzos: **Ando**, **David Randall** and **Jusen**;

To our 2nd Quarter Jikidos: **Kaizen**, **Sotetsu**, **David Randall**, **Meiho**, **Peter Ryugen Sample**, **Tommy Seishin Gardner**, **Dojun**, and **Taikan**;

To **Belkis Fabiola Herrera Ochoa** for cleaning the Zendo as her Dana to the Zen Center.

(We would also like to thank all those names that were forgotten or left unsaid.)

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The *Water Wheel* is published by the Zen Center of Los Angeles, Great Dragon Mountain/Buddha Essence Temple, which was founded by the late Taizan Maezumi Roshi in 1967.

Our mission is to provide training and resources for realizing the oneness of life, to maintain the precepts, and to embody the Three Tenets of Not-Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Taking Action. **Our vision** is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which all beings live in harmony with each other and the earth, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized and compassion flows unhindered.

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Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman

Abbot Emeritus 1999-2019: Roshi Egyoku Nakao

The Seats: Abbot, Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen;

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Inka Shomei (Seal of Approval)

Roshi Kipp Ryodo Hawley

Dharma Holder

Rev. Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Descending the Mountain

Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao, Abbot-Emeritus

Ascending the Mountain

Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen, Abbot

Jukai

Gemma Soji Cubero del Barrio

Brian Sotetsu Huff

Christiaan Ekan Manno

Robert Kanzan Swan

In Memoriam

Jill Shinjin Peters (December 30, 1942 - May 3, 2019)

Births

Marina Robin Goodsmith (November 19, 2018)

Vera Sky Palmer (December 13, 2018)



Growing a Plum Blossom Sesshin, May 22-26, 2019



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