



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Listen!!

by Katherine Daiki Senshin Griffith



Listen to the actions of the Perceiver of Sounds, how aptly she responds in various quarters. Her vast oath is deep as the ocean; kalpas pass but it remains unfathomable. She has attended many thousands and millions of Buddhas, setting forth her great pure vow.

- from *The Lotus Sutra*, Verse 25

In Chinese culture, the Snake is a symbol of wisdom, mystery, and adaptability. It is often associated with transformation and growth, as in the shedding of a snake's skin. Unlike the bold and outgoing Dragon, the Snake represents calmness and introspection, which are essential for guiding one's life with wisdom and grace.

Entering the Year of the Wood Snake, there is so much we might like to shed. We are witnessing so much suffering, it can seem not like just the end of a year or an era, but the end of life on Earth as we've known it. Mother Nature seems pissed and bent on shedding us if we don't make things right with her.

No matter where you fall along the cultural or political spectrum, this mess can all seem overwhelming. We've collectively created it, so what do we do now? I've heard from so many that they don't know how to respond or what to do.

Bingo! This "I don't know" is a good thing. Beyond the "I don't know what action to take," the deeper Not Knowing, that sheds all concepts, helps us refrain from jumping back into old unhelpful patterns that aren't up to the problems before us. It's an invitation to take the backwards step. Empty out completely.

But then what?

Listen!!

Deep Listening is the theme for our Spring Practice Period, starting now and going through May. This listening isn't just with the ears. It's with every pore of our being beyond the six senses. As Bottom says in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, when he wakes up from being an ass: *The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report...* This captures what it's like to experience our essential nature which cannot be grasped but is forever being revealed.

Zen Master Hakuin is famous for the koan: What is the Sound of the Single Hand? When you clap together both hands a sharp sound is heard; when you raise the one hand there is neither sound nor smell.

Thanissaro Bikhu says that maybe this koan refers to sights, sounds, smells, and tastes that clap against the mind and cause it to clap back. What is the mind that does not react to the senses but just observes them? Yamada Koun puts it this way:

In fact, each one of you, although you see and hear the various phenomena of the phenomenal world, are actually, in your most essential self, completely transcending the world of color and sound. It is from here that a wondrously free activity emerges in the case of the Zen master.

So, this Spring, I challenge each of us to listen with that Mind.

Listen openly to different points of view not your own. Listen for what is underneath, for what is not said,

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for what you're not hearing.

Listen to the interplay of bells and drums. Listen while chanting to the beauty of both harmony and cacophony.

Listen to your body's feedback. Do your eyes need to turn away from a screen? Do you need a nap or more sleep? Is your belly full? Have you been sitting at your desk too long? Do you need to move around, shake it up, stay off that leg, see a doctor? Do you need to dance, weep, scream, or hug?

Listen in the morning to: birds, sunlight, rushing cars, growling stomach, sleepy eyelids, jackhammers, breakfast smells, to do lists, garbage trucks. Listen to the feelings of excitement or dread for the day. What needs to be shed to be of benefit?

Listen in the evening to: birds, twilight, rushing cars, sirens, dogs, helicopters, children, marching bands, ice cream trucks, sports cheers, vendors, news reports, dinner smells, temperature drops. Listen to your feelings about your day. What needs to be shed to be of benefit?

Listen for the call of the new path, the new way of doing things, the route not tried. What needs to be shed to travel it?

Listen to your thoughts without clinging. What messages about yourself and the world need to be shed? What's really going on below the surface? Excessive ruminations are a sign something needs to be addressed. What do you need to shed to do that?

In the space between thought and action, listen for when to challenge, when to let go, when the needed action becomes clear. Listen for both your impatience and hesitancy, and for what ingredient you may be missing.

As we listen, we find we are not alone, but inter-connected. Some may feel the same way and some may have other feelings, skills or points of view. But no matter the stance, we're in this together. We Buddhists may think we know that, but listen for when we don't. We all experience the affects of climate change for Nature doesn't pick and choose.

Listen for ways to reinforce our sense of connection. The rugged individualism threaded through our culture's fabric doesn't encourage asking for aid or the building of community. When we are given or offer help, we may realize subconsciously that's what was wanted all along; that's who we are.

Listen to someone's suffering besides your own. Listen

to someone's suffering as your own. Hear all cries of the world as your own.

But don't just listen to the doomsday news, the hate and divisive othering. Hear the kind words and actions, good deeds not trumpeted, and insights coming from all directions.

On ABC's *What Would You Do?* actors act out scenes of conflict or illegal activity in public settings while hidden cameras capture whether or not ordinary bystanders intervene, and how. Variations can include changing the genders, races, or actors' clothing, to see if people react differently. The situations often pertain to prejudice; race, sex, religious beliefs, physical and mental disabilities or appearances, sexual harassment, vandalism, theft, financial trouble, parenting, and social status. When they are interviewed after the reveal, the bystanders often tear up with their feelings around the injustice or kindness to complete strangers. These tears are the sweet dew of the Perceiver of the World's Sounds, for:

*She can quell the wind and fire of misfortune
and everywhere bring light to the world.
The precepts from her compassionate body shake us like
thunder, the wonder of her pitying mind is like a great cloud.
She sends down the sweet dew, the Dharma rain, to quench the
flames of earthly desires.*

In *Why We Can't Wait*, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said:

*Just as lightning makes no sound until it strikes, the Negro
Revolution generated quietly. But when it struck, the revealing flash
of its power and the impact of its sincerity and fervor displayed a
force of a frightening intensity.*

We are still experiencing the power of the revolution that expanded into rights for women, all ethnic groups, the disabled, and every sexual preference and identity. And now, more than ever, we are experiencing the backlash from these movements. Listen for what is being generated quietly now, the sound of the one hand. Tune into what your capacities and gifts are and how they might serve. Keep some quiet space open so you can hear.

Listen as the stillness, the ever-present vast space, to that:

*Wonderful sound, Perceiver of the World's Sounds,
Brahma's sound, the sea tide sound--
they surpass those sounds of the world;
therefore you should constantly think on them,
from thought to thought never entertaining doubt!*

Harken, to your deepest self! What do you hear?

Sensei Senshin is the ZCLA Head Teacher.

The Year of the Snake

by Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert



Welcome to the Year of the Snake! The snake symbolizes renewal and rebirth. As Joseph Campbell notes in *The Power of Myth*:

“The serpent sheds its skin to be born again, as the moon its shadow to be born again... Sometimes the serpent is represented as a circle eating its own tail. That’s

an image of life. Life sheds one generation after another, to be born again. The serpent represents immortal energy and consciousness engaged in the field of time, constantly throwing off death and being born again. There is something tremendously terrifying about life when you look at it that way. And so the serpent carries in itself the sense of both the fascination and the terror of life.”

Of course, each of us is being reborn every moment, so let us use the image of the snake as a reminder of this constantly returning opportunity to reset our life, and to recommit ourselves to our intention to live an awakened life. As Maezumi Roshi said, quoting Dogen Zenji, in twenty-four hours our life is born and dying, rising and falling, 6.4 billion times—that’s 6.4 billion opportunities each and every day to actualize our intention to wake up. Maezumi Roshi went on to quote Dogen Zenji saying that “even if you live one day with a clear understanding of what life is, the value of that one day is equal to many, many years of living without awareness.” So, I truly encourage you, as we enter this new calendar year and this new lunar year to commit yourself to your practice, to set an intention to wake up and then—DO IT!!!!

On the one hand, we can say it is very hard, but really, which part of it is actually, truly difficult? Take the foundational practice of not-knowing—just emptying yourself out of fixed concepts and being totally open to whatever is arising in this moment. You can practice (“flash”) not-knowing for just a second, can’t you? Of course you can—try it! So then, how about for the second after that? And then the one after that? If we break it down in this

way, there is nothing “hard” about it at all! Challenging, perhaps—the brain and its billions of neurons are firing away, the ox is bucking, and our attention inevitably wanders. So, just come back—this moment is always waiting for us.

Sometimes, when people find out I’m involved in Zen practice, they tell me they could never, ever meditate, it’s too hard. But what is hard about it? The difficulty is in our minds, in our conceptual picture of what it is supposed to look like versus how I experience it. Sure, our minds wander. That’s called being human. Our vow is simply that, when the mind wanders, we just return, gently and without self-critical judgment, to not-knowing, over and over and over. This is why we call it practice.



Back in 1968, when we were the “Los Angeles Zendo,” Maezumi Roshi wrote a set of “Zendo Precautions” that one of his students then carved into a slice of tree trunk and placed in the entryway to the Zendo. They are still there today. These “Zendo Precautions” are an adaptation for modern circumstances of a fascicle written by Dogen Zenji, “Procedures for the Hall of Gathered Clouds” (J. Jūundō Shiki). Dogen Zenji wrote this fascicle in 1239 while he was establishing a monastic training site at Kosho-ji, and it provides a mixture of practical and spiritual guidance to the monks—the “Gathered Clouds”—who were practicing there together. I often go back to both Dogen Zenji’s original text as well as Maezumi Roshi’s later adaptation of it 729 years later to gain some guidance. As we enter this new year, and renew our intentions, they have been particularly on my mind.

Maezumi Roshi gets straight to the point: “Those who wish to realize and actualize the Buddha’s Way are welcome. Otherwise you better keep out.” Right there, *kan*—“barrier!” From the very first, we are being asked: why are you here? I ask this question in my talks all the time, because clarifying this “why?” is important. (Of course, don’t forget that “why” is often a trick question in Zen!) Why are we practicing? We have to clarify it for ourselves. No one can live your life except you, and you can’t live anyone else’s life—every time we try, we raise a crashing wave of suffering. So you have to clarify your practice for yourself. It is important to be clear about this—our practice is our

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YEAR OF THE SNAKE *(Continued from page 3)*

very own, and it is a big mistake to think that someone else can set out what your practice “should” be, what your life “should” look like. Remember, your own experience is always your most important teacher. Ehipassiko!

Now, people come to practice for all sorts of different reasons. Most people come with a transactional mind-set. By transactional, I mean they come because they want to expend some effort and get some result beneficial to themselves. While this is how people arrive—and I include myself in this group for sure!—over time, as our practice deepens, we see that this transactional mindset will loosen and, if we commit ourselves and practice steadily, it will fall away. It’s not that these “good results” may not manifest, but they are not so important. But, to begin, it is these reasons—which are always rooted in the experience of dukkha, of suffering—that bring people to the temple gate. (After all, most people seek out a meditation center are not blissfully happy.) Most people come because they want to get something out of practice—they want to be less angry,



“Those who wish to realize and actualize the Buddha’s Way are welcome. Otherwise you better keep out.”

or less anxious, or less reactive; maybe they want to be a better husband, or a better father, a better son, or co-worker.

Whatever brings you here, I invite you to leave it with your shoes outside the Zendo entrance. Then, enter this Hall of Great Silence, set an intention to just be present to whatever arises, bow to your seat, bow to each other, and sit down and take up the practice of not-knowing, of being present to whatever arises. Again, there is nothing intrinsically difficult in this practice—we flash not-knowing for a moment, for two moments, for a string of moments, and when our discursive mind pops up and hijacks our attention, we just gently return. Over and over and over again.

The gentle return is key. Don’t give up on yourself! Develop the discipline of return, of returning over and over. Aren’t you worth it? When I was in third grade, I became an avid equestrian. I was never accomplished, but

I was as devoted as my life circumstances allowed. When you are learning to ride, if you are actually making an effort, you fall off your horse a lot, particularly when you are going fast, or when you are jumping. We were trained that it was absolutely crucial that, whenever we fell, we had to immediately get back up on the horse, otherwise we could develop a fear that would keep us from ever getting back up. So when you were muddy (a lot), when you were in pain (not infrequent), when you were scared (also not infrequent), when you were embarrassed (constantly lol), no matter the circumstances, you had to get back up and return. It is like that with our sitting. When we notice that our thoughts are wandering, we just return, with no added drama, no story. Don’t stay down on the ground—don’t give in to daydreaming, to planning, to reliving that fight, to thinking about lunch—just return to not-knowing, to counting the breath, to following the breath, to MU.

What is this “realizing and actualizing the Buddha’s Way” that Maezumi Roshi talks about? It’s just this! Just returning, moment after moment, to this very moment, to this very life, to choosing living instead of a simulacrum of life. That returning to this moment—that’s it! Dogen Zenji emphasized throughout his writing that practice and realization are not separate. Indeed, he came up with this new word, “practice-realization” to capture his point.

Maezumi Roshi also emphasizes this point: “We do not practice in order to attain realization; in fact, when we practice, we do not need to expect anything. Why not? Because everything is already here! Our life is this wisdom! Our practice is this realization! ... All of us have abundant opportunities to experience our life in this way at this very moment. How can we realize the Supreme Way manifesting as our life? Just be! Just do! When we live with this awareness, we realize that there is no division between this life and the Supreme Way, no division between this life and the subtle mind of nirvana.”

So I encourage you to make the effort. And, even more, to do it together in sangha. Sitting and practicing together is much easier than trying to do it on your own—I know this as a fact for myself, but come check it out for yourself! We sit together in the zendo, the Hall of Great Silence, six days a week. Come join us there in this Year of the Snake. Let’s shed our skins and learn to let go together.

Dharma-Joy is ZCLA's Abbot and Head Priest/Preceptor.

Reflections from a new Sensei

by Christina Tchoren Carvalho



It is pertinent to ask whether our many years of koan curriculum make the teacher's path inaccessible to less privileged persons. On the other hand, it is reasonable to ponder that the same long years are what it takes for individuals to really traverse their internal limitations and mature in a more reliable way. A first koan.

So how do you make a new Sensei? Obviously, since every person brings her/his ingredients, there is no way to write a recipe. But it is generally accepted that ten years is the minimum amount of time required. In the case of this new Sensei, indeed it took a solid ten-year period of koan training, and probably only because she had had twenty years of previous study-practice in Tibetan Buddhism, with a couple of stints with Zen in the middle.

It has been an intense, two dokusan per week, ten-year training. And I feel incredibly lucky to have had Roshi Egyoku's patient and generous support throughout, including her blessings for me to start my own Zen group here in Campinas, Brazil, pretty much from the get-go.

My Zen group—Empty Hands Circle—has sprouted before the Covid pandemic, dwindled, and is sprouting again in the last couple of years. Please follow my infrequent posts on Instagram: @zenbudismocampinas.

A profound calling for me, however, is the theme of Climate Justice, which of course encapsulates the inextricable issues of social justice and climate emergency. Since I translated the book *Ecodharma* (and participated in online trainings, especially with Sensei Kritee Kanko, whom I consider my Ecodharma teacher), I have been giving online courses called "Precepts and Climate Crisis." These are fairly successful both in terms of number of participants as well as in terms of engagement with the contents. Yet I find students reticent when it comes to concrete activism. It is fair to presume that most people come to Zen in search of a modicum of peace and balance, a refuge from their excessively busy and stressful lives. So perhaps it is not fair to expect them to jump at the idea of engagement in street demonstrations and concrete acts of resistance. Still, my deepest feelings tell me that nowadays it is not possible to fulfill our bodhisattva vows without ALSO getting off the cushion and participating in the Climate Justice movement. A second koan here.

A third koan for me is about how to serve people in vulnerable economic situations beyond the regular financial support given to social projects. Charity and assistance are fine but... is that it? Zen everywhere, it seems, attracts white middle-class people, mostly with a college degree. In a much poorer country like Brazil, predominantly Christian and increasingly fundamentalist, Zen is much more foreign than in the US and Europe. Are these robes, titles and Zen accoutrements making it more difficult to reach—and serve—less privileged people?

These are the koans that, for me, follow the 700+ that I painstakingly worked on for the last ten years.

After spending a few 3-month Ango periods at ZCLA over the years, the final Transmission week was indeed a crown jewel. I had the fortune of having Sensei (now Roshi) Shogen as my "jisha," and I couldn't have had a more attentive, patient, and compassionate person helping me to go through the prostrations despite my hip problems. He reminded me that I could also add other names at the end of the dedications, and it meant a lot to me to be able to invoke my root-Lama, Geshe Sonam Rinchen, after the male lineage, and his interpreter, Ruth Sonam, and Sensei Kanko after the female lineage. Better not to name names (lest I forget some), but the renewed flowers and refreshed bowls on all altars three times a day were also a touching support for this meaningful preparation.

"It takes a village," quoted Karla, Roshi Shogen's wife when we met before the Sunday ceremony. Indeed, it does. I am hoping to be able to send a couple of my students to either ZCLA (those who can get the evermore elusive-to-Brazilians Visa) or Zen River for as long as they can afford to go for training in our lineage. I know in my bones how utterly transformative these experiences can be.

There is no way to express in words the depth of my gratitude for the "ZCLA village" that took me in with such generosity and pushed me through this long training with so much love. May all these efforts benefit many beings.

Sensei Tchoren received Dharma Transmission from Roshi Egyoku on December 12, 2024.



Remembering Sensei Koan Myogen Gary Janka

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



My Dharma disciple Sensei Koan Myogen was a tall upright tree of Buddhadharma. He spread Dharma seeds whenever and wherever he could. When offering oak leaves from the ground at my home altar for him, I thought how very much like an oak tree he was—strong, steadfast, and generous, freely planting acorns.

Gary Janka began his Zen Practice at ZCLA in March of 1973 as a result of a talk given at the University of California at Santa Barbara by John Daishin Buksbazen. Residing at the time in Santa Barbara, Gary commuted to ZCLA at least once a month for interview, sesshin and special events and sat with Flora Eko Courtois' Santa Barbara sitting group. Over twenty years later, both Gary and Daishin became members of my first Zen Teachers' Circle.

In 1982, Gary took Jukai from the Venerable Taizan Maezumi Roshi, receiving the name "Kōan"—Kō (ease, peace) An (contented, peaceful). In 1998, I gave him Tokudo (Priest ordination) and assigned him to serve as Shuso (Head Monk) from 1999 to 2000. In 2003, Kōan moved to the Zen Center as a full-time resident for intensive Zen practice. By this time, his three sons were grown and he had retired from a full, forty-five year career in management and organizational work, which included having his own organizational consultant company. He had completed a Doctor of Philosophy in Human & Organizational Behavior from the University of California at Santa Barbara. In addition, Koan had spent a year as the General Manager of the Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and two years as the Executive Director of the Peacemaker Community under Roshi Bernie while the latter was based in Santa Barbara. He later helped ZCLA develop its Core Values, which is in use today.

I was struck by the courage it took to undertake residential Zen training at age 60, a training which inevitably surfaces one's emotional and psychological shadows. Koan was an old-school machismo at a time when women

themselves were developing their voices and demanding a different kind of interaction. It was also a time when a less hierarchical leadership was emerging at ZCLA. He served as the Resident Steward and Co-Steward of the Zendo, positions which force one to confront deeply held habitual patterns and open to new ways of seeing. Resident training was a jarring experience for him in many ways.

Throughout it all, Koan tackled any task that needed doing—he was practical, competent, and a "let's get it done" type of person. Upon his passing, one of our members wrote: "Just to be in his presence was a teaching, specially when he swept the floors, for some reason it made me so happy." Others said, he had "such a steady presence and warm-hearted soul," and many reflected on

his kindness. Another commented that "Koan offered ... such kindness, patience, and care when I was a (young bumbling) resident and his neighbor, including the time he heard me drive in to ZCLA and quietly said, 'Sounds like you need a new muffler.' He was correct, as it turned out, I was grateful for this and other moments of Zen fathering."



Koan had a passion for the underdog which came through in his devotion to his volunteer chaplaincy among the incarcerated. He was the Steward of the Zen Center's Angulimala Prison Circle, a small group of volunteers who served as Buddhist Chaplains in the Los Angeles County Jails and the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo. One time, however, his fervent belief in redemption blinded him to the consequences of his actions. He unilaterally decided that he wanted to house a

released child molester at ZCLA. This situation became a crisis from which we all developed a deepening practice of the Three Tenets as leadership and community portals for wisdom and compassion. There were bitter lessons for Koan and he took his medicine whole, resigning as then Board President and taking a leave of absence at his own initiative. The Sangha and I held space for him, and he eventually returned and completed his studies and resumed his prison chaplaincy.

He received Denkai in July of 2006 and became a Dharma Holder in August of the same year. On the 16th of October 2010, he received Dharma Transmission (Denbo) from me and received the transmission name "Myo

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REMEMBERING SENSEI KOAN *(Continued from page 6)*

(Subtle) Gen (Mystery).” From 2014 - 2019, Sensei Koan returned to Santa Barbara and founded the Santa Barbara Zen Center, serving as the Head Teacher and Officiating Priest. During these years, he achieved his goal of building the Sangha and continued his prison chaplaincy, nurturing many. He maintained strong vows, always with the underlying attitude of “Nine full bows of gratitude to all my teachers and Ancestors!”

In his spare time, Sensei Koan planted and cared for trees, mostly in the public domain. He served as a Volunteer Forester for the Santa Barbara City Parks Department, caring for a fifty-five acre open space. Among the Sangha, he is known for the many trees he planted and maintained in the Zen Center’s Koreatown neighborhood. Many of us joined him in tree watering, wielding five-gallon water bottles in a cart, watering the winter pear blossoms, cork and pepper trees, golden shower trees and the like which he planted along the streets around ZCLA and existing trees whose care he adopted. I often wondered if the City ever noticed the many new trees which appeared throughout the neighborhood.

Koan developed Parkinson’s dementia which took its course over five harrowing years. When we spoke of his diagnosis, he was matter-of-fact, accepting, and with characteristic practicality, made plans to relinquish responsibilities at the Santa Barbara Zen Center. Upon his passing, a good friend of mine said, “Dementia is the ultimate letting go...it was a deep exploration for him.” A few days before Sensei Koan died, his Dharma brother Roshi Shogen sent me a photograph of a gift of calligraphy of the “Identity of Relative and Absolute” that I had made for Koan during his Denbo, now framed and hanging above his bed. I am sure he was held by Buddhaharma, just as he was held by many persons, especially by his devoted wife Genji

and his good friends Roshi Shogen and his wife Karla. Witnessing their devotion over these difficult years, I often reflected how each of them simply went “the way of the Buddhas.”

When Sensei Koan passed, I felt an intense release of energy. As I was setting up the 49-day altar for him, Koan

appeared to me. Rubbing his hands together with great energy, he said, “Roshi, let’s set up your sitting space.” For the past several years, I struggled to find a suitable sitting space in my new home. At one point, there were plans to build a Zen hut in the garden, but that fell through along with many other ideas. I was discouraged. Now suddenly, here was Koan, saying, “Let’s do this!” In a flash, I saw my sitting space. I asked Eberhard to help me and, within a short while, furniture was moved, a table stabilized and there it was: a marvelous *tan* for zazen between my everyday altar and my ancestral altar. For days I felt the joy of his release and his enduring passion for the Buddhaharma. Sitting and chanting for him, I felt that he had gifted me again the practice that we have shared for so many years. His “come on, let’s do this” was affirmative of his generosity and kindness.

When I remember my disciple Koan Myogen today, I feel the warmth of his kindness and the glow of his vows. I marvel at the many acorns he planted, including

creating ZCLA’s Endowment Fund with a bequest from his parents. He was determined that ZCLA would continue long into the future. May it be so. May the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas protect him and guide him forever.



Sensei Koan receives the shippei (the "six foot black snake") from Roshi Egyoku during his Shuso in 2000.

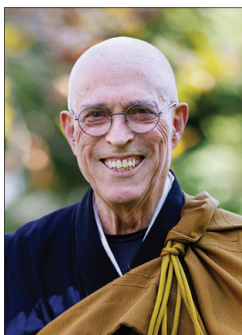


Roshi Egyoku giving Sensei Koan a beautiful lei.

Roshi Egyoku is the Senior Dharma teacher at ZCLA.

Just show up! Memories of Sensei Koan.

by Mark Shogen Bloodgood



I met Sensei Koan in the fall of 1999 when I first stepped through the Temple Gates at ZCLA. At the time, Sensei was commuting from Santa Barbara on the weekends, which became my own pattern for the next 20 years.

He was a role model for me in those early years with his calm demeanor and steadfast practice. Koan helped inspire my own calling to the priesthood. When Roshi Egyoku had him begin offering face-to-face (daisan), I was his first “guinea pig.” I’ll never forget it; we met in the Southeast room above the zendo.

It was through our prison work that we really bonded. Koan mentored me from the start. For many years, he and Nagy (Rev. Daniel Nagacitta Thich Minh Nhat Buckley, Jr.) would come up to San Luis Obispo monthly to join me in visiting inmates at the California Men’s Colony (CMC). They would spend a night or two at our home. Our friendship deepened. They also befriended my wife, Karla, always a gracious host. She is also an avid gardener and Koan was a certified Master Gardener. So they hit it off immediately. Now Nagy was a character, often spinning one corny joke after another. He’d have us in tears laughing. Koan, who had to listen to Nagy on the four-hour drive to SLO in addition to the time spent with us, would often say, “Stop it, Nagy...you’re killing me!” A profound teaching from Koan regarding the prison sangha was to “Just show up.” I’ve used that teaching not only in the prison work but through all of my practice. Just show up. Early on, Karla met Koan’s wife Jill Genji Yeomans, and, like Koan and I, they became fast friends. To this day, the two of them talk on the phone almost every day of the week!

Sensei Koan married Genji in April of 2015. Nagy officiated and I was his best man. Karla helped plan and coordinate the wedding. Much later I found out that Koan’s neurologist in Santa Barbara had told Genji and Koan that they should marry soon and get his affairs in order. The doctor scheduled an appointment with the University of San Francisco’s Neurology department for the month after their wedding. So symptoms were manifesting even back then. Ultimately a diagnosis was made: Multiple System Atrophy (MSA)—Parkinson’s. This is a rare neurodegenerative disease. After two years, as the disease progressed, Jill wasn’t able to care for him at home. He kept falling and it was becoming impossible for her to get him up. Eight

years ago, following one such event, he was hospitalized, then sent to a skilled nursing home and finally moved into Vista Del Monte—a retirement community. Here he spent time in their Independent Living and Assisted Living facilities and finally was moved to their memory care unit. Throughout these years, I was able to “just show up” as my schedule allowed. I would bring Sensei’s rakusu. We would chant and sit zazen and talk. We went out to lunch until he could no longer leave the facility. These were special times. Often Karla would join me and we would stay at Jill’s house to also support her.

Over our years together, notwithstanding the 5th precept, some of my favorite memories of Koan were the pub crawls we did in Santa Barbara for many years on his birthday, December 24. Friends and family would join us along the way. We’d always end up at Dargan’s Irish Pub. In 2024 when Koan was too ill to leave the facility, Jill, Karla, I, and others had a meal there to celebrate his birthday. (Their vegan Shepard’s pie is to die for!) And this year, after he passed, family and friends once again gathered at Dargan’s on his birthday. It was the same day we spread his ashes around trees he’d planted in Santa Barbara.

As Roshi Egyoku shared in her remembrance, Koan first started practicing at ZCLA as a result of listening to a talk by Sensei Daishin at the University of Santa Barbara. In that talk, Sensei Daishin spoke of emptiness. Koan told me, it was this that so intrigued him that he began his Zen journey. Shortly before Daishin died in 2022, I was able to orchestrate a cell phone call between Daishin and Koan. That day, they were both “with it” enough, cognitively speaking, and able to share some stories and memories and say their goodbyes. It was so moving.

In 2018 Koan wrote an article for the Water Wheel “Watching the Universe Come and Go.” It started “I was sitting on my back deck a couple of days ago, when an orange fell off the tree and landed in a compost bin.” Later it reads:

...Form is emptiness and emptiness is form. The process by which this happens is the mystery of the universe. I don’t expect that the former orange will become a new orange, but it will become something. When an orange blossom or a human egg is fertilized, they begin to draw upon the storehouse of materials available to them. Emptiness becomes form. The extent to which I can see and appreciate form and emptiness, as well as space, is the degree to which I am able to appreciate my own mortality as well as my own eternity...

Roshi Shogen is the guiding teacher at San Luis Obispo Zen Circle.

(Photos on page 9)



Sensei Koan with his wife Jill Genji Janka.



Dharma buds!



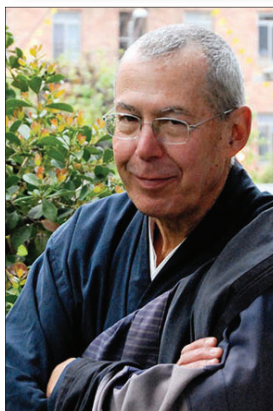
At Dargon's Pub in with Genji, Karla, and Shogen.



Shaving Shogen's head before his Tokudo 2012



In the kitchen with Bob Gido Fisher



That look!



Koan's Hossen with Reiju.



Angulimala Prison Project 2008.



That look!

We acknowledge with gratitude the following 119 practitioners who made formal practice commitments for the 2024 Fall Practice Period.

ZCLA

Alan Taigen Turton
Ben Genkai Ehrlich
Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran
Bill Tetsui Press
Bonnie Myosen Nadzam
Brian Sotetsu Huff
Charles Caposino
Chris Daian Fields
Chris Genzan Hackman
Conrad Butsugen Romo
Corey Ryūjin McIntyre (also SLO)
Craig Daigetsu Brandau
Craig Genji Miller
Darla Myoho Fjeld
Diane Enju Katz
Diane True-Joy Fazio
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Dylan Lake
Frank Genku Martinez
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Glenn Gikai Davis
Jack Kuykendall
Jacqueline Kyojaku Drummond
Jane Radiant-Joy Chen
Japhy Grant
Jenny Jūsen Bright
Jerry Grenard
Jessica Oetsu Page
Jitsujo Angyo Gauthier
Joey Sulkowski
John Kyogen Rosania
Josh Cretella
Julia Seirin Norstrand
Karina Myoki Beltran-Hernandez
Katherine Senshin Griffith
Kathy Myoan Solomon
Kipp Ryodo Hawley
Lane Kyojin Igoudin
Lorraine Gessho Kumpf
Lu Martinez
Mak Muan King
Marinel Mukherjee
Miguel Franco
Mike Radice
Nem Etsugen Bajra
Peggy Faith-Moon Gallaher

Rachel Belash
Reeb Kaizen Venners
Richard Taishin Schulof
Robertta Myodo Brehm
Robert Dharma-Gate Evans
Rosa Ando Martinez
Sacha Joshin Greenfield
Sandra Seiju Goodenough
Sarah McCarron
Sheri Christopher
Steve Jimenez
Toby Keido Rider
Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert
Tom Yudo Burger
Tracy Lin Payne
Ty Jotai Webb
Wendy Egyoku Nakao

Bambushain Zen-Center Aachen, Germany

Andreas Seijun Rampelt (also ZCLA)
Chris Rōthleitner
Eva Jiun Neumann (also ZCLA)
Harry Rischar

Empty Hands Circle Campinas, SP, Brazil

Edson do Prado Pfitzenreuter
Gyokuzan Geraldo Fonseca
Hongaku Sebastiao Ferreira
Igor Monteiro da Silva
Jion Carmen Carvalho Ferreira
João Pedro Aguiar dos Santos
Kakuon Camilla Abbehausen
Kōun Bruno Fernandes
Marcel Amorim
Myōkan Maria Vargas
Myōshin Emily Walsh
Silvia Ferreira Lim a
Taidō Diego Barbosa
Tenryū Lucas Schuster
Tchōren Christina Carvalho (also ZCLA)

Monday Night Meditation Group Pasadena, CA

Anna Keim
Betty Jiei Cole (also ZCLA)

Carli Simon
Erin Joyful-Heart Moore (also ZCLA)
Jan Rutiz
Marsha Cifarelli

San Luis Obispo Zen Circle (CA)

Amber Seishin Harmon
David Zoller
Deborah Fuku-an West
Derek Tōshin Ó Corraín
Eduardo Zambrano
Gary Kōshin West
Geoff Kanjō O'Quest (also ZCLA)
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Mark Shōgen Bloodgood (also ZCLA)
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Russell Rinkai Rayburn
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Steve Sumi

California Men's Colony

Gregory C.
Joseph H.
Jovan M.
Sal C.
Terry F.

Wild River Zen Circle Nevada City, CA

Alexa Yusen Hauser
Jeanne Dokai Dickenson (also ZCLA)
Kenneth Watanabe
Laurence Kigaku Aitken
Lisa Sensho Stein
Latisha Hojun Sullivan
Roy Jigen Martin
Tony Anzan Yep
Victor Yokovler

Next Steps

After taking the Intro to Zen Meditation class, here are some next steps:

Daily sitting practice: Start a daily practice and try to be as consistent as possible. It's better to sit a few minutes each day than to sit once a week for a longer period. Sit on your own or with others. It can be easier to sit with others than to rely on just yourself. ZCLA offers many options both in person and on Zoom.

Weekday and Weekend Zazen: Subscribe to the ZCLA weekly email to see the regular schedule and upcoming events and classes. Now that you've taken the Intro class, you can sit any scheduled period, and attend services and Dharma Talks. Zen practice is about showing up.

Intro II class: Offered one Saturday a month, this class reviews material from Intro I and introduces you to new aspects. See the website for a full description.

Meet with a teacher: It's good to meet with a teacher regularly and to see different teachers. We have several. Check out who you vibe with.

Exploring Your Zen Practice: Every other Wednesday on Zoom at 7 p.m., each meeting includes a short sitting period, a teaching and an open discussion.

Aspects of Zen Practice Classes: On one Sunday a month, one of four topics is covered: **1)** Forms of Zendo Practice; **2)** Service, Liturgy and Lineage; **3)** Everyday Life as Practice; or **4)** The ZCLA Organizational Structure.

Eunomia in the Aftermath

by Maggie Rowe



I recently learned the ancient Greek word eunomia - which means seeing the good in others, giving them the benefit of the doubt, being ready to see their perspective and question your own. All in that one darn word! I wrote this poem about it.

What if, now, after it all,
we softened our gaze?
For a season, we learned to armor ourselves—
to scan for the worst, the flaws in strangers' faces,
In their villainy we found our heroism.
In their wrongs, our right.
Eunomia asks us to look again, for what we missed,
it asks us to see a spark of good in what we scorned
It doesn't mean we forget the harm—
but what if we, too, need saving,
from the coldness we've let creep in,
From the company we've kept with contempt?
What if we've buried the best of each other in battle?
Maybe, now, in the quiet after,
we could begin to clear away the stones,
and notice where in the rubble and ruin and regret
the light catches.

ZCLA member Maggie Rowe is the co-host of "50 Words for Snow: The Podcast, a linguistic adventure into brave new words."

Corner of Disorder

Nyogen Senzaki's headstone reads: "Do not put any false head above your own." Diligent zen students check for extra heads.



A Heartfelt “Thank You!”

To **Sensei Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** for officiating the 49th Day Memorial service for DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass and leading the Fall Precepts Series, the Priest Circles and co-leading the Hidden Lamp series with **Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith**.

To **Preceptor Lorraine Gessho Kumpf**, **Sensei Senshin**, **Sensei Darla Myoho Fjeld**, and **Preceptor Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran** for leading Exploring Your Zen Practice classes;

To the leaders of our Sesshins and Zazenkais: **Sensei Senshin** and **Sensei Myoho** (*Autumn Wind Sesshin*), **Preceptor Earth-Mirror** (*Zazenkaï*), **Sensei Senshin** and **Sensei Dharma-Joy** (*Robatsu*), **Sensei Jitsujo Gauthier** (*Year-End Zazenkaï*);

To **Sensei Jitsujo** for leading the Sacred Feminine Course and for co-facilitating the DEIB Sangha Forum with **Frank Genku Martinez**;

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to **Roshi Shogen**;

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Head Trainee Entering/Shuso Leave-taking

Bill Tetsui Press, Entering

John Kyogen Rosania, Leave-taking

October 6, 2024

Hossen

John Kyogen Rosania

October 20, 2024

In Memorium

Sensei Gary Koan MyogenJanka

December 24, 1943 - October 25, 2024

Inka Shomei

Roshi Mark Kizun Shogen Bloodgood

From Roshi Egyoku Nakao

December 15, 2024

Denbo

Sensei Jitsujo Yubai Tina Gauthier

From Roshi Egyoku Nakao

December 9, 2024

Sensei Christina Hobai Tchoren Carvalho

From Roshi Egyoku Nakao

December 12, 2024

New Members

Erika Suderburg

Kasriel Spector

Eloise Hess

Melodie Yashar

Arron Mason

Ryan Rockmore

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