

## ICE MELTS UNDER WATER:

### Journal of a Winter Solo, Part II

By Master Dharma Teacher  
George Bowman

George Bowman has been with Providence Zen Center since its inception and is now living at Cambridge Zen Center. He studied anthropology and biology at Brown University, and attended Duke University on a Ph. D. program in anthropology of religion in 1969, until he left to study Zen fulltime. He has studied extensively with other Zen Masters living in America, and led the first three Winter Kyol Che retreats at Providence Zen Center. A long-time runner, he has done extensive racing, including a number of marathons. George is a skilled carpenter and has worked on all the major PZC building projects. He was ordained a Bodhisattva monk in 1982.

(The following excerpts are from a retreat journal kept by Master Dharma Teacher George Bowman during the winter of 1983-84. We published other portions, under the title "Journal of a Winter Solo", in the Spring 1984 issue of PRIMARY POINT.)

**Tuesday, Jan. 14.** Yesterday was warm and sunny. I sat outside for a while with my shirt off and noticed all the insects that had come out to enjoy the sunshine and forage about. A honey bee came to inspect the bright color of my book and underwear, perhaps thinking it some strange winter flower that had bloomed.

Small spiders crawled about in the grass. It is so cold in winter here that everything freezes solid. Where do these tiny insects go in the extreme cold? Are they frozen solid or do they just find some



crevice in the earth and go below the frost line? Imagine being frozen solid in absolute samadhi only to wake to a new day with the warm sun shining. No history, no dreams, no doubt or interpretation—just going about their business. What a remarkable thing. Teeming millions of those creatures in their own world of eating, shitting and creating more of their kind. Perhaps insects shall inherit the earth after man's folly has run its course!

In the meantime I continue to sit, to go to bed to dream wild fantasies of the shadow self.

This morning is shrouded in grey fog. In the distance the sound of cars taking their occupants to and from work. The neighbor's geese were cackling about early this morning. Dogs bark and life goes on.

If it is true that this planet is becoming more conscious, bit by bit, then it is taking place in a time dimension hard to imagine.

To be aware of our cruelty and insanity, our pettiness, defensiveness, is to be aware of the end of it. The more practice, the more aware we become and with this wisdom is also the unfolding of the extent of our consciousness, and our limitations.

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"For the cultivation of samadhi and wisdom"

## FIRST INTERNATIONAL 90 DAY MEDITATION INTENSIVE AT JUNG HYE SAH, KOREA

How can we make world peace? "By sitting together and finding our true human nature," says Zen Master Seung Sahn (Soen Sa Nim). To accomplish this purpose he has set up numerous Zen centers around the world so that people can experience living together and sitting together. Long meditation intensives are ancient and powerful tools for attaining clarity of mind. This year the Kwan Um Zen School is offering three separate 90-day retreats, called "Kyol Che" or "tight Dharma:" one in the United States, one in Poland, and one in the mountains of Korea.



Tiny Jung Hye Sah in Korea is one of the most famous temples on Dok Seung Mountain. Built by Zen Master Mang Gong, Soen Sa Nim's grand-teacher, as a special meditation retreat for his senior students, Jung Hye Sah is the place where many great Zen Masters got enlightenment, so it has special meaning for our school. Soen Sa Nim strongly encourages his students to sit at Jung Hye Sah at some point in their practice, because he considers Dok Seung Mountain the "primary point" for the Kwan Um Zen School.

His Dharma name, Seung Sahn, means "man of Dok Seung Mountain." He stayed at Jung Hye Sah after he got enlightenment. Soen Sa Nim has said that during the Japanese occupation of Korea, the Su Dok Sah temple complex (of which Jung Hye Sah is a part) was the only large temple complex in Korea in which the monks kept the tradition of celibacy. All of the other large temple complexes allowed their monks to marry and have families.

The first 90-day meditation intensive for international students at Jung Hye Sah will start on November 26. The schedule will include 12 hours of formal practice a day, including rising early, sitting, bowing, chanting, working and eating together in total silence. Soen Sa Nim will open and close the retreat, but it is unlikely there will be other formal teaching during the retreat.

Living conditions are simple (outhouse and only occasional hot water) but Korean temple food is excellent. Only seasoned Zen students willing and able to live with few amenities should consider this retreat. Time for sightseeing in

Korea will be arranged following the retreat. Since formal invitations must be obtained from Korea, please write or call the director, Kwan Um Zen School, very soon if you are interested in doing this retreat. Participants must sit the entire retreat.

Jung Hye Sah is about an hour's hike above Su Dok Sah and its grounds are the forests of a rugged national park. There are numerous small hermitages and monuments on the mountain, each with its own special history. American students who have been to Jung Hye Sah attest to the strong energy of the place. From the courtyard and other vantage points, you can see a hundred miles. It is a wonderful place to practice.

The present Zen Master at Jung Hye Sah is Baek Cho Sunim, who came to Su Dok Sah at the age of 9 carried on his father's back. He and his father became novice monks together and trained under Zen Master Mang Gong. Baek Cho Sunim never left the mountain except for an occasional pilgrimage or outing. He is a muscular man with a strong voice and did a great deal of the construction work around the temple, including building many of the stone walls and stairs by himself.

Last fall, Baek Cho Sunim, then 85, gave a talk to some of Soen Sa Nim's American students who had been sitting a retreat at Jung Hye Sah. He said, "Your body home may be in America, but your mind home is here."

The present director of Jung Hye Sah is Hye An Sunim, who speaks some English. He is very interested in helping Soen Sa Nim develop the temple as an international training center. In order to become more acquainted with Soen Sa Nim's American style of Zen teaching, he came to the United States in March for several weeks to visit and practice at Providence Zen Center, Head Temple of the Kwan Um Zen School.

Mu Sang Sunim, who has traveled extensively with Soen Sa Nim, recently returned to the United States after a year-long retreat in a hermitage just ten minutes hike from Jung Hye Sah. He spoke about the warmth and directness of the Koreans he met and of the support he received from the monks at Jung Hye Sah, especially Hae An Sunim. He highly recommends visiting Korea and experiencing it firsthand, especially on Dok Seung Mountain.

## KYOL CHE IN KOREA

Location: Jung Hye Sah, Korea  
Teachers: Zen Master Seung Sahn at opening and closing only.  
Dates: Nov. 26-late February  
Registration: Entire 90 days. For experienced students only.  
Cost: No charge for monks and those willing to shave their heads. Others, \$300.  
Contact: Director, Kwan Um Zen School 528 Pound Road, Cumberland, RI 02864

## KYOL CHE IN AMERICA

Location: Diamond Hill Zen Monastery  
Cumberland, RI 02864  
Dates: January 5, 1986-April 4  
Teachers: Lincoln and Barbara Rhodes  
Registration: 90 days or periods of 21 days or one-week intensive  
Feb. 16-23  
Cost: \$400 (\$300 for members) for 21 days  
\$1250 (\$1000 for members) for 90 days  
\$175 (\$125 for members) for 1 week intensive Feb. 16-23  
For experienced students only.  
Contact: Director, Providence Zen Center 528 Pound Road, Cumberland, RI 02864

## KYOL CHE IN POLAND

Location: Warsaw Zen Center, Poland  
Dates: July 1-September 30  
Teachers: Jacob Perl (July 1-25 and Sept. 15-Oct. 5) and Barbara Rhodes (Aug. 7-18).  
Registration: 21 day periods.  
Cost: \$100 per period.  
Contact: Director, Kwan Um Zen School

# PRIMARY POINT

PRIMARY POINT is published by the Kwan Um Zen School, a non-profit religious corporation under the direction of Zen Master Seung Sahn. The School supports and arranges the world-wide teaching schedule of Zen Master Seung Sahn and his senior teachers, issues publications on contemporary Buddhist practice, and supports dialogue among religions.

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School Abbot: Master Dharma Teacher Lincoln Rhodes  
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 Teaching Editors: Master Dharma Teachers Barbara & Lincoln Rhodes

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 Contributors to this issue: Rusty Hicks, Neil Pregozen, Mu Sang Sunim, David Ledebor, David Klinger, J. Gong Sunim and David Longerbeam.

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## Ice Melts Under Water

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The eye of wisdom sees itself as part of the whole. A piece of the absolute that has the inexplicable ability to look upon itself. It sees on the one hand that fundamentally there is no problem, but in particular there are many problems. In seeing our frailties and blind spots, we realize the need to become more aware. So it is all endless unfolding and untying of the apparent knots and predicaments we have conjured up.

This morning I can't help but wonder where it's all headed. Expanding and dissolving into the light only to contract and begin again?

It's time to do the dishes and cut wood. That's where it's all going right now.

Jan. 21. 2 a.m. woke early and made a fire and noticed in the paper Star's meat market ad. Half rack of lamb \$1.99/lb. Whole chickens \$.49/lb. Lamb legs \$1.79/lb. Isn't it strange how easily and habitually we put a price tag on life? The infinitely precious life of a young lamb wandering through fields of clover and meadows of wild flowers—with the will to live, to manifest fully so innocent and young. Life is worth \$1.99/lb. Is the criterion for life intelligence? If that were so, would a visitor from another planet have the right to butcher young children at \$2.00/lb. simply because it is more intelligent?

I wonder how the great religions of the world deal with lust for blood. Was it God's plan to put this rich variety of life on the planet at man's dinner table?

Certainly the creatures of the world exhibit a different kind of intelligence and sensitivity. They live in a silent world rich with smells, sound and sights unknown to the human being, or at least that we are only dimly aware of. A product of countless millions of years of evolution. A real Blue Stocking lineage of the natural world whose family tree goes back to the source,

is worth \$2.00/lb. Nothing can match the enormity of the human ego.

"The time has come, the walrus said, to speak of many things..."

Jan. 27. Eating rice and lentils for breakfast I thought of each seed that I'm consuming so matter of factly as a miracle unto itself. Each one is offering itself to me so I can live and carry on. It has the potential for a life of its own—each grain. Do we deserve this offering? Countless millions of tiny beings offering their lives so that we may live and destroy this planet? Hardly seems fair. Perhaps we owe something in return for this silent offering? Consider what kind of offering we make in return.

Another day has dawned. Let me wake up from the sleep of my ignorance!

Feb. 2. Yesterday it snowed 10 inches—everything is fresh, bright—but covered over. Nature's best quilt over the compost pile. The birch trees are bent over like old men under the oppressive burden of their snow. Many have cracked in half under the weight of life's load. The sun is so bright—untouched by human sorrow or the heart-shaped prints of the deer, those soft and innocent creatures that tiptoe in the night.

Yesterday I sat all day and night—hour-long rounds completely absorbed in the process. Not at all clear—but I felt as though my practice was being tempered and tested by every conceivable mind state. Perhaps when mind becomes still like a forest pool, then all the creatures of the forest will come to drink, leaving soft ripples and the brief reflection of their faces on the smooth surface of the pool.

I wonder if lust is a hooved ungulate or a feathered creature? Whether fear and horror are reptilian or perhaps amphibian? So many came to the water's edge to drink, leaving their mark. The pond reflected—tainted with its habit force of pleasure for some and repugnance for others—it must embrace them all to be free. Mosquito, snake, deer and owl—all are its children.

May all beings be happy in the light of awareness.

Sometimes it is satisfying to take balls of ice that have formed on your socks while cutting wood and toss them on the hot wood stove—jump, sizzle and disappear as steam in an instant. So the ice of our stuff disappears on the stove of vigorous, passionate practice.

Feb. 8. Chopping wood in the morning sun. Sitting Zen in the soft lamplight. Ahh—the tides of breathing. Seeing...hearing...sensing how boundless and vivid this life. The woods in winter clothes crisp white, subtle green.

Feb. 25. The rain has passed again. A light mist hangs over the field. Its beauty is that it will soon be gone—the bright light of morning awareness will burn it away. There is in the mist a rare, fleeting kind of beauty that cannot be held. It covers the trees and grasses with such a soft and gentle touch—a caress so light and subtle it cannot be approached with the mind. It can only be felt

in its exquisiteness when mind is silent and open, completely vulnerable—like a yawning clam!

March 2. It's cold this morning—the kind of bitter winter cold that numbs toes and fingers and makes you thankful to have a warm cabin and lots of wood to burn!

The eyes work just fine when no one is controlling them telling them how to see. Then you begin to see with your whole body instead of your head. We put such a severe restriction on the senses by making them be "my" senses. In effect, we cut their potential down to a fraction of what it could be.

Hearing is the same. When "I" is not there it is our nature that is hearing. It becomes lucid, rich and boundless instead of this interpretative newscast we're used to.

Even the process of thinking is so rich and natural when it is set free outside the domain of opinion.

In spite of all this we return to our old armored, insensitive and encrusted ways like anachronistic knights stumbling around in creaky armor. What a price we pay for our endless thinking.

This lesson must be learned in the body—body must be filled up with mind—energy flowing freely.

It really helps to throw awareness and concentration into the lower belly and let all the senses and mind relax. In the hara please! Let it function by itself.

March 3. Woke early at 3:30—the morning was cold. I could tell the temperature outside by how much the cabin has cooled down without a fire. Winter mornings here are such solitary affairs. There are so few birds singing. An occasional crow, chickadee or blue jay is heard but it is a time of cold and loneliness.

The stream has frozen over and there is a crust of ice over all the snow. A thin dusting of powder snow covers the ice. Just enough to see the animal tracks—the tracks of a rabbit tentatively meandering around the cabin. These are followed by tracks of the red fox in search of his dinner. Can you imagine being chased and eaten alive by a giant red fox?

Sitting with the breath, as the breath and the unknown. Thoughts and feelings come and go but always the Breath and the deep silence of the unknown. Thoughts which were quite disturbing are now commonplace and don't raise an eyebrow. Feelings of restlessness, anger, jealousy, appear and fade away in the light of unknown awareness.

Yesterday during yoga a mad woman with a skull for a face appeared at the door, only to melt into the deep quiet breathing and warmth of the fire.

If practice is stable the illusions melt like ice under warm water, only to return to the ground of their existence. Ice melts under water. So simple—why resist this simple realization?

Feeling mellow and patient this morning. Time to clean up and cut wood.

LET IT ALL MELT IN THE WARM LIGHT OF UNKNOWN AWARENESS.

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