



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

A House Un-Divided

by Katherine Senshin Griffith



"If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it... 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free." — Abraham Lincoln, June 1858

As Buddhists we wish all beings to be free—free from the greed, anger and ignorance that causes suffering. We vow to

awaken to our True Nature of interdependence and the co-arising of all things. We wish to think of our country as united but see continual evidence that we are still very divided. The so-called United States was founded on the genocide of numerous indigenous peoples, and the forced labor of enslaved Africans. To delve deeper into this "house divided" from a Buddhist perspective, let's examine Mumonkan Case 35, "Seijo and Her Soul are Separated. Goso said to his monks, "Seijo's soul separated from her being. Which was the real Seijo?"

This koan comes from a famous Chinese folktale of the T'ang period. Once upon a time, Chōkan loved his beautiful daughter Sei very much. (Sei is a proper name and jo means girl.) When Sei was little, Chōkan teased her, saying she and her handsome cousin Ochu would make a fine married couple. The two cousins grew up and fell in love and were devastated when Chōkan announced Sei's engagement to another man. Heartbroken, Ochu set off in a boat till Sei called to him from the riverbank. They ran away together and eventually had two kids. But they both longed to return home and get her father's blessing.

Leaving Sei in the boat, Ochu went to see Chōkan and apologized for running away with Sei. Chōkan was dumbfounded. "My daughter Sei has been in a coma since the day you left." Chōkan showed him the sickly Sei in bed.

Ochu said, "This can't be, Sei is in my boat right now." Chōkan's servant then confirmed Sei was on the boat. Chōkan told the whole story to the sick Sei who silently got out of bed just as the other Sei arrived at the house and the two Seijos became one. Sei then said, "I didn't know I was in a coma. When I heard Ochu ran away, I followed his boat as if in a dream. I'm not sure which was the real me: the one sick in bed, or the wife and mother."

Now, Master Goso is not asking us to solve this folktale mystery but to open up our penetrating Zen eye and see our true nature clearly, as Master Mumon comments:

When you realize what the real is, you will see that we pass from one husk to another like travelers stopping for a night's lodging. But if you do not realize it yet, I earnestly advise you not to rush about wildly. When earth, water, fire, and air suddenly separate, you will be like a crab struggling in boiling water with its seven or eight arms and legs. When that happens, don't say I didn't warn you.

One of the points of the tale is that we humans play various roles in life and relate differently to different people in different situations. Who is the Real Self underlying and taking on these roles? These roles are more like guests and hosts of the Real Self. Even our personalities are more servants than masters of the Mind.

Someone told me recently he didn't know who he was, who I was, who anyone was. How wonderful! There's so much to endlessly discover. How audacious to think we completely KNOW anything!

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A HOUSE UN-DIVIDED *(Continued from page 1)*

Who is the Real United States? I'd like to look at a collective approach to this fundamental question. The great inventor Buckminster Fuller said, "We are not going to be able to operate our Spaceship Earth successfully nor for much longer unless we see it as a whole spaceship and our fate as common. It has to be everybody or nobody."

What's the difference between diversity and division? Can we have diversity without division? We aspire to "one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." But our nation's soul is separated. One aspect is full of greed, hatred and delusion; the other believes in liberty and justice for everyone. Who is the Real United States? Both these aspects are in each of us. It's a delusion to think that these qualities only apply to certain people. Could this be another folktale?

Once upon a time there was a beautiful country. It was told in its early years that it was betrothed to liberty and justice for all. But then its founding fathers wanted to marry it off to greed, anger, and ignorance – consumerism, genocide, oppression. One side pulled away from that and vowed to be awake to its underside in the pursuit of liberty and justice. But the other side stayed sick in a coma of delusive harmful behavior. Who is the Real United States?

These two karmic tributaries flow through each of us – whether we recognize it or not. Witnessing the repercussions of our sense of separation is painful. We may "pass from one husk to another" thinking we are free from blame but there is only the One True Body.

Will this nation – or any for that matter – unite into the One Body – even with all its differences? The House Un-Divided that it already is—and cannot be otherwise. Can a Nation realize its True Self? Are we not a part of that process? Doesn't it take each of us realizing our Essential Nature?

Buckminster Fuller also said: "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. You cannot change how someone thinks, but you can give them a tool to use which will lead them to think differently."

We are fortunate to have the tools of our Zen Practice. As a Sangha, we have subtle, myriad differences. But we also have a common renewed intention to be beneficial, fortified by the practices of zazen, council, atonement, working together and the Three Tenets. Not Knowing, atoning, deep listening and working together is exactly what is needed in our divided house – both individually and collectively.

The aspirational United States is often referred to as a great democratic experiment and we truly are a work-in-progress. The global task of peacemaking, reconciliation, mutual recognition, and justice is an unending process that takes boundless patience, deep listening and dropping preconceptions. But isn't that what we as Zen students commit to with our Great Bodhisattva Vows?

Starting with ourselves: What is inside your own house of the mind that is divided? Are you one with what you are doing? Or are you always wishing you were someplace else? Are you torn between the different aspects of your life or roles you are asked to take on? What is keeping you from full commitment to your zazen?

We can find ourselves in situations where we construct narratives about ourselves. Often others seem to construct an image of us that is different than how we see ourselves. This is true of nations and individuals. If we over-identify with one aspect, we can lose the rest of our potential or be blind to areas that need to be dealt with. We can experience conflicts between our different roles and those of others too. We can forget the ripples are all part of the Great Ocean.

Mumon's verse on this koan:

*The moon above the clouds is ever the same;
Valleys and mountains are separate from each other.
How wonderful! How blessed!
Is this one or is this two?*

Feeling separated from ourselves can reveal not just a big yearning to fully express our gifts but a deep longing to know our True Self. We may feel something in us is not whole – but sense there is a Whole. To close the gap and experience our Real Self, we must personally shed all concepts, expectations and surface answers.

Another master Huo-an wrote a verse on Seijo's koan:

*Whatever done is not forgotten.
Even in thousands of years:
When causes and conditions combine,
Results and consequences are naturally experienced.*

We may be experiencing the consequences of the harmful deluded side of ourselves. Knowing that our individual awakening affects not just our own lives but the greater House Un-Divided, can inspire full-hearted commitment to practice.

Sensei Senshin is the ZCLA Head Teacher.

Remembering Rabbi Ani Shalom

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



Death reveals the stunning beauty of a life. It's so as I remember Rabbi Don Ani Shalom Singer, who died at the age of 87 on January 11, 2023. He died in his sleep from Covid at his home on the edge of a national pine forest in Carson, New Mexico, which he shared with his beloved wife Virginia. He rejoiced in the natural beauty that surrounded him every time we spoke over

the phone: Rabbi Don was a lover of beauty; he himself radiated love and joy. A devotee of the philosopher Martin Buber, Rabbi Don exemplified Buber's words that "the core of Hasidic teachings is the concept of a life of fervor, of exalted joy (*Tales of the Hasidim*)."¹ Rabbi Don's "exalted joy" was infectious.

When I was asked to return to the Zen Center (ZCLA) by Roshi Bernie in 1997, Rabbi Don offered unwavering friendship and support during those tenuous and tender years. We were both new Zen teachers, although Rabbi Don had been a Rabbi for decades having ordained as a Reform Rabbi from Hebrew Union College. Roshi Bernie had transmitted the Dharma to Rabbi Don in 1995, following long years of the mutual studying of Zen koans and the old Hasidic stories which flowed forth from Rabbi Don as song, dance, and spoken wisdom. Roshi Bernie's vision of interfaith was one in which persons of faith—Catholicism, Judaism, Sufism—uniquely intersected with Zen. Although Rabbi Don was also a transmitted Zen teacher, he remained first and foremost a Reform Rabbi. Still he embodied two powerful rivers, distinct yet both nourishing what Rabbi Don called "the wisdom of the heart."

Rabbi Don and Roshi Bernie were doing Zen-Judaism workshops by the mid 1970s in Los Angeles. During this time, Rabbi Don was a Hillel or campus Rabbi at large, serving over 40 groups. Rabbi Don was fond of recalling that at an East meets Judaism retreat, the East walked in as a Zen guy from Brooklyn. Practicing zazen and doing many sesshin, Rabbi Don came to regard the dynamic practice of zazen as "shalom" or "peace." Many years later, Roshi Bernie would give him the name "Ani Shalom," or "I Am Peace."

Although our paths crossed at the Zen Center in the early days, our friendship did not begin until 1995 when



Sensei Ensho (left) with Rabbi Ani Shalom at ZCLA High Holy days.

we both found ourselves in Yonkers as students of Roshi Bernie. I recall an amusing incident there. In discussing where I might live in Yonkers, Roshi Bernie mused that my living with the cloistered nuns of the Sacramentine Order would be worth exploring. The nuns had sold their historic building to the Greyston Foundation, and it would be several months before moving day. Roshi Bernie, Rabbi Don, and I went to see the kindly head nun. In my left ear, I heard Roshi Bernie inquire if I could live with the nuns; simultaneously in my right ear, I heard Rabbi Don whisper, "You *don't* want to do this, Egyoku. You *don't* want to do this!" I was spared a decision when Roshi Bernie's request was politely and firmly denied.

The first decade after my return, ZCLA was amorphous; it would be many years before the new shape of the Zen Center would emerge. It was during those open and unformed years that I invited Rabbi Don to celebrate Shabbat and the High Holy Days, which he did for eight years. We also conducted several weddings and funerals together. Rabbi Don was the leader of a Jewish contemplative community of friends called Shir Hadash, or "New Song," which held their celebrations and study groups at various locations around town. While the Zen Center struggled to find its footing, we provided a place for the free-floating Shir Hadash community. Although not everyone at the Zen Center was happy about this, we opened ourselves to a "new song." I recall fondly how the Zen Center garden sparkled for days afterwards from the transcendent joy of the High Holy Day events, from the sound of the Shofar, from Rabbi Don's joy.

I had little experience with Judaism before I met Rabbi Don. If "Zen," as Rabbi Don said, "was living in meditation," Judaism, for me, became "living in song, dance,

(Continued on page 4)

¹Louise Steinman, "Two Faiths Nourish the Wisdom of the Heart" in: *Los Angeles Times*, December 26, 1997.

REMEMBERING RABBI ANI SHALOM

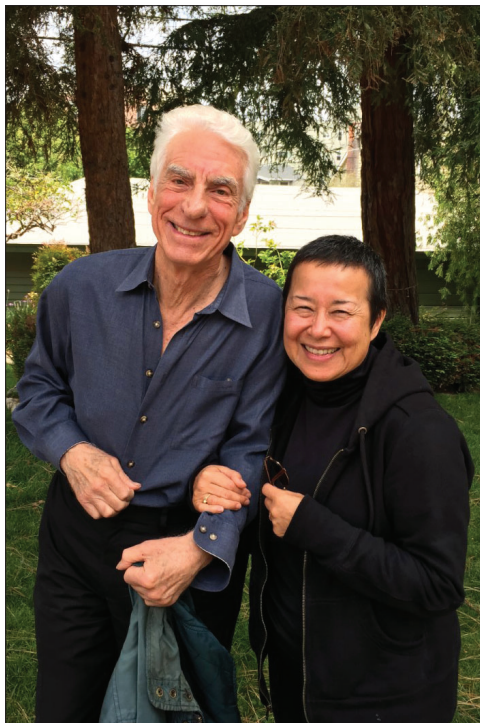
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and stories.” Throughout the years, I would hear Rabbi Don speak to what he regarded as Judaism’s most radical commandment: “You shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were a stranger in Egypt, and you know the heart of the stranger.” He referenced this even over cups of tea during his visits, often wearing an aloha shirt. He elaborated that “‘to know the heart of the stranger,’ means not to make a stranger of yourself, to become intimate with your own heart.” I can still hear him reciting a poem he wrote upon the death of his heart brother Sensei Raul Ensho Berge, “It is the work of heart and mind to see to the other in patience and wholeness.”

There was an event which Rabbi Don and I planned together that remains for me a highlight of my time at ZCLA. Together we designed a Bearing Witness Day based on the book *Shivitti: A Vision* by Ka Tzetnik 135633. This is Ka Tzetnik’s autobiographical account of the professional treatment regimen with LSD for Concentration Camp Syndrome that he undertook as a survivor of Auschwitz. Rabbi Don invited artists that he knew personally to each read one of the chapters of the book. Between each reading, which was held in the Zendo, a musician played on a keyboard to transition us to the garden, where we had a light snack in silence, and then returned again to the Zendo for the next chapter reading, for the deep listening that pervaded the silent day. This continued for many hours until Ka Tzetnik’s soul-searing account was complete and absorbed. Rabbi Singer helped me to understand that some things in life are “beyond the reach of consolation.”²

Rabbi Don and I attended the early Auschwitz-Berkeinau Bearing Witness Retreats in Oswecim, Poland. He continued to attend for many years. During the first retreat in 1996, something remarkable happened which taught me powerful lessons on “exalted joy” and bearing witness. On the opening night of the five-day retreat, Rabbi Don stood before over a hundred of us seated in the large auditorium in the Auschwitz Museum. I don’t recall Rabbi Don’s words, but before long he began singing and dancing, joy pouring from his being, his soul, his heart. He

exuded a joy for which the retreatants were not prepared. Nevertheless, most people were swept up by his energy and began to sing and swirl around the auditorium, filling the aisle and weaving throughout rows of seats. Suddenly, people began to stop and withdraw; people became upset and angry that we were singing and dancing at Auschwitz. Roshi Bernie called an emergency meeting for the leaders of the retreat. What happened then has been one of my most important spiritual lessons. We sat in a circle; people directed their anger at Bernie. One man, incensed at what had transpired, leaned over me and shouted at Bernie: “This is wrong! You have to fix this!” Roshi Bernie looked directly at him and quietly and firmly said, “I am not here to fix anything. I am here to bear witness.” The force of that exchange—perhaps because I was sitting between them—continues to resonate for me as the moment I learned how to bear witness and that, it was indeed possible, to raise a heart of joy in the darkest places.



Rabbi Ani Shalom and Roshi Egyoku in the Garden.

One year long ago, Rabbi Don and I both attended a Street Retreat in Manhattan together during Passover week. On the first night, the group settled on a small hill in Central Park for the night. The bitterly cold wind was relentless. As daylight appeared, many participants had dispersed and Rabbi Don was nowhere to be found. We spent the day begging on the streets with no sign of Rabbi Don. Around 4:00 in the afternoon, we gathered at a designated park. By this time, Roshi Bernie had clearly had it with the missing Rabbi, who was to lead the Passover celebration. “He is probably hanging out with a friend in a condo somewhere,”

Roshi Bernie fumed. Rabbi Don finally appeared. “Where have you been?” demanded Roshi Bernie. Rabbi Don, clearly surprised at Roshi Bernie’s demeanor, responded, as though it was the most obvious thing, “I’ve been begging for our Passover meal.” We all watched as he unloaded his backpack with Passover food begged from Manhattan delis and groceries. Throughout the years, I would often be reminded of the strong bones undergirding Rabbi Don’s apparent absent-mindedness and freewheeling energies. The Passover meal was very special indeed.

I especially loved that Rabbi Don was not a linear person. Rather, he swirled. To quote again a line from the poem he wrote upon the death of Sensei Ensho, he “... did not always talk like others talk, sometimes it is as if the subject or the object of the sentence has not appeared.”

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²Kaddish translated by Rabbi Singer and Sensei Peter Levitt for Auschwitz-Berkeinau Bearing Witness retreats.

Arousing Wisdom

by Darla Myoho Fjeld



The Case

The twenty-first ancestor was the Venerable Vasubandhu. One time the twentieth ancestor said, "I do not seek the Way, yet I am not confused. I do not venerate the Buddhas, yet I am not conceited. I do not meditate for long periods of time, yet I am not lazy. I do not restrict myself to just one meal a day, yet I am not attached to food. I do not know what is enough, yet I am

not covetous. When the mind seeks nothing, this is called the Way." When the master heard this, he aroused the undefiled wisdom. (From The Record of Transmitting the Light, trans. by Francis H. Cook)

Master Vasubandhu was a great Indian philosopher and Zen teacher. I read an entry online that compared Vasubandhu's epistemology to that of Immanuel Kant. Epistemology means the study of knowledge. This made me perk up since I was reading Kant when I made a decision to learn how to meditate at a Zen Center in New York. In short, Kant said that we can never know the thing-in-itself, we can only know the thing as it is in us, because we perceive things through our senses and then make judgments about them in our minds and through our memories. Like Master Vasubandhu, Kant, then emphasized that everything we see are "appearances" of the things, not the things themselves. The problem with Western philosophy, in my opinion, is that it leaves us with a dualism between ourselves and the so-called outside world that is impossible to overcome by thinking. There was an inkling inside of me that told me that this division between inside and outside was a delusion and that is why I turned to Zen. My suspicion was that if I could learn how to drop all of my dividing thoughts, I could experience reality clearly and directly. I too could arouse the undefiled Wisdom. And so can you.

When Master Vasubandhu was 15 years old he made his home departure to seek the Way. At that time Master Jayata (the 20th Ancestor) was traveling around and teaching. He entered the town where there was a group of Buddhist students that considered Vasubandhu their leader. He was extremely disciplined and ate one meal a day, never lay down to rest and revered the Buddha day and night. Master Jayata, seeing this, wanted to liberate Vasubandhu. He asked the group: "This ascetic Vasubandhu, cultivates purity very well, but can he acquire the Buddha Way?" The group of students thought he could, but Master Jayata says, no – all this asceticism yields vanity and falseness.

Master Keizan's first words of his Teisho on this case are: "This story contains the greatest secret for learning the Way." The short version of this so-called great secret is Seek Nothing – this is the Way. Don't be Precious about anything. Don't even cling to these words. Our practice is not about doing things the right way – who even knows what that is? We can spend many lifetimes being caught up and feeling precious about putting the candle in the proper place on the altar or not stepping on the threshold when we enter the Zendo. As Sensei Mukei has taught us many times, doing these proper things are not about being right, they are about creating an atmosphere of being mindful and aware. None of these proper things are ends in themselves. You know you are on the path when there is nothing you want – when you drop all attachment to what is proper.

I love this verse that Master Keizan shares in his Teisho on this case. It's from Chia-shan who was a prominent Zen teacher who died in 881. Here's the verse:

*Clearly there is no thing called awakening;
Instead, awakening deludes people.
I stretch out both legs and take a long nap;
And here there is neither true nor false.
Truly, such is the essence of the Way.*

All kinds of things come up for us in our Zazen and when we are learning a new service position. When we participate in a Zazenkai or a Sesshin, we might get nervous when we are asked to ring a bell. We experience pain in one or more parts of our bodies and we have thoughts about all sorts of things. Just let yourself let go of all of this as if you're stretching out your legs and taking a long nap – beyond right and wrong. There is a calm, peaceful realm that runs through all of us. Please drop everything that hinders you from this realm.

Our practice is about shedding everything we think we know – shedding ideas about what a Buddhist is – shedding all the ways we find to be precious about this or that – shedding anything we think about awakening, enlightenment, Buddha nature – shed all of it – just let it fall away and sit with the Realm of Peaceful Ease.

Along with shedding we must also avoid adding. We must become like non-stick pans and resist all the ideas, words, shoulds, shouldn'ts, – allow nothing to stick. There is nothing in the so-called outside world that will save us.

(Continued on page 10)

DANA BOOKLET

January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022

Dear Sangha and Friends of ZCLA,

We are so grateful to all of you for your sincere practice and devoted service during this past year. The people whose names appear in this Dana Booklet have given of their time, energy, material goods and money.

We achieve nothing alone. We experience this when we deeply realize the interconnectedness of all of life. Each year, the Zen Center relies on our Dharma Training Fund and Annual Appeal to ensure that we can offer regular zazen, trainings,

programs, sesshins and zazenkais and maintain our buildings and grounds. This year, your generosity allowed the Zen Center to improve our virtual offerings. There are also sixty donors who have joined the Zen Center's Legacy Fund, donors who have remembered the Zen Center in the form of future bequests.

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“Since that which is
 real includes nothing
 worth begrudging,
 they give their body,
 life, and property
 in charity, without
 regret, without the
 vanity of giver, gift,
 or, recipient, and
 without the bias of
 attachment.”

— *Bodhidharma,*
Outline of Practice

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What does it mean to be a Zen Center priest?

by Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert



In January, we held a meeting where the current ZCLA priests met with anyone interested in exploring becoming a priest. We have not had such a meeting in quite a long time – in fact, I can’t remember one in the last decade. It was a wonderful meeting that demonstrated the diversity of our priests and their paths of training and service. No two reflections were the same!

Subsequently, the priests met in February – our first meeting as a group since before the pandemic. It was wonderful to get together; in the new reality, we had several people joining us via Zoom – from Brazil, Georgia, Arizona and Central California – along with those of us in person. The priests are in the process of working collectively to develop and clarify certain common guidelines for the priests and priest candidates to consider when someone wants to ordain as a novice priest (a ceremony called *shukke tokudo*).

As is true with virtually every “path,” the priest path involves ancient principles and practices that we are constantly reexamining and adapting in a modern context. What does it really mean to be a priest? Not just in the abstract, but here, at ZCLA, in 2023? How does the priest path differ from any other training path? Of course, we are in the process of sketching out a series of different training paths that will comprise the Open Palm School; this is intended to clarify the distinctions among various different training paths – the emphasis being on the term “training.” Training involves both external guidance and internal determination and self-initiative; clarifying the various training paths helps both the student and the teacher directionally. But, as you may notice if you are around for any period of time, the distinctions between these paths are not crisply delineated – indeed, they can be very mushy. So, while many people would say that one function specifically reserved for priests is to officiate at liturgical services in the Buddha Hall, in our lineage we have opened that role up to allow certain lay practitioners to lead services as well. Different people have different feelings about this – but that’s how it is, and we invite you to roll those feelings into your practice and to use them to

examine your ideas about how things “should” be. As with so much in Zen practice, if you are looking for hard-and-fast, black-and-white answers and rules, you’ve come to the wrong place. Can you hold and enjoy the complexity and let go of fixed ideas?

Fundamentally speaking, the role of a priest is to serve. Of course, everyone who chants the Four Great Bodhisattva Vows is vowing to serve: “Numberless beings/I vow to serve them.” But for a priest, he or she or they have put this vow – specifically, the vow to serve the Sangha – at the center of their lives. As a priest said to me many years ago, when I was considering novice ordination, while service can be optional for lay people, for priests it is not. Personally, I have always carried that perspective with me.



Dharma-Joy's tokudo, August 2010, with Roshi Egyoku.

The function of a priest is to serve the Sangha – the Noble Sangha. The Sangha is one of the Three Treasures. It is through practicing together, as a Sangha, that we wake up. It is how we rub off our sharp edges and learn harmonious practice. At ZCLA, we emphasize collective wisdom and awakening. A priest who ordains here is making a deeply-rooted vow to nurture the ZCLA

Sangha. But, of course, this term “Sangha” has many facets, opening out further and further, and none of them is left out from the vow of service. The vow of service does not have any qualifying footnotes.

Becoming a priest, your relationship to the Sangha changes, in ways both obvious and subtle. While you become more visible with this new form and its black robes, mostly the role of a priest is to be invisible, to do what needs to be done without drawing attention to yourself, or seeking notice or praise. A priest is a role of service, but sometimes it can go to your head. Do you think you’re special because you’re a priest? Do Sangha members think so? The ego is subtle and pervasive. Becoming a priest is a wonderful opportunity to see that and to practice with it.

And then there is the “priest archetype,” a set of expectations that may be completely unspoken that permeates your view of yourself and the Sangha’s view of you. What ideas and expectations do you have about what it means to be a priest? Sangha members, what expectations do you have?

Sensei Dharma-Joy is the Head Priest at ZCLA.

The ZCLA Lay Path

Three Teachers Discuss Their Lay Path

by Kipp Ryodo Hawley



The Open Palm School of Zen, as envisioned by Abbot Emerita Roshi Egyoku Nakao and the teachers and senior students of Zen Center of Los Angeles, lays out a series of training paths members can choose from as they pursue their formal study of Zen. These are not lifetime commitments, neither are they a linear grouping of phases we go through in specific order; rather,

they are ways to focus our current interests and maturity level on areas most appropriate for us at the moment. So, while we may find ourselves on a particular path for a period of time, we may soon find ourselves pursuing another.

One of the paths that has been generating interest lately is the Priest Path, which may be the most defined and developed since we have inherited much of its form from our Japanese Soto dharma ancestors.

And now that the Priest Path is being explored, ZCLA members are asking about a Lay Path. Currently there isn't one specifically listed in the Open Palm School, although the Mitra Path is close.

Because of this, we three lay teachers of ZCLA have been discussing such a path, and are beginning by exploring how we ourselves arrived at this, the Teacher Path, which is open to both lay and ordained students.

When I began my formal training at ZCLA there weren't "paths" per se, but there were three recognizable groups of members: ordained monks and nuns (we didn't call anyone a "priest" in those early days of the 1980s), those who weren't ordained but had formally become Buddhists by receiving jukai, and everyone else. We all trained together, we all dove into the dharma together, we all served in the same positions together, but some wore rakus and some shaved their heads, wore kesas and used zagus for bowing.

My view was that everyone's basic interest in Zen was the same, but some wanted a deeper, public commitment to the dharma so they asked to have jukai, and others felt a calling to make it their vocation as well as spiritual interest so they asked to be ordained.

I never felt that calling, and as a musician and later a software developer with a family, I already had a vocation. My interest has always been in seeing the truth and exploring it with fellow travelers on the dharma path. Even though we can provisionally distinguish separate "paths," there really is just one Way.

At certain times through the years, I was asked to take on more responsibilities - service positions, leading introductory classes, giving talks, offering face-to-face to students, and eventually to become an independent Zen teacher. I didn't consciously choose this as a path, it just happened organically.

And more and more lay folks in various Zen lineages are being certified to teach, enough that we have created an affinity group called the Lay Zen Teachers Association. It is now over ten years old, with over 100 members from multiple Japanese, Korean and Chinese Zen schools. So it appears that the "lay path" is becoming a thing! I encourage you to explore what it could mean for yourself, along with other ways of integrating Zen into your life.

by Katherine Senshin Griffith



When asked why I am not a priest, I answer I am: a priest of the Theatre. My primary identification and vocation is that of an artist, most specifically as an actor, writer and comedic trickster. Ironically, when I was in a sixth-grade Catholic school class, I answered a catechism question so wisely, the teacher Father John said, "You would make a very good priest, but you are the wrong sex." That was the moment, I "left" the church in my own mind, and I was not confirmed that year.

I'm married to a priest with a shaved head and robes to indicate her role and make herself available to the world. I'm the opposite. I want to be invisible, fully immersed in the world. I'd practiced 23 years before anyone realized I was a Buddhist because I got on staff at ZCLA. I never aspired to being a Zen Teacher but that is just what I was asked to do.

(Continued on page 11)

AROUSING WISDOM *(Continued from page 5)*

As we shed and avoid adding all the sticky thoughts, we are left with ourselves. It's amazing how much we try to wriggle out of facing who we are. If you're struggling with sitting, this is probably what you are doing. Don't be afraid to sit up straight and just be with your own true nature. Take a good look at all the ways you avoid, cling, revert to mistaken patterns – do this over and over again until you're exhausted and bored with your old ways – then experience the undefiled wisdom that you've been covering up with all of that stuff.

The Irony is that we think that our attachment to what we think is proper or what we think will make us happy and peaceful is precisely what is getting in the way of us truly experiencing peaceful repose, undefiled Wisdom and compassionate Love.

In Rohatsu Sesshin, we honor Shakyamuni Buddha. As he sat down under a tree, straightened his clothes and his back, and practiced zazen, so do we practice zazen. He

"Our practice is about shedding everything we think we know."

was enlightened to his true nature and said, "I, and the great earth and beings simultaneously achieve the way." As Master Keizan instructs, it is this "I" and this "and" that we are all here to examine. This is what Rabbi Singer talked about every time we saw each other – he puts it in Martin Buber's words of "I and Thou." Buber hyphenates this as "I-Thou." Each of us is "I-Thou." Each of us is "I and..." What a great opportunity we have to clarify this matter for ourselves.

We must practice carefully to find in ourselves "the one that stretches out her legs and takes a long nap" – the realm of peace and ease and joy and kindness. Sit with this – completely open and free. As Master Keizan says in his Teisho on Master Vasubandhu's Case: "You just must stir yourselves and turn inward to your own square inch of mind." It is within this square inch of our minds that "undefiled Wisdom is aroused – this is the Gateless Gate that we all are – portals through which Loving Wisdom fills the Cosmos.

You just have to trust in your true Self with no inside and outside. This can be experienced on the cushion – it can also be experienced throughout your life. Think about the times in your life that you did something or said something and later realized that it didn't come from your small self, but from a deeper place within you. I have

long stopped taking credit for anything wise I might say or anything helpful I might do or when I find myself on those rare occasions being a good person. Whenever these occasions arise, I feel grateful for the living Wisdom that made these actions possible.

At the last Atonement Ceremony, I atoned for sinking down over my brother's mental illness and alcoholism. I was about to visit my family over the Thanksgiving break. I hadn't seen most of them for three years. I found myself wanting to find comfort in old patterns. I vowed to seek nothing.

I found myself being so grateful for my practice when my sister texted me with all the rules for our visit, most of which involved not talking about things that would make other people upset – no talking about Alcoholics Anonymous – no talking about politics or anything that might offend the Evangelicals in attendance. I began to center myself in a mind that seeks nothing – this is also called Not-Knowing – the first of the Three Tenets.

I found myself Bearing Witness quite a bit of the time to loud conversations, sometimes heated. But I also found opportunities to be a good listener and advisor and to Bear Witness to what good human beings my nieces and nephews have turned out to be. I also paid attention to the emotions that arose in me as I Bore Witness to my 85-year-old father. I did my best to express gratitude and kindness in the midst of the samsara of my family's life. This experience has made me more determined than ever to live in the refuge of the Three Treasures – finding repose in a mind that seeks nothing.

I saw a talk online that Ram Das gave where he refers to "the still small voice within." Ram Das said: "At first that still small voice – that tiny ember – is overshadowed by the incredible pressures, desires, attachments and possessions of the world." As I worked with Great Ancestor Vasubandhu's Case, I began to realize that we don't usually hear this still small voice through all the noise of our thoughts and attachments – the noise of Greed, Anger and Ignorance. It's when the mind quiets down and seeks nothing that we can hear the Voice of the clear Wisdom that pervades all beings. When we practice and Bear Witness to ourselves, letting go of all hindrances, we fan the embers of this Wisdom that resides in each of us – our breath blows on these embers and a flame appears. Please take good care of this flame.

Sensei Myoho is a priest, the Temple Development Steward and is on the Teachers' Circle.

REMEMBERING RABBI ANI SHALOM

(Continued from page 4)

One never knew just where he was going in a formal talk or even in conversation—it was quite mysterious. For a time, he and I read Martin Buber's *I and Thou* together, as he did with many spiritual friends far and wide. He often spoke about how discovering Buber as a college student opened up new worlds for him. He was so moved by these writings, he told me, that he would go out into his garden and read Buber to the trees. He said, "the trees answered." Yes, I am sure it was so. I will always remember with love, gratitude, and joy the spaces we shared—the spontaneous laughter we shared; the sheer joy of being alive in this broken-hearted world. I will forever hear him singing this ancient Jewish prayer:

*Sh'ma Yis-ra-el, A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad.
Ba-ruch Shem k'vod mal-chu-to l'o-lam va'ed.* (Hear, O Israel: Ado-nai is our God, Ado-nai is One. Blessed is God's glorious kingdom forever and ever.)

Thank you for everything, Rabbi Ani Shalom. The Sukkot hut we built for you continues to be used for Buddha's Birthday celebrations at the Zen Center. I am so grateful that the Zen Center's Great Dragon Mountain DNA is suffused with your "exalted joy" whether the practitioners today are aware of it or not. Love and blessings to you, always.

For further reading:

Eve Marko, "Death of a Rabbi" in her Blog, January 14, 2023.
Linda Rubin, "Not Your Typical Rabbi: A Sit Down with Sensei Don Singer," in Community Corner in *Patch (Pacific Palisades)*, April 3, 2011.



Rabbi Ani Shalom looking at the Holocaust Buddha painted by artist Inge Klimpt.

THE ZCLA LAY PATH

(Continued from page 9)

I am passionate about the Dharma—seeing and expressing the True Nature of this amazing existence. My dedication to Awakening is in perfect sync with my artistic pursuits. And I particularly resonate with Zen – giving myself fully to each role, expressing multiple points of view in my writing, and turning things upside down with my comedy. I used to apply for grants saying "my work is like a Zen koan..." Finally, it is the spirit of the Bodhisattva Vows that inspires every aspect of my life.

by George Mukei Horner



I first lived at the Zen Center in winter of '88. Back then there wasn't much housing available for non-residents during sesshin and someone who'd once been a resident stayed with me for one. Afterward, when we could talk, he surprised me by asking when I was going to ordain. I said I hadn't even thought about it, and he was shocked! But indeed, I hadn't. In contrast, when I first heard about Jukai, I knew immediately it was something I would do when the time was right.

I've never felt called to ordain as a priest. I don't know why. It never came up for me. Instead, I just kept doing what was in front of me—following the schedule, attending zazen and service, talks and atonement ceremonies, sesshin often as I could, and learning positions, memorizing the liturgy through simple daily repetition, becoming an intro instructor—with no thought of a destination in mind. When I started koans, it was the same: start a case, get stuck, eventually pass, repeat. Over and over.

Through it all, the practice was sinking in, opening out, working on me. I still make mistakes, need to right myself, atone, and learn. That's also the practice working. Who would I have become otherwise? I don't know, but it grounds my life in a very particular way, and enables me, hopefully, to be some help to others as we awaken together.

Corner of Disorder



"Not Lazy!! Lay ZEN!"

Roshi Egyoku is the Senior Dharma teacher at ZCLA.

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)
coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The San Luis Obispo Zen Circle (CA)
led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Empty Hands Circle (Campinas, SP, Brazil)
coordinated by Rev. Christina Tchoren Carvalho

Wild River Zen Circle (Nevada City, CA)
led by Sensei Jeanne Dokai Dickenson

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)
*coordinated by Marc Dogen Fontaine and
 Michael Jishin Fritzen*

Bambushain Zen Center (Aachen, Germany)
coordinated by Eva Jünn Neumann

Outreach Groups

**CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group
 California Men's Colony (CMC)
 (San Luis Obispo, CA)**
led by Sensei Mark Shogen Bloodgood

The Water Wheel is published quarterly by the Zen Center of Los Angeles, 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 unbindered.

Founding Abbot: Taizan Maezumi Roshi

Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman

Abbot Emeritus 1999-2019: Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao

*The Three Seats: Abbot Sensei Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen,
 Head Teacher Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith, and Head Priest
 Sensei Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert*

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Burt Wetanson

October 12, 1934 - January 30, 2023

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David Randall

Dan Ejo Wilner

A Heartfelt "Thank You!"

To **Julia Seirin Norstrand**, **Chris Daian Fields**, and **Robert Dharma-Gate Evans** for their Day of Reflection precept talks;

To **Sensei Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** for leading the Priest Path Exploration Meeting, and officiating Annual Donor Memorial service and the Medicine Buddha Eye Opening Ceremony; and to **Sacha Joshin Greenfield**, **Dharma Holder Jitsujo Gauthier**, and **Gemma Soji Cubero** for planning and leading the ceremony;

To **Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith** and **Conrad Butsugen Romo** for leading AWAKE 2;

To **Sensei Jonathan Kaigen Levy** for leading the Beginner's Mind Sesshin and the Shobogenzo Classes;

To **Sensei Senshin** for leading the Shared Stewardship Reflection Forum and Public Face-to-Face;

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