

PRIMARY POINT

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SOEN SA NIM GOES TO CHINA



Soen Sa Nim and Chinese Zen Master enjoy a round of Dharma combat on Puto Shan Island.

by Diana Lynch

In September Zen Master Seung Sahn became the first Korean Buddhist monk to go into China since the Communist takeover. South Korea has had no diplomatic relations with China since then, and perhaps Soen Sa Nim planted some seeds of reconciliation and trust that the political people have not been able to. Traveling with him on the 3-week trip were 20 people, including monks and laymen, Koreans, Canadians and Americans, old students and new.

We visited temples that had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and which were now being rebuilt by the government: an amazing statement about death and re-birth, about change. We met with old monks who not only had been forced out of their temples to work in factories or fields for up to 20 years, but also to give up their identification as monks and any semblance of formal practice. Yet you could see in their calm and smiling faces that they had attained what real practice is about.

The pilgrimage began with long train rides through the south of China, from Hong Kong to Canton, then to Shao Guan where Nan Hwa, the Temple of the Sixth Patriarch is located. We passed rivers, often with water buffalo cooling off in them, and lush green rice paddies interspersed with taro and vegetable. We saw peasants working everywhere, mountains poking straight up exactly as in Chinese paintings. The magnificence of the country transfixed us all.

In this early part of the trip we got acquainted with the excellent guide supplied

by the China Youth Travel Service, Mr. Zhao, who was very open and knowledgeable about his country's good and could-be-improved-upon parts. He was very helpful to us because few of us knew very much about China, except for John Chan, (an American born Chinese from Berkeley who is writing his PhD thesis on the history of China and who worked out much of our itinerary), and Jon Solomon (a young Zen student from Cambridge who had learned fluent Chinese at Brown University and from having lived in Taiwan and visited in

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A GENTLE RAIN: The unremarkable visit of Thich Nhat Hanh

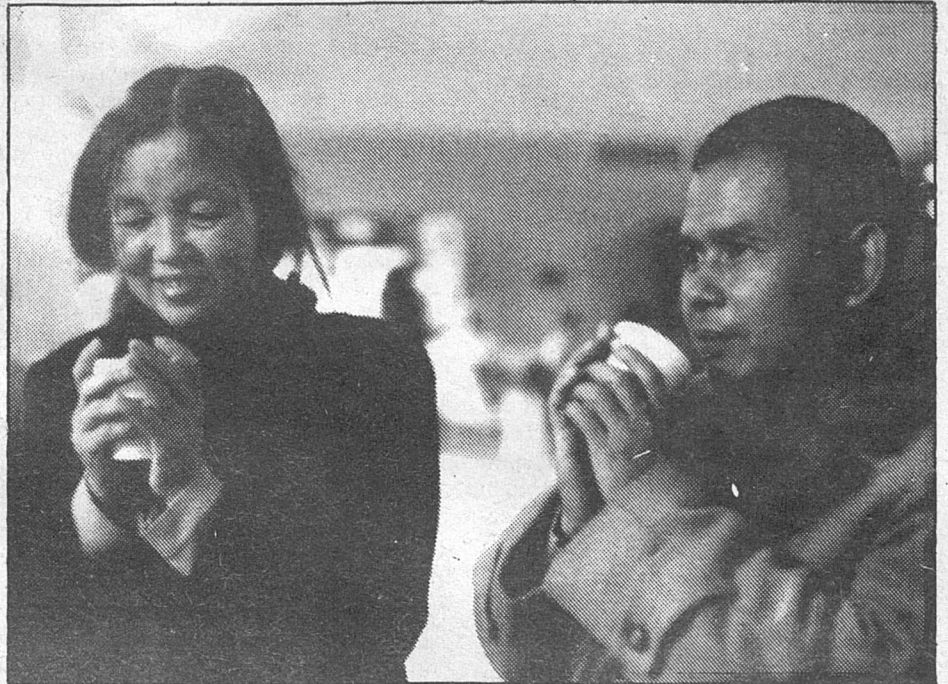
by Ellen Sidor

For seven days in September the hustle-bustle of the Head Temple of the Kwan Um Zen School where some 40 Zen students and their families live and train, was subject to the gentle influence of Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, the renowned poet, scholar and peace activist. Providence Zen Center, his East Coast host for this rare visit to the United States, provided the setting for a 4-day mindfulness workshop and several public talks. The Buddhist Peace Fellowship coordinated his travel schedule.

Living in exile in France since 1966, the slim, collected Zen Master has been an untiring advocate of peace through a change of hearts and minds. He is the leading voice of "Engaged Buddhism" and a founder of the Tiep Hien Order, the Order of Interbeing. About 45 people attended his 4-day workshop, held in the Diamond Hill Zen Monastery on the PZC grounds, in which he taught mindful walking meditation and how to use mindfulness in everyday life. He held tea ceremonies and a precept ceremony to which many children were invited. During his stay, he also gave a scholarly talk on the Heart Sutra.

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Photo by Ruth Klein



THE SWORD THAT KILLS AND THE SWORD THAT GIVES LIFE:

Finding balance in Zen practice

by Zen Master Seung Sahn

The following talk was drawn from a lively question and answer session between Soen Sa Nim and his students at the 3rd Kwan Um Zen School Congress. Master Dharma Teacher George Bowman was the moderator for this session. The School Congress, which takes place every July at the Providence Zen Center, is a major gathering of Soen Sa Nim's students from all over the

world for several days of teaching, School reports, and ceremonies.

GB: Last night we met in small groups to discuss the most important issues of our practice. The major issue was balance: how to find it in the midst of formal practice as Zen students, families, jobs, relationships, etc.

There are two formal aspects to Zen practice: the killing sword and the sword that gives life. The killing sword means how do we give ourselves to the situation? How, without repressing, do we let go of our condition, opinion and situation and really offer ourselves to what's going on in the moment? For most of us that requires a fair

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The next issue of PRIMARY POINT will focus on the "Balancing of American Buddhism" conference held at the Providence Zen Center on September 14 and 15. Included will be talks by Zen Master Prabhava Dharma, Ruth Denison, Ana Pema Chodron, Dr. Joanna Macy and excerpts from the lively Saturday night panel discussion.

THE SWORD THAT KILLS AND THE SWORD THAT GIVES LIFE

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amount of hard work. Sometimes it's painful and difficult. If we try to live that way all the time, only being "good" or only taking certain roles, most of us find that it doesn't work. We become brittle, irritable, out of balance. We do many things with such a charge behind them that we put ourselves in precarious situations.

The other aspect is the sword that gives life: the experience of empowering ourselves, doing things which come naturally, that we love to do and find fulfillment in. When we do too many of these things, most of us get a certain softness or flatness. There's no keen working edge to our practice. It's hard to believe in ourselves if we go too far to that side.

So there's a swing between "putting it all down" in formal practice, life at a Zen Center, the demands of family and job and relationships, and on the other side, empowering ourselves and being happy so that our lives are workable, so that we can be the kind of people in the world that other people would like to be.

These two aspects come up in many different dimensions. On the simplest level, they arise with the inhalation and exhalation of the breath, sitting completely and receiving experience on the cushion, and receiving what comes up in family life and all the other areas. How to balance all this was the major issue that came out of last night's meetings.

In talking with Soen Sa Nim now, it would be nice if we could get into the spirit of heckling him a little. It's hard to do that, because whenever you ask him a question you are taking your life in your hands. I am reminded of the relationship between Ananda and the Buddha. The Buddha would give long Dharma talks and then Ananda would say, "Yes, but what about men and women and what goes on between them?" The Buddha would make some reply, then Ananda would say, "Well, it's all well and good for you to say that, you're the Buddha (or the Zen Master). People fly you around everywhere and everyone bows to you, but we're here, slugging it out in the trenches. How about us?" so a little bit of that spirit would be helpful. Soen Sa Nim, last night many people talked about balance and doing hard training. How do we find balance?

SSN: Many people are confused about what their job is: how much they should practice, how much they should take care of their family. Sometimes this gets unbalanced. So we must talk about our direction. Why are we living in this world? Direction is very important.

If your direction is clear, then your relationships will be clear, your outside job will be clear, your inside practicing job will be clear. If your direction is not clear, it means you are holding some opinion, condition or situation. Then already you have lost what is important. Many people want to drink alcohol and have a good time. If this mind appears, you cannot have a correct relationship to your family or your inside and outside jobs. Your practicing will not be clear. Nothing will be clear.

Everybody has this mind: I like going to movies, I like ice cream, good restaurants, going around everywhere. Single people want a girlfriend or boyfriend to have a good time with. We have a lot of this "wanting a good feeling" mind. And good feeling is sometimes necessary, but first, what is most important? If we understand this, then family, relationships, job, practi-

cing will be no problem. Everything will be correct and balanced.

Q: How can we balance things which help our and other people's spirits grow, like music and art, that are not just having a good time or doing formal practice?

SSN: If you live outside a Zen Center, you decide how often to go. If you go two or three evenings a week and do hard practice, then maybe one evening you want music, one evening of seeing friends, maybe one special evening like yoga or something. If your center is strong, you already have everything. If your center is not strong, then you want many things: music, art, sculpture, tai chi, karate, connecting with other religions. Then your head gets complicated. Is this necessary?

If your center is strong, in one week you can do 10 or 20 different jobs without difficulty. Then coming to a Zen Center once a week would be enough. But if your center is not strong, coming to a Zen Center more often is very important, because you will not be having a correct relationship to your family, your outside job, your music or anything. An eminent teacher once said, "When you drink water, understand whether it is cold or hot." Everyone understands, you understand, whether your own center is strong or not. If it's not, then coming often to a Zen Center is necessary. Having a clear direction is very important.



Soen Sa Nim meeting an Abbot of a temple in China.

Q: Many people have responsibilities outside of a Zen Center which they cannot give up. But if they don't come often, their center will not remain strong.

SSN: Then you must decide about practicing at home and make a schedule of waking up early. Maybe you want to sleep until 6:30, but you must wake up at 4 when everyone else is asleep and do bows. Your center will become strong. Try that. It's difficult, but you can practice at home.

GB: Recently I was at Jakusho Kwong Roshi's center at Sonoma Mountain and he talked about what happens when they have training periods there. Whether it's a week training period or longer, people from the community come to a meeting at the center and work out a practice schedule for themselves at home. Everyone in the sangha together decides that they're going to take this time, whether it's a week or a month, to make more of an effort. They might come to the zendo once a week or not at all, but everyone does it together. The people who can't come at all do a little more than they ordinarily would.

SSN: I like Richard Shrobe, one of our new Master Dharma Teachers, very much because he has great love for his family and is also very responsible to his job. When he would occasionally come to the New York Zen Center, his center was very strong. I would ask him, "Do you have any problems?" He would say, "No problems."

So as an example, his not coming very often to the Zen Center wasn't a problem because his direction is clear. Before he came here, he used to go around to a lot of yoga centers and other meditation groups. Then he came here and found his correct way. He found every day life practicing. Taking care of family and his outside job, that is Zen. Moment to moment, he is practicing Zen. I understand his mind.

Why separate your family, your job, and Zen? Master Dharma Teacher Bobby Rhodes is an old student and she doesn't do

as much formal practice as before, but every day her practice is to take care of her family and go to her job. Even if you are a very good student, if you check your family, your job, your feelings, your condition, you will have a problem. So don't check, just do it, ok?

Zen is every day life. Every day mind is Zen mind. If you keep this mind, no problem. Keep your direction clear and try. Make a mistake, try again. Lots of thinking, try again! Even if you live at a Zen Center for a long time and do many retreats and hard training, but you still check yourself and hold onto things, still your life will be unhappy and unclear.

Moment to moment, just do it: that's our direction. That is Zen. Then your family and your outside job and your practice are never separated. They are the same direction, the same point. Try it. If you cannot do it, then you must do bows many times, a thousand times a day.

Q: Many of the people who run Zen Centers and the School get over-tired from all the responsibility and worry and emergencies, then they feel "I don't like this. I don't want to practice. I don't want to do my job." We call this "burn-out." What can we do about it?

SSN: So you have a baby. It's your baby. This baby has many problems. At night it cries, shits, or crawls around a lot. That's

not so bad if you just take care of it. So the Zen Center is your baby. If it becomes separate from you, this "I don't like it" mind appears. What is your direction, the purpose of your life? You must take responsibility for the whole universe, for all beings. You must find your original job, then this "burn-out" mind will not appear. If you hold onto your situation, your condition, your opinion, then this mind appears.

This isn't a good example, but when I stayed in Korea, I had no problems. I was a Zen Master and everyone took care of me—kept my rooms clean, did my laundry,

Taking care of family and outside job, that is Zen, moment to moment practicing.

brought me food. Many people liked me, came to see me and took me around in good cars. I stayed in beautiful houses, going anywhere was no problem.

When I came to the United States I had no money, so I went to work in a laundry. Nobody understood that I was a Zen Master. I was a laundry-working man, carrying heavy loads of clothes to this store and that, picking up all the dirty clothes, washing them, being sent all around every day. At night I had a lot of pain and fatigue, but I always practiced. My older students understand this!

Some other old monks who have come to the United States to work found it very hard. They wept and were too tired to practice. This means the mind is very important. I never worked this hard with my body in Korea, not just 8 hours a day, but 12 hours a day at the laundry job. But even with the hard work, I always practiced bowing and chanting in the morning and evening. If I didn't work at any outside job, I couldn't get money to pay for my apartment and food. It was difficult. But that was my job.

Q: I understand that. If you have a baby of 1 or 2 years old, it gets up in the middle

of the night. But as it gets older, you don't have to do that anymore. Also, when you came to this country, you had to work to get money, it wasn't for the rest of your life. There are some people (whether or not they are living in a Zen Center) who are pushing themselves very hard, beyond what they can really do. Then they burn out.

SSN: So direction is very important. If your direction is not clear, burnout appears. If your direction is clear, it never appears. Even if you are dying, if your direction is clear, it's no problem. So we practice. If you have energy, no problem. If you have no energy, burnout appears. Every day correct practicing is necessary.

Earlier this summer I was very sick before going to Paris. Breathing was so difficult, I almost died one night. Then I went to Paris on a charter flight and there were many problems: standing in long lines, carrying a lot of baggage, so I got very sick again. My body had no energy. Diabetes means not much pain inside, but having no energy. Everything is uninteresting. "I don't care" mind appears. If you have a lot of energy, helping other people is no problem. So getting energy is very important.

Q: How did you get your energy back?
SSN: I am talking to you now. That is how I get energy. If today or tomorrow, I die, no problem. Worry only means losing energy—"Oh, what shall I do?" Worry is number one bad. If you don't worry about anything, then whenever you die, no problem. Only follow the situation, then slowly it will get better.

Q: All of these questions that people asked you about balance and burn-out and getting a strong center, and having a clear direction, you always answer, "If you have a clear direction." So my question is, how do I get clear direction?

SSN: So I ask you, why do you eat everyday?

Q: I haven't the foggiest idea. (Laughter)
SSN: That's your direction. Why do you eat everyday? For what?

Q: I understand your question, but I don't know the answer.

SSN: You have no answer? Then you don't understand your direction.

Q: Right! (Laughter)
SSN: Then I will make your direction clear. Everyday before bowing we say, "Sentient beings are numberless, we vow..."

Q: "to save them."
SSN: Good! That's your direction. If only your mouth is saying it, you are not doing it. So do it.

Q: But when I say, "to save all beings," it's not true.

SSN: Why isn't it true?

Q: Because I...
SSN: You are checking your mind. Don't check, ok? Just do it! I eat everyday, so only "sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all." So I eat. Then this thinking appears, "That's not true." That's what I mean by checking.

"I vow to save them all" means when you're doing something, just do it, moment to moment. That is all. Moment to moment keep the correct situation, the correct function, the correct relationship. If someone in front of you is very hungry, what can you do? Don't care? Everyone understands correct situation, correct function, only they cannot do it! We understand it only in our speech. If someone in front of you is hungry, give them food. If they are thirsty, give them a drink. Understand?

If you go to New York City to 42nd Street, there are many people begging, but other people just pass them by. If you have money, even if it's only ten cents, give it to them. That is helping. But we cannot do even that.

Doing is very important. Small or big help, it doesn't matter. Just do something. If you understand this, you must try, then your understanding becomes wisdom. If we don't try, then understanding is only understanding and cannot help our true self, our direction, our life, our practice, or save all beings. So only do it. Don't check your mind. That's very important. □

The following talk was taken from the opening speech at the summer Kyol Che (a 19-day intensive retreat) held at Diamond Hill Zen Monastery on July 30. Lincoln Rhodes, who is Abbot of the Kwan Um Zen School, supervised the design and construction of the monastery, a process which started in the winter of 1983-84 when the first trees were cut to clear the building site.

It's a treat to be up here, because I will finally be able to use this building in the way it was intended. For several years we've been building it, so it's very wonderful to be leading a retreat here.

Whether you've been a student of Soen Sa Nim's for a long time, or even if you just came here this weekend, you've all heard a few talks about Zen. "Zen mind is everyday mind." "Only pay attention." "When you're washing dishes, just wash the

FINDING YOUR SPOT

by Master Dharma Teacher
Lincoln Rhodes

dishes." "When you're doing something, just do it 100%."

If that's all Zen is, why go to the trouble of building a monastery? We did go to a lot of trouble to build it, for instance, just getting 34,000 pounds of roof tiles up on the roof! Why do that if Zen is just paying attention to everyday mind? I see a lot of you came from places like Kansas or Toronto. You can wash dishes in Kansas. You can pay attention in Toronto. Why come this far?

The Buddha was a very high-class teacher, so he said it was because human beings have desire, anger and ignorance. I'm not so high-class, so I would say we come here because we're crazy or dumb. The Buddha was a much better diplomat than I am. Saying we're dumb doesn't sound nice.

About five years ago I was really dumb. I went on a 100-day retreat by myself in a cabin in the woods for the winter. Many things happened on that retreat, but coming up here to speak tonight reminded me of

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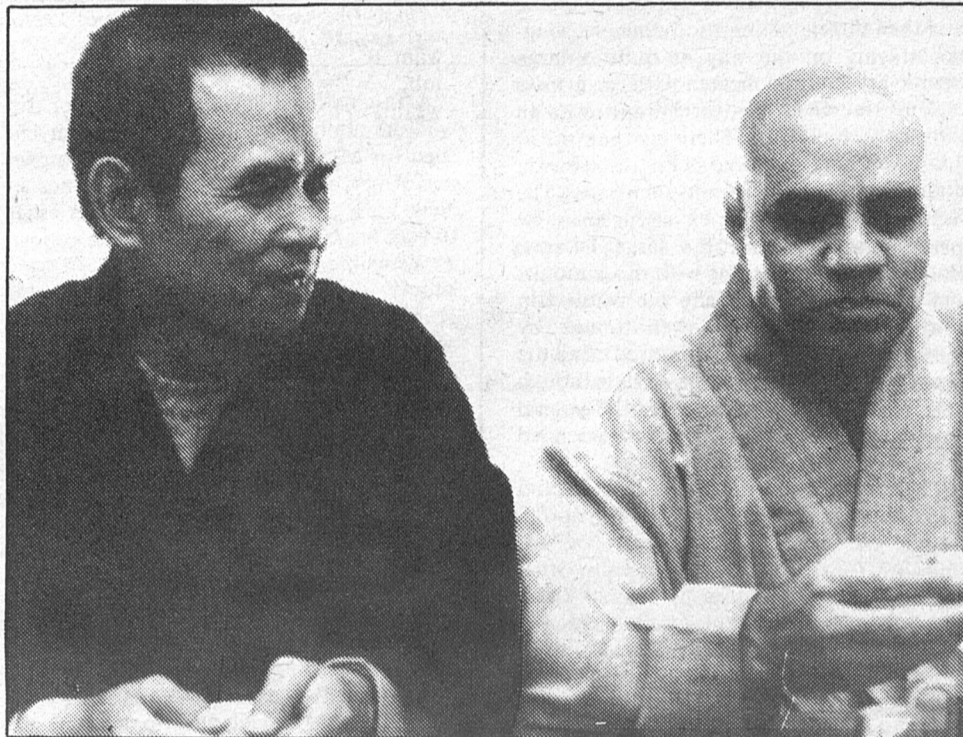
A GENTLE RAIN

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Thich Nhat Hanh was accompanied by his student, Sister Phuong, director of Plum Village, a peace community which Thich Nhat Hanh established in the south of France. About 10 people live there pursuing mindfulness practice. Plum Village is open to visitors only one month during the year. In a talk to the PZC community, Sister Phuong spoke of her experiences during the Vietnam war and her ongoing efforts to feed and educate the refugees, especially the children, from that and subsequent conflicts in Vietnam. Sister Phuong is a lay member of the Tiep Hien Order.

Thich Nhat Hanh's attendant for this American visit was Arnie Kotler, a Berkeley Zen student who was secretary to Richard Baker Roshi. Arnie explained that Vietnamese Zen "is a complete blend of mindfulness practice and zazen."

In a talk at PZC, Thich Nhat Hanh discussed the practice of Buddhism in America.



Thich Nhat Hanh and Mu Soeng Sunim, director of Diamond Hill Zen Monastery.

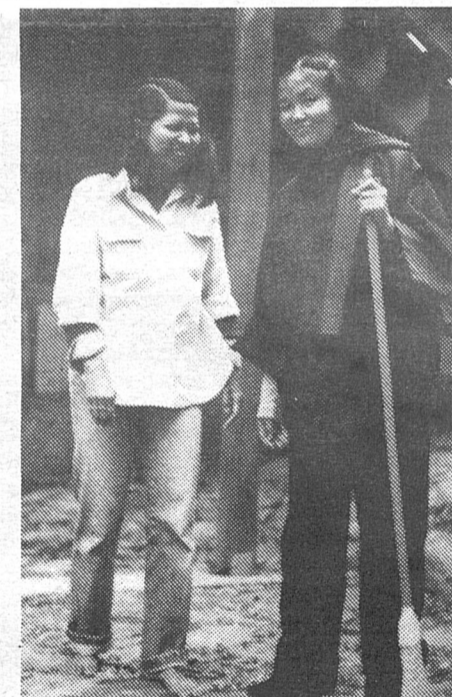


Photo by Ruth Klein

CZC resident VanLoc Tran and Sister Phuong discover that they have the same Dharma name—"Barefoot Sister."

"I think most of the Americans who come to Buddhism are intellectuals, young people. And the door to enter the Dharma is not the door of faith, but the door of psychology." He noted that in looking at the encounter between Buddhism and Western civilization, people often speak "as if the West has never had Buddhism. Therefore it is interesting to see what is Buddhist in non-Buddhist traditions. That way we can better understand (both) Buddhism and Western civilization. I think that the encounter between Buddhism and Western civilization is a very exciting event in our century. Something important might happen because of that.

"A number of you who have come to Buddhism seem to have rejected everything that is faulty in Western civilization. It is courageous to abandon everything in order to engage oneself in the search for

enlightenment or liberation. And you practice very hard. Many Asian Buddhists have great respect for that kind of courage and frankness.

"Buddhism is not one; there are many kinds. And there will be a truly American form of Buddhism, which many of us look forward to seeing. It is possible that Buddhism will get a fresh start in America, because America is still very young and vigorous."

In discussing the alienation from Western society that many American Buddhists seem to have, Thich Nhat Hanh said, "It is like a plant pulled out of the soil, which cannot be replanted. Even if you try, the plant itself resists. The soil does not seem to be fit for the plant. I think something is wrong with the soil, and something is also wrong with the plant. Meditation is to find out, in order to make a compromise."

Using the analogy of a tree, in which we are leaves being nourished by the roots, Thich Nhat Hanh spoke of the activity of the leaves which is necessary to nourish the roots.

"All of us are not only children of society, we are the mothers of society. We have to nourish society. But how can we do that if the stem linking the leaf and the tree no longer exists? Society needs us, especially when we have an insight that can help change society, make it into a more livable place. Therefore, trying not to be alienated from society is very important."

In his recent book, *A Guide to Walking Meditation*, (available from Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 27, Nyack, NY 10960) Thich Nhat Hanh says, "The practice of walking meditation opens your eyes to wonders in the universe. It turns Samsara into the Pure Land. It lets sorrow and worry fall away, and brings peace. But walking meditation also helps us to see pain, anguish and suffering. When we are aware we can see clearly what is happening in life. I often tell meditation students, 'If you can't see

what is happening in front of you and around you how can you understand your true nature?' It is not by closing your eyes that you see your own nature. On the contrary, you must open your eyes wide and wake up to the real situation in the world to see completely your whole Dharma Treasure, your whole Dharma Body. The bombs, the hunger, the pursuit of wealth and power—these are not separate from your nature."

"Every path in the world is your walking meditation path. Once you are awake, you will not hesitate to enter these paths."

"When I returned to Europe after trying to help the boat people, I felt that Western life was not life. It seemed strange to me. After seeing refugees who had suffered so much to survive at sea, I landed at the airport in Paris, and driving home I passed cities and supermarkets with colorful lights. It was like walking in a dream. How could there be such disparity? Here people were seeking pleasure with liquor under neon lights. There people on the sea were pursued, robbed, raped and killed. Aware of suffering, I rebelled against the superficial way of life."

Thich Nhat Hanh's visit seemed to have a profound impact on students who attended his retreat and talks at PZC. Buddhist Peace Fellowship board member, Ruth Klein, a long-term PZC resident and coordinator for his East Coast visit, noted inclusion of women in everything. "There was a clear, conscious pattern of referring to men and women in his speech. I asked Sister Phuong if he had had to work on that and she said no, he had always been (aware) that way." In discussing the retreat (in which she acted as liaison between Thich Nhat Hanh and PZC and Diamond Hill Zen Monastery), she said: "It was clearly designed to be accessible to families, and to be re-

spectful to men and women in their family responsibilities." Ruth said that Thich Nhat Hanh makes no distinction between monks, nuns and laypersons. "Your status in the Tiep Hien Order does not depend on whether you are celibate or not."

A Zen student who was born in Vietnam, worked in Cambodia and lived at PZC, becoming Head Dharma Teacher before she moved, Van Loc Tran said, "Thich Nhat Hanh's gentleness and humility has reached the very depth of my being. I still feel a lot of joy and sadness at this moment. A retreat can be done in a family, among friends. A teacher is not very necessary. The commitment to practice mindfulness, understanding and love is sufficient for a good retreat. There is nothing such as 'personal.' Everything is 'inter-being' with each other. What we do will affect other people, trees, animals, in a word, the whole universe. This helps me be more and more aware of my actions and words."

Jim Doran, Director of Cambridge Zen Center, said of the retreat: "I saw how a different form of practice (mindfulness) opens different perspectives. When you met somebody or were just walking by another person, you came to a complete halt, looking at the other person, haphchanged (palms together) and smiled, then continued on your way. After several days of this I got a tremendous hit. I was so used to our Zen style of avoidance in which if you're practicing hard on a retreat, you avoid making eye contact with the other participants. Here the practice was the very opposite. You were supposed to make eye contact, smile, and as you haphchanged, say to yourself, 'A lotus for you, the Buddha to be.' So with this form, other people became an opportunity to practice, instead of being a possible hindrance or distraction (that would) water down your retreat."

"The qualities of joy and ease were built into the forms or the retreat and even the schedule. I saw in mindfulness practice a more flexible form for family, career, regular lay life."

Several people who came to the retreat from other Zen schools were angered by the relaxed style and left, one immediately following the orientation. Thich Nhat Hanh had asked people not to get up earlier than the scheduled time (of 6 a.m.) in order to do their own practice, but to follow his form. After training in the Kwan Um Zen School for a number of years, Ruth Klein noted that she found it even more demanding and disciplined to relax, go slower, to take time to breathe and be mindful. At one point Thich Nhat Hanh observed, "Many people seem to view their practice as an obstruction to their lives." Ruth reported that he often said "Practice is joyful. If it is not, you are doing something incorrect."

Following this East Coast visit, Thich Nhat Hanh and his attendants went west for public talks and workshops in Colorado, Texas and California, leaving many people with "new appreciation of the richness of mindfulness practice and walking meditation." As Ruth Klein said, "I experienced him as a gentle rain that slowly seeps in." □

CHINA TRIP

Continued from page 1

China previously). Without the two of them, the trip would have been very difficult indeed. When we visited the old monks, Soen Sa Nim often engaged them in Dharma combat, and Jon would translate. It would have been almost impossible without an interpreter who knew Soen Sa Nim's style.

After visiting the south we flew to Beijing in the north and got quite a different view of the huge country. Beijing, administrative and political head of China, gave us a look at history—the Summer Palace, the Imperial Palace, the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall. We were able to make contact with some officials of the Chinese Buddhist Association, which hopefully will open the door for future contacts between Buddhists of China and the West, and also South Korea.

From there we took an overnight train to Louyang, capital city of China until the end of the Tang Dynasty, and famous as the beginning of the "Silk Road" to the Arab countries. Tired from the long train ride, we boarded a bus for another several hours out to Deng Feng: miles and miles of rugged roads through farmlands where very few tourists ever go.



Reunion after 40 years: Ms. Chun and her aunt in Manchuria.

There were people everywhere, imprinting the realization that China truly does have one fourth of the world's population, pulling, pushing and lifting endlessly it seems. Although the land itself is beautiful, there is little to relieve the eye from the drabness of the way people live, even though now there is at least something to eat for almost everyone. Many changes have been and are continuing to be made over the years since Communism took root in China and as they find out what works. We were impressed with how pragmatic and experimental the government is, especially since the end of the devastation caused by the sadly misguided Cultural Revolution. We found that nowadays people can own their own homes or apartments if they can afford to do so and also can earn more money if they work hard, and even run small private businesses. More and more the country is trying to open up and catch up to the rest of the world, after its long period of being completely closed off. There is more freedom and less fear of the influences of the West, although perhaps with some good reason (as some of us felt when we returned at the end of the glitter and materialism of Hong Kong) there are attempts at controlling what kind of influences they want.

Near Deng Feng we visited the Shaolin Temple and climbed the steep trail to the cave where Bodhidharma sat facing a wall for nine years. Some of the young monks and nuns hiked along with us. In the temples now there are the very old monks, back

from the fields, who basically act as custodians and museum guides, taking tourists around to see the new structures going up and the few remaining artifacts that were not destroyed, and some very young monks who have very little teaching available.

It will be some years before there will be any real practice going on in the temples, until they are rebuilt and there are more monks. Also, the government is financing the work and its aim, understandably enough, is to make some money from tourism. Probably the government also feels that Buddhism itself can help the country too, so practice is not discouraged—there just isn't much time for it yet and there is virtually no sitting practice. As horrible as the Cultural Revolution was, those same temples had been destroyed and rebuilt already a number of different times. Perhaps when anything gets too powerful or loses its aliveness to form for its own sake, something comes along to destroy it so that the pure essence can reappear...

From Deng Feng and Louyang we went, again on an overnight train, to Shanghai and then through Hangzhou down to Ningbo, staying on the way at quite a large temple far from the beaten path, a surprise on our itinerary which turned out to be an important highlight. There we got up at 4:00 AM and practiced with the monks, doing first their chants and then ours. The feeling of solidarity we experienced as we perambulated around the large Dharma Hall in the early morning with those monks and some lay people made the whole trip worth while, somehow, even though by then people were getting a bit tired of all the long train and bus rides, the endless though delicious Chinese food, and just the general frustration that can arise from an extended travel with a large group.

Then we took one more long bus ride and a 5½ hour ferry ride out to Puto Shan, definitely the most interesting part of our Buddhist tour. Puto Shan is literally Quan Yin's (Kwan Seum Bosal's) island. There had been over 200 temples built on the island in honor of the Bodhisattva, and almost all of them had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Now about 18 of them were being rebuilt. To make matters even more interesting, there was a beach and we could put our tired bodies in the ocean—Nirvana!

At each temple along the way Soen Sa Nim had tried a bit of Dharma combat with the various old monks we met, but no one was really able to respond with any but thinking style answers. But at the first temple we visited on Puto Shan, a monk brightened when he heard Soen Sa Nim begin the dialogue, and said, "I cannot answer you, but I know who can—and he is waiting for you at another temple!" So with feathers on our feet we made for the other temple—and sure enough, we met a great Zen Master, 77 years old, clearly the real thing. The twinkle in his eyes and complete lack of pretentiousness lit up the room. Master Dharma Teacher George Bowman, asked him if he could give one word to help us—and his response was, "I have nothing to give you." He meant it. It was as if all the I, my, me had been worn away and only his smile remained.

After Puto Shan we returned to Shanghai via a short sojourn near the beautiful city of Hangzhou which is at the edge of Westlake, truly lovely. There we had our closing circle talk before returning by plane to Hong Kong. Soen Sa Nim ended by saying that it didn't really matter if one could do Dharma combat or not, but what was important was whether a strong center and gentleness and compassion had been attained. We certainly had experienced those qualities in the monks we met, who have stayed loyal to their strong direction through so much suffering. Soen Sa Nim also said that he believed there were probably some great monks living in caves and small hermitages in the mountains, waiting for the time to be a little more right before reappearing.

It was an amazing experience to be able to visit China with Soen Sa Nim—to see where so much of our practice had its roots, to hapchang to those old monks who had endured and transcended so much. It made us realize how incredibly lucky we are to have the luxury of being able to practice and have the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha—the Three Precious Jewels—so readily available. □

A SIDE TRIP TO MANCHURIA



Dancer Myung Sook Chun demonstrating at Yan Bian Performing Arts School in Yen Ji, Manchuria.

A fascinating sidelight to the China trip was the almost spy movie drama that ensued for Myung Sook Chun, a well known performer of Korean traditional dance in New York City, who left the tour in order to visit her birth place. Ms. Chun was born in Yenching, Manchuria in a Korean community 42 years ago and at the age of 2, was secreted out of the country to South Korea with her mother and some friends after her father, a prominent, wealthy community leader, was killed. A long-term student of Zen Master Seung Sahn and well-known to many East Coast Zen Center people, Ms. Chun runs a dance studio in New York city.

All her life she has wanted to go back to Yenching to find out if any relatives remained. She had heard that in this particular area there were many dancers like herself, who were continuing the Korean cultural tradition. When at Soen Sa Nim's suggestion, she expressed interest in going on the China trip, it was not at all clear whether she would be allowed to go into this particular region of China. However, having a lot of faith, she decided to go anyway and just try.

After we arrived in China, she talked to Mr. Zhao, the national guide, about her situation. He understood how important it was and helped her arrange the trip. She had hoped to have companions, even one person to help with the language, but this proved impossible. Feeling a little uneasy, but knowing she had to do it, we left her alone in Shanghai to await a flight two days later. Had any of us known it might be dangerous for her to travel alone, we might have worked harder to find a companion. Korean style, Ms. Chun didn't want to worry us, and with a big smile waved us off to our next temple.

The flight took her to a place that had no connections to Yenching. She had to go back to another taking-off place so it took an extra day and lots of lucky karma to get to Yenching. She met people along the way who were eager to help her, some who spoke a little English and even some visiting from Korea. She had no idea what to expect when she finally reached Yenching.

Through a series of wonderful happenstances, she met some performing artists. When they discovered who she was, they were ecstatic. Since she is very famous in her field, they had all heard of her and they treated her like a princess. The fact that she had been born there and wanted to come

back moved them to tears. News of her arrival spread quickly. Soon a special work shop with almost 300 dancers, some even coming from other provinces, was scheduled. She was amazed at the quality of their technique, and also that all of them seemed to be Korean.

They did many dances for her and then insisted that she perform for them. They were very excited to have such a great artist come and share so much with them. They wanted her to teach them, not only about Korean dance but also about modern, improvisational and jazz dance. As she watched them, she began to realize that although their outside technique would be considered excellent anywhere in the world they lacked something on the inside. Spontaneously she began telling them (without using Zen words) about Zen practice, about developing a center from which dance would evolve. They were very excited and wanted more of her teaching.

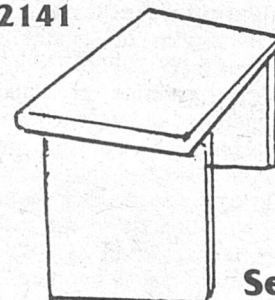
With great difficulty she finally extricated herself so that she could try to find some relatives whom she thought must still be living in the area. Everyone began to help her. They finally located an aunt, the wife of a doctor in a medical school. After a long, harrowing drive far into the countryside, travelling by car with four new friends and relatives over almost impassible roads, she found a half-sister, two years her senior. Neither had known about the other.

The half-sister was living in very poor circumstances and told a story full of heartache and dead ends during the Cultural Revolution. Even though, like Ms. Chun, she had been very good at gymnastics and other studies in school, she was never able to continue them. Both women cried and cried. Such different karma! But how wonderful that they could connect after so long.

Ms. Chun finally left Yenching, accompanied on the 16-hour train by one of the most famous dancers in the area, who wanted to use every possible moment to learn from her new teacher. It was with great joy and relief that we greeted Ms. Chun in the lobby of a Hong Kong hotel at the end of her adventure. She hopes next year to return to Manchuria with some Zen students and dancers—and perhaps even set up a Zen Center there. She says that Zen and dancing are not different for her, and that she wants to teach this in depth to the performers there who seemed so interested. □

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Dr. Danette V. Choi, who founded Hawaii Dharma Sa in Honolulu nine years ago and who has known Soen Sa Nim for many years, recently began teaching at the Paris and Palma de Mallorca Zen Centers, at Soen Sa Nim's request. This gifted woman, whose teaching is from the *Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law*, has drawn large crowds attracted by her energy and psychic gifts. Taking time out from a busy schedule in Hawaii, she spent much of the summer giving talks and personal counseling in Paris and Spain, and is credited by Palma Zen Center Abbot Joan Insa with revitalizing that center. Since she started teaching with Soen Sa Nim several years ago, she has traveled extensively with him, especially in Europe and South America.

A native of Korea, Dr. Choi was able to predict the future at the age of five. Because of this gift, her parents, who were Christian, supported her search within Buddhism for answers. Unable to find a temple that would take her spiritual search seriously, she went into the mountains during her high school years. Upon her return home, people began seeking her out for personal counseling.

She came to Hawaii in 1967, married and worked in various businesses for 10 years. In 1977 she founded the Dharma Buddhist Temple and held several large, traditional Buddhist ceremonies such as the Festival of Land and Sea to let the people of Hawaii know that the temple existed.

In 1982 three hundred people gathered at Kapiolani Park for a World Peace Ceremony. Among the distinguished guests were Soen Sa Nim and Aitken Roshi. In 1983 Dr. Choi conducted a joint workshop and Precepts Ceremony with Soen Sa Nim and his students. She received her Dharma Master Certificate in 1981 in Korea from the denomination which follows the Lotus Sutra. In 1982 in Los Angeles she received a PhD in Religious Science. She gives spiritual counseling to people in all walks of life.

Although her personal style of practice differs from Soen Sa Nim's, she emphasizes the great value of his teachings and has incorporated such forms as the 108 prostrations and living in Zen centers into her own teaching. This article is drawn from an interview conducted in July in a Palma de Mallorca restaurant between Dr. Choi, Joan and Antonia Insa (Abbot and Head Dharma Teacher at the Palma Zen Center), and Do Mun Sunim, a Kwan Um Zen School monk who was former Vice-Abbot of the Providence Zen Center and is currently helping develop the Paris Zen Center as the Vice-Abbot there.

J: Maybe you can say something about how you know Soen Sa Nim, when you met him.

DC: I know him from a long time ago, but officially it's four years ago. We had a Land and Sea Ceremony in Hawaii and I invited him. I've practiced Zen and the Dharma for years. Ever since I was

DR. DANETTE CHOI TEACHES IN PARIS AND SPAIN

young, I could perceive people's karma.

J: What was your idea in starting Hawaii Dharma Sa?

DC: When I was 18, I decided to leave Korea and live a social life experience for 10 years. So at 19 I went to Los Angeles and then to Hawaii, where I have lived for 20 years. There were already 10 Japanese temples and a Zen temple in Hawaii. I got married and gave birth to a child. I was involved in various businesses: a restaurant, a jewelry shop, a gift shop, import-export and real estate. So for 10 years I learned what life is all about. Truth by itself cannot give the truth of human life, so during those years I did that, attained what is human suffering, what it is to feel human. Now when people come to see me, attorneys, or waitresses or electricians, I can understand their feelings. That 10 years was my great experience, better than my PhD experience.

J: Are Korean Zen and Japanese Zen different?

DC: There's no difference. Zen is Zen, ok? Why make a distinction? You only make trouble. Zen is Zen. Find your true self. Some people say, "I am a strong Korean Zen student." Or Soto Zen, or Rinzai Zen. If you really attain truth, you'll never call it Korean or Japanese or Soto or Rinzai Zen. That's just style. If you say that you are making yourself stupid. When you attain Zen, you don't care who you are. You're white or black or rotten, it doesn't matter.

J: Do you see a difference between the karma of different countries, like Korea, America, France and Spain?

DC: That's interesting, Karma is all the same. In this whole world everybody is the same. Today you are Spanish, but when you are reborn you may be Korean. I can't make a distinction. As long as we are human beings we are the same. I don't understand people saying, "I am Soviet, I am Communist" or "I am American, I am great." They are only talking about this life.

DM: One time you said to me that a monk's job is compassion. But sometimes when I practice hard and cut into my karma, it's difficult. Then maybe I'm too strong on the outside. Can you give me any advice on that?

DC: Monks are supposed to be compassionate and have great loving kindness. When some monks practice too hard, their center gets strong and they think they should act harshly on the outside. But that's not a great monk's job. Better they go cut wood or clean the toilet. Even though you have a strong center, you must have great compassion.

Soen Sa Nim already told you, you must have correct function in your life and loving kindness. Just acting strong on the outside means you don't have a

strong center. Your practice is only building up an ego I not your Big I. Whether you're a monk or not, you need compassion and loving kindness so you can save all beings. You must have a wide open door and not hold your condition. When you hold your condition and your opinion, you can never be a great monk. Open the door wide. No condition. It's like using a mixer. Put in all the carrots and potatoes and everything, and come out with soup. So a monk's job is being a mixer. If you hold your condition, the mixer is going to break. Then you cannot grind the carrots and potatoes.

J: What is the function of Dharma teachers in Palma?

DC: Both of you (Joan and Antonia) are already doing a great job. Teaching new people how to sit, how to chant, how to practice together. That is already doing great Bodhisattva action. You say, "I'm not enlightened so I shouldn't be a Dharma teacher." Don't say that. You are gaining enlightenment together.

Dharma teacher is very important. Without Dharma teachers we cannot train people. A Master can only tell you so much. Dharma teacher is just as important as Master. More important. We hold the fabric together. Not only you and I holding, but anything in a Buddha's disciple's life we have to hold together. Together action is very important.

DM: What is the correct function of a layperson?

DC: The correct function is great compassion and loving kindness. Monk is monk, layperson is layperson. In great compassion there is no monk, no social person, no you, no I, only great love. Love is round like the world turning. Don't make distinctions. You're a monk, your condition is monk, your karma is monk. I'm a social person, but you and I are no different. We are not different. You like being a monk. Fine, don't eat meat. Another person, he can eat meat and still do great action. Nothing is higher or lower.

DM: You mentioned some of Soen Sa Nim's teaching: correct situation, correct function...

DC: Correct situation, correct function, correct relationship, and moment to moment: that is nirvana. That's great teaching. That's why I like and respect him. When he came to Hawaii four years ago, he talked about those four things. When you attain those four things, you attain nirvana, you don't have to live in a Zen center.

In this society we live by groups. When you exist, I exist. When you don't exist, I don't exist. When I'm by myself, one whole world. Why do I need Buddhism, why do I need practice? Because you need them. That's why I'm here. We rub



against each other, that's why we need religion, philosophy, Zen centers. This is a great opportunity to share.

But I'm not like Soen Sa Nim. He has great together action and group teaching. I can help the individual but I'm not into group activity. A long time ago one Zen Master went around talking a little and helping people. I have that kind of karma more than teaching groups. I'm happy with what I am. If I can help, or if they don't need me, that's ok.

DM: What do you think about someone practicing and staying at a Zen center for a long time?

DC: That person wants to eliminate their karma. I like to call the Zen center a "Dharma bath." When you're in the Dharma bath, you can wash your dirt off faster than if you're by yourself.

DM: So you think it's a good idea to stay at the same center for a while?

DC: Yes, it's good experience. Because when you live in a Zen center or community, you can't just prop up your own situation. You have to understand others more. Practicing by living together is very important. Nowadays people value themselves more than others, so they don't know where they're attached or how to get better. Together action and together living is very important. You can attain truth, Big I, faster than living outside. First you must find your strong center.

J: Many people practice Zen because they want to become like Buddha or like Soen Sa Nim or like you. But that's not what they're aiming for.

DC: Well, if they want to become like Buddha or Soen Sa Nim or me, that's a great desire. You can't say that's bad.

J: But that's not what they're really after.

DC: The problem is, they don't know what they are. Once they find out, then they will understand. They can become Buddha or whatever. But they only have desire I, small I, which wants to become like Buddha or Soen Sa Nim or me. Once they attain Big I, which is true self, they will already know what they should do and they won't have to ask that kind of question.

SPREADING THE DHARMA IN EUROPE

Soen Sa Nim has been visiting Europe annually since 1978 and feels there is a lot of energy for spiritual practice there. There have been inquiries for him to visit many countries, including Italy, Greece, Sweden, Norway, and Egypt. Each year he makes his European tour a little longer,

to include places where people are practicing and have asked for him.

This October he led workshops, retreats and gave talks in Paris, West Germany, Poland, Spain and London, following a 3-week trip to mainland China. In addition to the steady growth of the Polish

sangha, Soen Sa Nim is nurturing the development of two new centers, one in Palma de Mallorca and one in Paris.

The first stop on Soen Sa Nim's European tour this fall was the Zentrum for Buddhismus and Bewusstes Leben in Kemmenau-Bad Ems, 75 kilometers from Frankfurt.

Organized by Paul Koppler of the Zentrum, the retreat attracted over 25 participants. The most recent news is that the group may wish to become an Affiliate of the Kwan Um Zen School, meaning that Soen Sa Nim would lead retreats there when his schedule permits. Welcome to our new sangha members!

In Poland during October 16-24, Soen Sa Nim was accompanied by Mu Sang Sunim and Providence Zen Center Director Tony Sager. Over 50 people took the Five Precepts in a large Precepts Ceremony, 10 people became Dharma Teachers, 2 or 3 became Senior Dharma Teachers and one person became a Bodhisattva monk. Master Dharma Teacher Jacob Perl has just returned from several weeks in Poland, during which time he closed the 90 day Kyol Che retreat. Genpo Sensei, a leading student of Maezumi Roshi, was a visitor at Warsaw Zen Center and gave a talk during the last part of Kyol Che. The Polish sangha is planning a three week Kyol Che for this winter.



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Master Dharma Teacher Barbara Rhodes, her daughter Annie, and members of the Polish sangha at Warsaw Zen Center during the intensive sitting week in August. Accompanying Bobby were Dharma Teacher Bob Genthner, director of the Lexington Zen Center in Kentucky, and his daughter Gretchen.

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume 35, Number 6

December 1984

Attain utmost emptiness;
Hold firm to stillness.
The ten thousand things stir about;
I only watch for their going back.
Things flourish,
But each returns to its root.
Returning to the root is peace.
And peace is a going back to reality.

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THE HEART OF BUDDHISM

by Takeuchi Yoshinori (NY: Crossroad Publ. Co.; 1983; 162 pages; \$17.50 hardcover)

Reviewed by Paul Shozen Hanke

During the last 15 years I have read a lot of books about Buddhism, from simple introductions to in-depth expositions of Buddhist Dharma and practice, and *THE HEART OF BUDDHISM* by Takeuchi Yoshinori stands out as one of the most interesting. But, as editor and translator James Heisig says in his introduction, "I cannot pretend this book makes easy reading." Takeuchi Yoshinori is a Shin Buddhist priest, a prominent scholar, teacher, and one of the leading figures of the Kyoto School of Philosophy. If his subject and depth of knowledge did not combine to make difficult reading, the author's style alone would do the job.

Despite an excellent glossary of Sanskrit and Pali words, the average reader will often need a good dictionary to look up such terms as "metanoia" and "ontological hermeneutics, and there are many German words and phrases that should have been included in the glossary. Furthermore, Takeuchi's sentences sometimes run upwards of 95 words! The book also suffers a bit from being a collection of essays, despite the fine efforts of the editor to organize and relate individual chapters to each other. Nonetheless, *THE HEART OF BUDDHISM* offers a fascinating perspective on contemporary questions of Buddhist faith and practice, and makes a strong contribution to an East/West religious dialogue.

There are two major sections to the book. Section I-**Centering** focuses on the stages of Buddhist contemplation,

while Section II-**Freeing** delves into the doctrine of dependent origination. Takeuchi approaches both subjects from his own unique perspective, which he calls "Buddhist existentialism." This viewpoint provides part of the book's fascination for me, as I have long had a personal aversion to the existentialist perspective. To my limited understanding it seems that the existentialists in general realize that the Void is home, but they hate it, while Buddhism has accepted this ultimate fact of our existence. In the last paragraph of the book Takeuchi sums up by saying that "the significance and depth of meaning of the Great Practice¹ becomes all the more clear when viewed in the light of...contemporary (existential) theology and philosophy of religion," and this is the theme of the entire book.

Whether it becomes more clear or not is a question for each reader to answer, as throughout the book Takeuchi writes on several different levels simultaneously. He blends textual criticism of Sanskrit and Pali Sutras with commentary and interpretation. He frequently compares and contrasts Buddhist and Western/Christian doctrine and theology and abstracts universal dimensions of the phenomenon of religion. He also refers to aspects of Buddhist history, draws examples from everyday life, and relates it all to his own faith as a "Pure Land believer of extremely conservative stamp."

In the first chapter Takeuchi reflects on the silence of Buddha Gotama concerning metaphysical questions. He believes this silence is not a repudiation of metaphysics, or a rejection of all philosophical thought as useless for the goal of Nirvana (as is sometimes heard in Zen circles), but represents a higher insight which is cautious of being led astray by

1 He refers specifically to **Nembutsu** recitation, but the phrase could be more broadly interpreted to mean the Buddha Way.
2 My addition

the "antimonies of theoretical reason." He also argues that Buddhism is not "pragmatic" in the Western sense of relating everything to objects and utility, but rather tries to sound utility to its depth and expose the subject/object disjunction as false.

Buddhism is practical however in all ways aiming toward the goal of enlightenment. For Buddhism, says Takeuchi, the real ground of the phenomenal world is not **metaphysical** (i.e. in a reality "beyond" daily life), but is to be found in the here-and-now. Philosophy may be able to produce an **abstract** harmony between transient existence and the Absolute, but it leaves our "poor existence" in much the same condition as before—i.e. philosophy produces no individual **conversion** in the religious sense.

The stages of Buddhist (and Western) contemplation, says Takeuchi, are aimed at complete conversion of awareness and lifestyle, resulting in what we call salvation. The contemplative processes begin with Sila (the Precepts) and a spirit of conversion which involves an awareness of Nothingness and impermanence, followed by a moral/religious resolve to pursue self-transcendence, plus a radical withdrawal from the world and a turning inward. Gradual progress through the stages of contemplation (dhyana) described in the Sutras finally breaks through ignorance and goes beyond the habitual consciousness of good and evil, resulting in a new way of seeing.

Compassion, in the sense of a detached sympathy that extends to all things, is the fruit of this experience. Takeuchi sums up this section by observing that from the Pure Land point of view **Nembutsu** recitation (calling on the name of Amida Buddha) is the method by which the world "beyond" can be brought into contact with the everyday world and transform it in an age of despair and (as he later points out) decline of the Dharma.

The remainder of the book is devoted to an exposition of the doctrine and contemporary ramifications of dependent origination. Takeuchi's underlying point here is that this basic Buddhist doctrine is not some sort of idealism, but an existential tool for transformation of everyday awareness, involving the interrelatedness of **nama-rupa** (name-form) and **vijnana** (consciousness). The chain of causation described in the Sutras, says Takeuchi, finally gives way to a deeper reciprocity that is a springboard for leaping free from the fetters of existential causes altogether. The entire discussion weaves in threads of Buddhist eschatology (the 3 periods of Dharma decline) and history, Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time," and commentary on relevant Sutra passages.

Takeuchi also considers the metaphysical and existential questions that faced Buddha Gotama himself. He observes how Shakyamuni chose not to push the

anxieties he felt (when faced with the realities of sickness, old age, and death) into the unconscious, but faced them squarely in a religious context. Upon enlightenment these phenomena did not disappear, but the historic Buddha was no longer held captive by them.

Finally, argues Takeuchi, we live in an increasingly secular society where the concept of transcendence is losing its traditional meaning. He notes that some contemporary Christian theologians (i.e. Tillich and Robinson) find difficulty in accepting the notion of a God "up there," and seek transcendence in the depths of the human spirit. Takeuchi rhetorically asks if Shin Buddhists should approach the problem of the "Pure Land" in the same way. His answer is that for him transcendence must necessarily include a sense of "to...from" (i.e. the Tathagata has not only gone to the Other Shore, but returns in a reciprocal process to save suffering beings). There is, he says, a two-way encounter between the world, human existential reality, and the Absolute, that involves a world-to-world movement, but in which each of the three realms completely encompasses the others.

The transcendent, he argues, merges into the present through the vehicle of finite human beings, and is to be found in the midst of everyday life (exemplified by Bonhoeffer's phrase, the "beyond within"). Therefore, Takeuchi concludes, the Pure Land has a significance that cannot easily be replaced by any other symbol. **Namu-Amida-Butsu** recitation belongs to the absolute world where subject/object duality is finally overcome and the distinction between **tariki** (other power) and **jiriki** (self-power) is dissolved.

In this short review I have merely skimmed the surface of *THE HEART OF BUDDHISM*, and haven't even attempted a systematic presentation of Takeuchi's ideas. I will leave it to scholars and to people whose understanding of Buddhism is far greater than mine to analyze and criticize the merits of Takeuchi's arguments, but as a lay reader with a very limited background in philosophy, I suspect that this may be one of the more important books on Buddhism and East/West philosophy of religion to have been published in the recent past. Just be aware before you pick it up that the scant 143 pages of text will probably seem like a lot more as you read them. Nonetheless, the publishers and translator deserve a sincere thank you for making this work available in English, and for introducing Takeuchi to a western audience—both academic and Buddhist.

*Paul Shozen Hanke is an architectural designer, builder, teacher, writer, also a lay Buddhist and avid reader. His reviews have previously appeared in **Fine Homebuilding**, **New England Builder**, and other journals. He lives with his wife and 5-year old son in Plainfield, Vermont.*

3 BOOKS BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

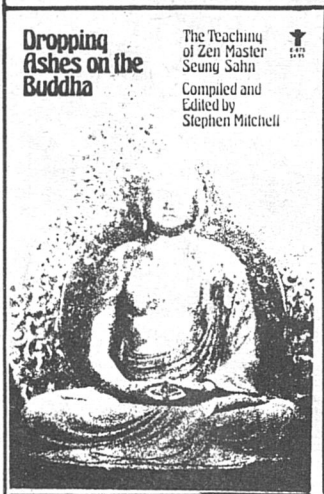
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CORRECTION

The Poetry page of the July 1985 issue of PRIMARY POINT omitted the very important information that these poems (translations from Rainer Maria Rilke) were taken from Stephen Mitchell's "Sonnets to Orpheus," scheduled to be published by Simon & Schuster in October 1985. Our sincere apologies to Stephen Mitchell.

Time is the least thing we have of.
Ernest Hemingway

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ENLIGHTENMENT IS NOT LIKE A BRILLIANT IDEA

by Da Free John

This article by Master Da Free John was sent to us by Ken Stateman of Laughing Man magazine and Dawn Horse Press. Ken studied with Zen Master Seung Sahn for two years in 1977-78 and recently published an interview with him in Laughing Man. We hope our readers will enjoy Master John's article, capitalizations and all, and see how uncannily similar to Zen teaching it is.

Ken sent us the following biographical notes: "Da Free John was born Franklin Albert Jones into a middle class family in Jamaica, NY in 1939. He was illumined at birth and awakened into full enlightenment 31 years later. Soon after his God-realization, he was moved to teach others and transmit to them the condition of "the heart," or the transcendent reality in which everything inheres.

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MASTER DA FREE JOHN: I have been asking people questions all week based on this consideration of Ignorance. I have involved myself profoundly, and yet when I ask a question that is directed at the heart of it all, the response is, "I don't know." These "I don't knows" do not amount to this Ignorance I am talking about. People have yet to Realize their Ignorance. When I ask them to elaborate on their response, they always have more to say. There is always more knowledge, hiding, lurking, ready to trample the unsuspecting Infinite at any moment. (Laughter.)

Knowledge sells. There are all kinds of amusements to be played. If you have a really good amusement that you know nobody else really knows too much about, you package it. That is knowledge. Ignorance is an entirely different matter. Nobody has ever thought of promoting it before, which shows how odd I really am. (Laughing wildly.) Nevertheless, this is what I propose. (Laughing.)

Perhaps somebody has thought of all this before, but have they ever been Ignorant of it? (Laughter.) To have thought of it is to know something, but to realize that you are completely Ignorant of it is an entirely different matter in which even the speaker is confounded. Now, why do you suppose all of this has been obvious to me and not to you? How is it possible? There is no way

you could have known your Ignorance, you see. You had to be put in an entirely different position relative to your knowledge before you could recognize your Ignorance to be the foundation and the Truth of your knowledge. Why was this not obvious, however? And who could have possibly instructed me in this? (Master Da chuckles.) It is not possible at all. I have never been instructed, and now you are just as Ignorant as I am. (laughter.) If I had been instructed, I might know something, but I have never been instructed, never even lived, and yet somehow I am here.

STUDENT: Master, does this Realization not require any attention at all?

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: No, it does not mean anything, however meaningful it may appear to be. There is nothing to be known about it.


STUDENT: Right. (Laughter.)

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Have you been Ignorant of all this all of this time? Do you know anything about it? Do you Realize this Ignorance to be exactly what you are? When you are simply being that, completely Ignorant, you are not un-Happy, are you? Not at all. There is no possibility of being un-Happy in that case. You are completely Ignorant of the possibility of un-Happiness. (Addressing another student) Do you see this?

STUDENT: No, Master.

Continued on next page

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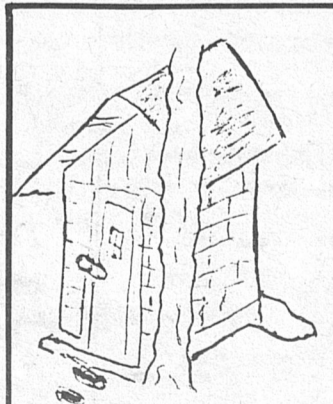
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MASTER DA FREE JOHN: You do not? You are Ignorant of it entirely, is that it?

STUDENT: Yes.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: You see? That is exactly your position. You do not know anything about it. You do not know what it is, do you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Exactly. That is really your experience, is it not?

STUDENT: Yes.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: That is what you are. You are Ignorant. That is the Truth of all of this. You see, you have always been Enlightened, but you do not know anything about it, do you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: That is it. Do you see?

STUDENT: Yes.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Good. It is easy to Enlighten people, impossible to make them change. (Laughter.) If Realizing one's Ignorance depended on change, on a capacity for effort of any kind, Ignorance would never be Realized. If it could be Realized by effort, it would have to be a kind of knowledge. Nothing, however, is required. Anyone can be Enlightened. It makes no difference. It makes all the difference. You could see what a difference it makes. You do not have to sit under a bodhi tree in order to Realize Ignorance. I have not Realized this by sitting under plants. (Laughter.) What difference does it make if you starve the body, stuff the body, kundalini the body into distraction and vision, pre-vision, pre-know, after-know, if you speak it, do not say it, are silent or terribly crude (laughter)—it makes no difference whatsoever and does not lead to this Realization at all. None of your experience leads to it. I have led you to it, whatever it could possibly be. (Laughter.)

Enlightenment is not a matter of the point finally being made. It is not a concept, a brilliant idea. Perhaps at some point, it will simply be Obvious beyond your possible imagining. It is simply a matter of Realizing it. After all is said and done, you do not know what anything is. You are completely Ignorant, and nothing that has arisen in your mind or experience has ever been knowledge. Therefore, consider that and do what you will.

Do you understand what I am saying? You do not understand it? You do not know anything about it? (Laughter.) You have not grasped it. It has not become knowledge. Exactly. You are entirely Ignorant of it. You know nothing about it, nor about anything else. It has always been obvious to me that in your case nothing like knowledge was present. Now it is even obvious to you. (Laughter.) It is not that you are stupid, you are completely Ignorant. (Laughter.)

You are in a Condition of complete Ignorance. You have been playing, acting, living, but you do not know what your experience is. You do not know what anything you do is. You are always thinking—there are all kinds of implications to think about—but you do not know what the thinking is. Nothing arising is anything about which there can be knowledge. There is no such thing as knowledge. Knowledge is merely the illusion at the end of seeking. True Realization, on the other hand, is that all that seeking is fruitless, that there is no knowledge that can ever be attained.

That very Ignorance is precisely your Condition and the Condition of everything, and you are completely free of the whole affair. Insofar as it continues to arise you can play it exactly as you like. Knowing the consequences of the various kinds of action, you can exercise preferences and it will make no difference whatsoever. You will still know nothing about it. You will know nothing more about the absolute ultimate Divine Vision than you know about this glass of water. You are and you always will be completely Ignorant of what it is. It may mean a lot, but you do not know what these meanings are. You do not know what they are. You see? You are completely Ignorant. This is absolutely true, and that is the Truth. (Laughter.)

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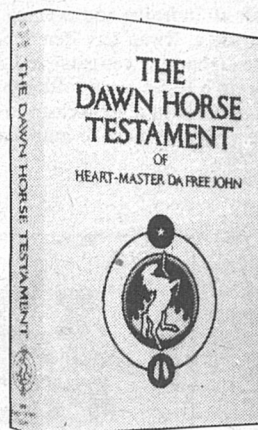
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There really is not anything else to realize, once this Ignorance is fully Realized. When it is fully Realized this becomes a complete Mystery. Nothing can be known about the process of that Realization, but you can consider this Argument in its various forms, and one day it will suddenly be Obvious.

In any case, you still have not the slightest knowledge of what I am, what it is, what this is. You do not know what it is at all, do you? To be without knowledge is also to be without certainty. The absence of certainty in the most positive sense is the sign of Ignorance.

Knowledge is the illusion. What is knowledge? It is like a prize that no one ever receives. Even ordinary knowledge is just manufactured meanings, interpretations,

It is easy to enlighten people, impossible to make them change.

things arising. It is not based on experience at all. Your experience is complete Ignorance. You do not know what anything is. It makes no difference what happens, you still do not know anything about it. To notice this with the full force of your being is Enlightenment. It is only then that you step out of the stream of experiencing, of knowledge. Knowledge cannot be summarized. It can only be completely undone in the Realization of prior Ignorance. Thus, there is no "high knowledge" that is meaningful. There is nothing like that. You know nothing.

Enlightenment is so simple. It is only a matter of Realizing this Ignorance. Realizing Ignorance brings the entire complication of this manifestation to an end even while it continues. It does not become single, it becomes a paradox, a Condition of which there is no knowledge whatsoever. Do you know what I am talking about?

STUDENT: No, Master.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Good! I suspected as much. In saying all of this I have not known anything whatsoever. Therefore, how could you know anything more as a result of listening to me? You do not. You see? You are as Ignorant now as then. You have understood nothing. Even if you had understood something it would make no difference because you do not know what it is. Do you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Well, what about it? Is this consideration at all illuminating? Could anything possibly be illuminating? Have you ever heard anything illuminating?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: What do you think it would be like to hear something illuminating? You do not know.

Are you and the person next to you the same person? (Laughter.) Do you really know? Do you know? Do you know what you are directly enough to differentiate it from the person next to you?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: As a matter of fact you do not know anything about it. You do not know what you are. Do you? Exactly.

Could there possibly be any knowledge?

STUDENT: No.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Exactly. I am talking about Realizing this Ignorance, not just thinking about it. Sadhana is essentially the consideration of this Argument until there is enough free attention that it becomes completely Obvious. The Argument

appears in many forms. Ignorance is just one of the versions of it.

Since you have learned nothing this evening there will be nothing to remember tomorrow, except perhaps to consider this Argument in summary. I have always told you that there is no experience, no path. I always told you this. I am not saying anything different now, am I?

When you Realize that this Ignorance is the same as Consciousness, when you completely Realize this Ignorance, then everything begins to become Obvious in a remarkable way. Enlightenment is not a matter of quieting the mind. It has nothing to do with any of those conventional processes. It has nothing to do with any process at all. You may be thinking right now, but that has nothing to do with this Ignorance. In the midst of your thinking you still know nothing about what anything, including your thinking is.

Your fundamental position, then, is always one of not knowing what anything is, complete Ignorance. Even when you know about something, you are completely Ignorant of both the knowing and the thing itself. Knowledge has nothing whatever to do with you. You are not something that has knowledge or requires it. So what is wrong? What is there to be un-Happy about?

STUDENT: Nothing, Master.

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Absolutely. You see? A certain manliness comes with Enlightenment because obviously the body dies, all these changes inevitably occur. Enlightenment does not change any of that. Perhaps by pattering around with your experience, your circumstances, you can change it a little bit—that would be amusing, or perhaps it would not be. Decide for yourself. In any case, the changes you may effect have nothing whatever to do with this Realization. This Realization brings an end to everything altogether and, paradoxically, everything essentially remains.

Make no assumptions whatsoever about knowledge. Know that you exist as a complete Mystery. That is precisely what you are, in fact. It is not that the state you are in must be changed—it is Enlightenment. That is the secret. You see? It could not possibly be otherwise.

STUDENT: Yes, Master...or do I?

MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Do you at least know that you know nothing about it? This is true, is it not? That is why the Argument must be reconsidered constantly: because you are always becoming ignorant of it. In order to carry it around in yourself, then, you must confront it somehow. You confront it through the Community, through hearing it within the Community. In this way, always be reoriented to this Obviousness. Not merely the obviousness that you do not know anything about what anything is, but that whatever is is not anything about which anything can be known. There is no such knowledge, you see? Thus, you have no recourse to anything like super-knowledge.

The Self, Brahman, is this Ignorance, not "something," not the idea of knowledge that you have in mind, not concepts like "the Self on the right." What does Ignorance have to do with being on the right?

STUDENT: Master, I don't know (laughing).

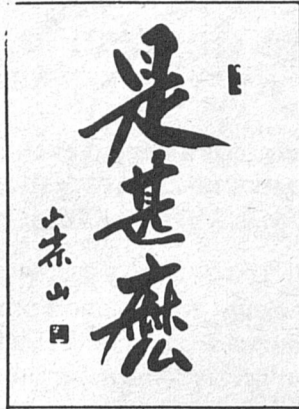
MASTER DA FREE JOHN: Nevertheless, it is true enough in the ordinary sense. There is only complete Ignorance, and yet you are here. Whatever the ultimate significance of "you" is, in philosophical terms, you are still completely Ignorant of it. Therefore, you can bypass all of the argument, all the consideration, all the philosophy, by Realizing that you are simply Ignorant of it. Asking "Who am I?" as Ramana Maharshi recommended to his devotees is not a matter of finding out who "I" am. It is a matter of Realizing that you are completely Ignorant of who "I" is. The "I" is not something about which there can be knowledge. The questions "Who am I? What is it?" cannot be known. Yet, that Ignorance is also Consciousness itself. This Ignorance, this Consciousness is your very Condition under all conditions. □

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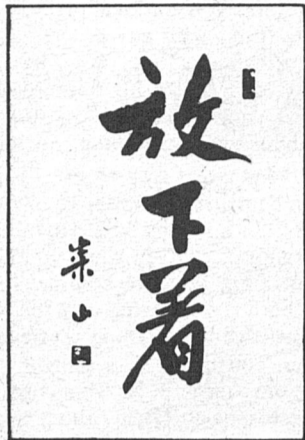
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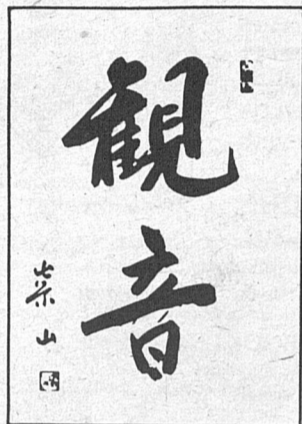
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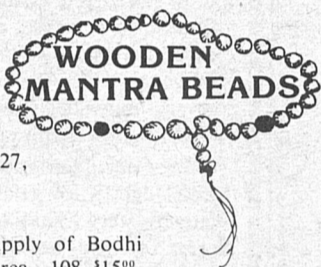
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE KWAN UM ZEN SCHOOL

The Teachers: Zen Master Seung Sahn is the first Korean Zen Master to live and teach in the West. He is the 78th Patriarch in the Korean Chogye Order, and became a Zen Master in his native Korea at the age of 22. After teaching in Korea and Japan for many years, he came to the United States in 1972 and founded the Providence Zen Center, now located in Cumberland, Rhode Island. He is addressed as "Soen Sa Nim" (Honored Zen Teacher) by his students.

Soen Sa Nim has established over 30 Zen centers and affiliated groups in the United States, Canada, Brazil, Europe and Korea. These centers comprise the Kwan Um Zen School. The Providence Zen Center is Head Temple in the United States. In 1984 a Kwan Um Zen School of Poland was formed which includes five Zen Centers and two affiliated groups, of which the Head Temple is Warsaw Zen Center.

Soen Sa Nim travels worldwide leading retreats and teaching Buddhism. In recent years he has been doing more intensive international peace work, bringing people of many countries and religious traditions together to demonstrate world peace. In 1985 he was presented with the World Peace Award by the International Cultural Federation, under the auspices of the Korean government. Working to strengthen the connection between American Zen and Korean Buddhism, he has established the Seoul International Zen Center in Korea and the Diamond Hill Zen Monastery in the United States. At Diamond Hill, Zen students who wish to may become monks and live the traditional monastic life in the original practice style of Bodhidharma.

Soen Sa Nim has published **Dropping Ashes on the Buddha** and **Only Don't Know**, collections of his teaching letters and Zen stories, and a book of poetry, **Bone of Space**.

He has given "inga"—authority to lead retreats and teach kong-an practice—to six senior students. Called Master Dharma teachers, they regularly travel to Zen centers and affiliates in America and abroad, leading retreats and giving public talks. The Master Dharma Teachers are: **George Bowman**, Cambridge Zen Center; **Barbara Rhodes** and **Lincoln Rhodes**, Providence Zen Center; **Mu Deung Su Nim**, Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center; **Richard Shrobe** and **Jacob Perl**, Chogye International Zen Center of New York.

Training Programs: Each Zen center holds meditation practice every morning and evening, and a weekly Introduction to Zen talk. These events are free and open to the public. Some centers also offer personal interviews each month with the teachers in our school when available.

Introduction to Zen Workshops: Beginners and newcomers can experience Zen practice for a day, with instruction on meditation, question periods, informal discussions and lunch.

Short Intensive Retreats (Yong Maeng Jong Jin, or "Leap like a tiger while sitting"): Each month many of the Zen centers hold silent meditation retreats for 3 or 7 days under the direction of Zen Master Seung Sahn or one of the Master Dharma Teachers. The daily schedule includes 12 hours of sitting, bowing, chanting, working

and eating in traditional temple style. Personal interviews and Dharma talks are given by the Zen teacher. Advance reservation is necessary and requires a \$10 non-refundable deposit.

90-Day Intensive Retreat (Kyol Che or "Tight Dharma"): Conducted in total silence, long intensive meditation retreats are powerful tools for examining and clarifying our lives. The daily schedule includes 12 hours of sitting, bowing, chanting and formal silent meals. Personal interviews and Dharma talks are given frequently. Registration is for 90 days, 21-day periods or a one-week intensive. The School offers three long Kyol Che's (one each in Poland, Korea and the United States) and a short three-week summer Kyol Che at Providence Zen Center. See schedule on this page for details.

Chanting Retreats (Kido): Several times a year chanting retreats are held. A Kido is powerful training in keeping a one-pointed mind and using group energy to deepen awareness.

Membership: If you would like to become a member of the Kwan Um Zen School, you may either contact the Zen center or affiliate nearest you, or become a member-at-large by writing directly to the School. You do not have to be a member to participate in any of the training programs. However, rates for members are reduced and include a free subscription to the monthly NEWS-LETTER and the quarterly, PRIMARY POINT. The most up-to-date calendar information is in the NEWSLETTER. Non-members can subscribe for \$6.00 per year, and \$10.00 per year for PRIMARY POINT.

Retreat Calendar

November

- 1-3 Providence (GB)
- 8-10 New Haven (RS)
London* (SS)
- 12-13 Providence (special retreat led by Dhyani Ywahoo of Sunray Meditation Society)
- 15-17 Cambridge (GB)
Chogye (RS)
Empty Gate (JP)
Kansas (LR)
Paris (SS)
- 22-24 Lexington (LR)
Tahlmah Sah (JP)
- 26 Opening of 90 day Kyol Che at Jung Hye Sah, Korea *(SS)

December

- 6-8 Cambridge (RS)
- 7 New Haven (GB)
- 7-13 Providence (LR)
- 14 Buddha's Enlightenment Day, precepts, at Providence (SS)

January

- 5 Opening of 90 Kyol Che at Providence (LR)
- 10-12 Empty Gate (SS)
- 17-19 Tahl Mah Sah (JP)
- 24-26 Seattle (SS)
- 31- Dharma Teacher Retreat at Feb. 2 Empty Gate (SS)

Please call the appropriate Zen Center to confirm these dates and teachers, and make retreat reservations at least two weeks in advance. Retreat leaders are indicated by their initials: SS, Zen Master Seung Sahn; GB, George Bowman; LR, Lincoln Rhodes; JP, Jacob Perl; RS, Richard Shrobe.

* Contact Director, Kwan Um Zen School, for details

Winter Kyol Che (LR)

Providence Zen Center

- Jan. 5-26 First Period
- Jan. 26-Feb. 16 Second Period
- Feb. 16-23 Intensive Week
- Feb. 23-Mar. 16 Third Period
- Mar. 16-April 6 Last Period

Registration is for a minimum of three weeks, with the exception of the intensive week, which is open to all but new students.



Intensive Winter Sitting Retreat

led by Kwan Um Zen School
Abbot Lincoln Rhodes

This year's Intensive Meditation Retreat will be held in the new Diamond Hill Zen Monastery, located on the grounds of the Providence Zen Center, a residential center on 50 acres of woods and fields in rural Rhode Island. The new monastery is constructed in traditional Korean post-and-beam style with a curved tile roof and has a spacious, airy meditation hall overlooking a small pond.

Held in silence, Kyol Che is a rare opportunity to intimately look at what is happening in our lives; it is a time when all of our energies, under the guidance of a teacher, are devoted to deepening and clarifying the meaning of what it is to be human. Such training then is a powerful tool for enriching our everyday lives with greater clarity and direction.

90 DAYS (*1250).....	JAN. 5-APR. 6	
21-DAY PERIODS (*400)	JAN. 5-26 JAN 26-FEB. 16	FEB. 23-MAR. 16 MAR. 16-APRIL 6
INTENSIVE 7-DAY SITTING (*175).....	FEB. 16-23 (open to all but new students)	

For information please contact:
PROVIDENCE ZEN CENTER
528 Pound Round
Cumberland, R.I. 02864
(401) 769-6464

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FINDING YOUR SPOT

Continued from page 3

one thing that has stayed with me. It was winter, snowy and cold, and most of the time I was by myself. There were some people who stayed nearby and came and went, but there were long periods when I was by myself. Often I'd be lonely, and all kinds of thinking states would appear.

About two-thirds of the way through the retreat I started to go to a particular tree every afternoon around 4:30 after I finished sitting. It was on top of the small mountain in western Massachusetts where I was doing the retreat. Called the look-out tree, it was a big pine tree on the edge of a cliff. It had branches in just the right places, like a step-ladder. It was very tall and you could climb to the very top.

Near the top was a place where you could sit and hang on to the tree. I started doing this every day. I didn't know why. It just seemed as if I needed to do that. It was my spot. You could see for 40 or 50 miles. Sometimes it would be really cold out and the wind would be blowing the tree and I would be hanging onto it, swaying back and forth, just looking out.

Sometimes airplanes would go by, sometimes geese. Through the woods I could see a house a few miles away and sometimes smoke would be coming out of the

chimney. I couldn't see any cars, but I could hear horns beeping once in a while, or the buzz of a chain saw.

It was very comforting to me to go up to that tree and see that the world was going about its business the way I remembered it. Being lonely, sometimes I'd start thinking about what it was like down there in that house. Maybe they were having hot chocolate. One's mind does that sort of thing. That's probably why I went to the tree, for some companionship.

Once I even went there in the middle of a snowstorm, climbed up and sat for half an hour. I couldn't see much. But I faithfully went there every day, made that a part of my practice. And over a period of time something happened that I wasn't even particularly aware of, something about the mind becoming still. Something like this has to happen when we practice.

When we're part of the world, there's all this: drive down the street and you can go right into the movies, the shopping mall, the pizza place, the liquor store, the kids, the action. That's not good or bad, but with all that happening, it's very hard for human beings to perceive clearly and not get caught up in all the activity. We're trying to make sense of it, that's why we're here tonight. And there's an incredible necessity to have the mind become still enough so that it can tell what's moving "out there" from what's moving inside the mind. The only way we can do that is to still the mind. If we can do

that, then maybe we can perceive what's actually happening.

For most of us, the only way to do that (I'm actually just speaking for myself) is to frequently take away a lot of the junk. Here at the monastery we're just left with the trees and the birds and a very simple schedule, simple meals, simple everything. It's going to be so simple that we won't be able to blame anything on this situation. Whatever appears that is complicated is not from this situation. We still won't believe that, but it's true. We'll get a chance to see all this activity in our mind, the coming and going into the future and the past, rather than just being here right now.

So we need to make some places that are like the pine tree was for me. For the next 19 days, this monastery is going to be our pine tree. And if this building isn't enough, then go outside and find your spot out there. This is where we're going to be, and not being able to change that will help a lot. So much of the day we spend at the controls, trying to change things so they'll happen the way we'd like it, instead of just letting things happen.

Many things will happen to us during the next three weeks. We can try a lot of different responses and none of them will quite do it. We need to do something about the amount of time our minds spend thinking about the future and the past.

Some people will decide that practicing Zen means "nobody's home," or that Zen

is freedom, or non-attachment. But whatever you put in the blank after "Zen is..." is a mistake. We'll probably fill in that blank anyway, but perhaps we won't have to be so attached to our idea. Perhaps we won't have to grab onto something to understand and make something out of this retreat.

So I'm very happy that someone went to all the trouble to make this monastery, that these trees went to the trouble of growing out there for us, that all the bugs came here to live and do their thing. We dumb human beings have to be reminded to use this precious time, this precious situation, and not to waste it on fantasy and dreaming. I hope all of us can do that. Thank you. □

Lincoln Rhodes is Abbot of the Kwan Um Zen School and Providence Zen Center, where he lives with his wife and two daughters. He received his Ph.D. in biochemistry at M.I.T. in 1971, taught at universities and did medical research. After meeting Soen Sa Nim in 1973, he traveled extensively with him and helped many Zen groups start their own residential communities. When the Providence Zen Center moved to Cumberland 5 years ago, he designed and supervised the construction of several major buildings, including a passive solar heated meditation hall. He is supervising the design and construction of the new Diamond Hill Zen Monastery in Cumberland. He was ordained a Bodhisattva monk in 1982.

NEW ZEN GROUP IN PROVIDENCE

Three long-term residents of Providence Zen Center recently moved into the city of Providence and have started a branch Zen group. Ellen Sidor, editor of **PRIMARY POINT**, purchased a two-family house on the East Side so that her teenage daughter Inga could be closer to her school. They live in the second floor apartment and have a small Dharma room.

David and Shana Klinger, both very active Dharma Teachers for years in the development of Providence Zen Center, live

downstairs with their one year old daughter Mae. David, former PZC Do Gam (Vice Abbot), was made a Senior Dharma Teacher this July. Shana has held many positions at PZC, including housemaster and financial director. David is continuing his apprenticeship at the PZC Artisans Studios with the Korean woodcarver Mr. Kim, and Shana has been working as a therapist. With Ellen, they are sharing responsibility for holding practice upstairs, which is six mornings and three evenings a week. An un-

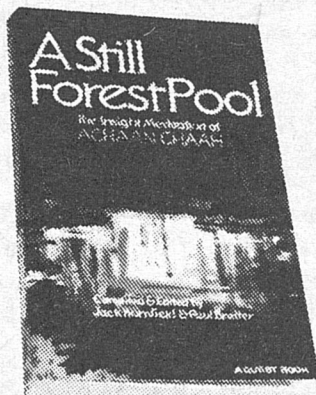
furnished third floor is being converted to add a larger meditation room, bathroom and bedroom. Once completed, this space will make several rooms available for new residents who want to join the practicing group.

The Klingers and Ellen have been discussing the project for several years and decided it was time to try having a branch group in the city which would be lower key and more convenient for city residents, as well as a way to attract new residents and retreat participants for the main temple in Cumberland. Since the Providence Zen Center moved out to rural Cumberland six years

ago it had lost a number of formerly active members who found the early hours and difficult transportation to be obstacles. Some of these old members have started re-appearing at the branch group and have expressed gratitude that an in-town place to practice has become available.

Since they have moved into the city, the group has maintained close ties with Providence Zen Center. Davy and Ellen are now outside directors of PZC, and Ellen is continuing as editor of the quarterly. An opening ceremony for the Zen group will be held when Soen Sa Nim returns to the East Coast in December.

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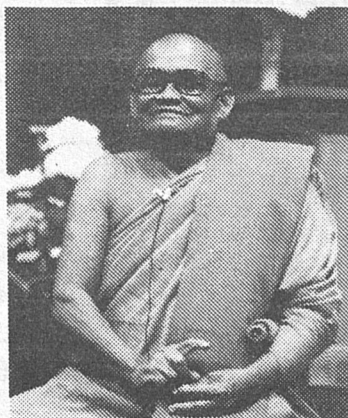
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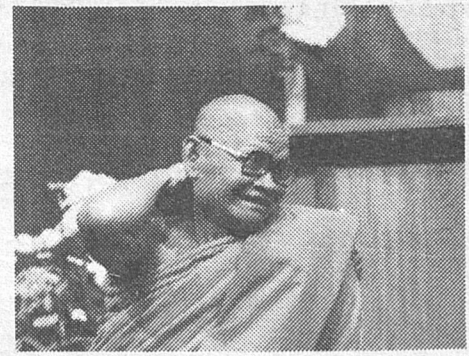
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