

PRIMARY POINT

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KUZS CONTINUES EXPERIMENTS IN "BLENDED ZEN"

Zen Centers in the Kwan Um Zen School are continuing to experiment with the blending of Korean Zen forms with various other traditions, some Buddhist and some Native American practices. Many other Zen centers in the country offer talks from different traditions, but it appears that offering of retreats in traditions not their own is fairly unusual. Guided by the outreaching example of Zen Master Seung Sahn and his belief that different spiritual traditions must learn to work together, the experiments are dependent to a large extent on the willingness of other teachers to put down some of their barriers of form. In the past several years, several Zen Centers within the KUZS have been offering retreats, workshops and conferences led by teachers outside the School.

In November the Providence Zen Center hosted a retreat for over 50 participants, led by Jakusho Kwong Roshi of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in California. The three day meditation retreat united practices from several traditions, including the Kwan Um Zen School's 108 prostrations and Korean chanting, Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh's walking gatha during a daily 45 minute walk, and Soto Zen style sitting, chanting and three-bowl style silent meals. A brief highlight of each afternoon meditation was a 20-minute period in which retreatants gave each other a back rub.

In addition to leading regular Soto retreats at his own center, Kwong Roshi recently led several retreats jointly with Zen Master Seung Sahn and Master Dharma Teacher Mu Deung Sunim and members of the Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley. In this his first East Coast retreat, the Roshi was assisted by his wife Laura, who took the role of Doan (time and bell-keeper), PRIMARY POINT Editor Ellen Sidor as Head Dharma Teacher, and KUZS Director Richard Streitfeld as Second Head Dharma teacher. These four met for an intensive half day before the

retreat to work out forms and to familiarize the PZC staff with the elements of Soto ritual that were to be used. Retreat participants were for the most part enthusiastic about the results.

In the past three years, Providence Zen Center has hosted retreats by Maurine Freedgood Roshi (who also led a retreat last fall at the Lexington KY Zen Center) of the Cambridge Buddhist Association and Thich Nhat Hanh, as well as numerous conferences, including a series hosting women Buddhist teachers. This summer it is holding a workshop co-led by Zen Master Seung Sahn and Stephen Levine, noted for his work with the dying. In September a second conference uniting Zen with Native American practices will feature Cherokee leader Dhyani Ywahoo, Seneca Elder Twylah Nitsch, and Kwan Um Zen School's Barbara Rhodes.

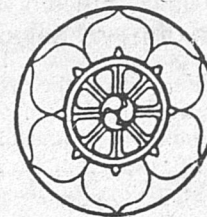
Cambridge Zen Center featured a retreat with Toni Packer of The Springwater Center, Springwater, NY, and speakers from many different traditions. Dharma Sah Zen Center of Los Angeles has been active for the past several years in All-Sangha Day activities, an annual West Coast spring event which includes Buddhists from many different ethnic backgrounds.

School News

Using the Zen Center practice schedule, simple vegetarian diet and her own skills as a counselor and healer, Ji Kwan Poep Sa Nim (Dr. Dnette Choi), resident teacher at CENTRE ZEN DE PARIS, has developed a new kind of workshop that is creating a lot of interest among European professionals in health, education and human services. In late February, 47 people attended a 3-day workshop entitled "Psycho-Energy and Zen" that was designed to heal physical and emotional problems and to promote personal and spiritual growth in a setting of daily life activities.

The workshop used the Zen Center environment and diet, work periods and Zen practice schedule, in addition to talks and healing sessions with Dr. Choi. Attending were psychiatrists, doctors, psychologists, hospital personnel, teachers, dentists, healers and psychics. Abbot Do Mun Sunim said, "It was surprising to see professional people sleeping together in the meditation room, sharing two toilets and eating simple and healthy temple food." Residents and Zen Center members took time off from work to support the kitchen and household staff.

Similar workshops have been held in Spain, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland and Austria, keeping Dr. Choi on the road. She is booked up for the rest of this year and next, and is receiving return invitations to many meditation and psychology centers in other countries.



BOOKS ARE IN THE AIR....The first book of the newly formed Primary Point Press was published in April. "A Gathering of Spirit" is a collection of talks of women Buddhist teachers who spoke at the Women and Buddhism conferences at PZC in 1983, 1984 and 1985. The editorial board for the press consists of Ellen Sidor (PRIMARY POINT editor), Mu Soeng Sunim (Director of Diamond Hill Zen Monastery), Richard Streitfeld, (Director of the Kwan Um Zen School), and Jacob Perl (School Abbot). The next book, due out in July, is entitled, "Ten Gates," and is an explanation of Soen Sa Nim's kong-an system. Stanley Lombardo and Dennis Duermeier of Kansas Zen Center put the book together, with help from Dhananjay Joshi of Chicago Meditation Center....Mu Soeng Sunim's first book is on the verge of publication. "Thousand Peaks: Korean Zen — Tradition and Teachers," will be published in several months by Parallax Press of Berkeley....Diana Clark's labor of love, a tribute book for Soen Sa Nim's 60th birthday (excerpted in this issue), will be published by the end of July.

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