

accumulating... preparing to “leave something for the children,” and in the short space of one week, packed in boxes—the work of a lifetime!

Through the tears and sadness, we did share some moments of light and laughter. We reminisced, told stories, reminded each other of things long forgotten, and were comforted in the thought that though death took away our beloved Father, we could find strength in the memory of his love, honesty and integrity.

Aided by hundreds of messages of support, flowers and offers of Ji Jang Bosal chanting from across the globe, Dad’s direction is clear and we, as a family, are humbled and sustained by the overwhelming support and outpouring of love throughout this period of mourning. Even now, more than two months after his death, we still receive messages of hope and condolences. One very recent one read: “I was so sorry to hear of your Dad’s tragic death, and am very sorry not to have written sooner, but I was just so shocked, I didn’t know what to say!” A supplier to Kensho Krafts—from the United States, whom we haven’t even met, planted a miniature orange tree in a children’s park—in memory of my parents. The list goes on and on. Thank you! Thank you!

Zen Master Seung Sahn, during his first visit to South Africa, in 1989 said: “Good situation, bad practice. Bad situation, good practice!” These words were a constant reminder to us in these days, weeks, months following our parents death. Our work continues. Our job ever bigger. The question *even* bigger: How do we as a family and sangha stop this cycle of violence? Dad’s very violent death was a wake-up call to all of us. We only have this moment, this moment, this moment!

Our first vow:

*Sentient beings are numberless;
we vow to save them all.*

*Delusions are endless;
we vow to cut through them all.*

*The teachings are infinite;
we vow to learn them all.*

*The Buddha way is inconceivable;
we vow to attain it.*

May we live this vow.

May we have the courage and depth of insight to grasp this moment and maximize the treasure of the dharma. May all beings be well. May all beings be at peace. May all beings be free from violence and the results of violence. May we all attain the great heart of compassion and free this world from further suffering.

a trip to vietnam

Mu Shim Sunim JDPS

In December 1999, Zen Master Seung Sahn, Zen Master Dae Bong, Hyang Um Sunim and myself traveled to Vietnam to visit Dae Won Sunim Ji Do Poep Sa and do some teaching and sightseeing there.

Vietnam has very long Buddhist tradition going back almost 1700 years. Buddhism first came from India through Cambodia and then to Vietnam. Vietnam is interesting because it has both the northern Mahayana tradition and the southern Theravadin tradition of Buddhism. Some monks wear a Mahayana style robe—gray or dark brown—and some monks wear a yellow robe, like the monks wear in Thailand. The two groups also observe the precepts differently. The Theravadin style monks will not eat after noon and they beg for food. Even though there is influence from the north and the south, still every Vietnamese temple we went to had a big statue of Kwan Yin, the Chinese name for Kwan Seum Bosal. The Vietnamese Kwan Seum Bosal is always holding a child.

There is a very interesting story as to why the Vietnamese Kwan Yin is always portrayed with a child. A long time ago there was a young woman from a very good family background who eventually got married. She was always eager to please her husband. One time he came home from work very late and because he was tired he soon fell asleep. Looking at her husband she noticed he had one long hair on his cheek. Maybe he didn’t shave this hair today so she thought, “Well, I have to cut this hair off of his cheek.” So she took a scissors and approached her sleeping husband. Just as she held the scissors near his neck, he suddenly woke up. He was so startled he thought she was trying to hurt him. He got very worried and called his parents. “My wife she has gone crazy, she is trying to kill me!” Since she was a very shy girl she didn’t say anything to defend herself. The husband got very angry and said, “You don’t really respect me.” Then he told her to leave the house.

When she left the house she had nobody to turn to. She always believed in Buddhism, so she cut her hair and disguised herself as a man. She went to a monk’s temple and was ordained. Meanwhile there was a very flamboyant young

dancer who frequently went to this temple to pay respects to Buddha. She soon met the new handsome young “monk” and immediately fell in love with “him.” She brought him many gifts. Even though she was very nice to him the new young “monk” showed her no affection. Finally she became very angry and left the temple.

Soon thereafter the dancer took up with a local farm boy and found herself pregnant. Since she wasn’t married she had a problem. She thought, “...ahhh, I know what to do, I’ll get back at that cold monk in the temple.” She went back to the temple and said to all the monks there: “Now, I’m pregnant with a child! The handsome monk got me pregnant.” Then the handsome “monk” had a big problem. They told “him” to live outside the temple gate. Soon the dancer brought the new baby and said, “You made this baby, so you can take care of it.”

The “monk” only said, “Yes, I understand. If that’s the case I’ll take care of it.” Under very difficult conditions she took care of the baby for three years. Finally, it was just too difficult for her so she wrote a letter to her parents telling them what happened. Soon after that she died and it is said she became Kwan Seum Bosal. So that’s a Vietnamese style Kwan Seum Bosal story.

Dae Won Sunim JDPS, who originally came from Vietnam, went a few days before we did to arrange our schedule in Vietnam. In Hong Kong, even though it’s now part of China, it is still possible for people to get together for a dharma talk and to practice. But in Vietnam that is not the case. In Saigon or Hoh Chi Min City, as it is now called, you need a permit from the government to do that. These permits are not easy to get. You have to make payments to many different people. So, as it turned out, we could not have a dharma talk in Saigon. We were told that, even if you didn’t talk about politics, if you had more than ten people you would have a problem with the police, and they are everywhere. In Vietnam, and also to some extent in China, when you go to a temple not all the monks there are really full-time monks, some are government monks. During the day they wear robes and do everything that the other monks do, they chant, they read sutras, but at night—after “work”—they go home to their families. *[loud laughter]* Their job is to report to the government about the temple. So one thing we made sure of when we went to a Vietnamese temple was never to talk about politics. We just went for the dharma, to teach people.

However, we were able to arrange a talk outside of Saigon. Everybody wanted Zen Master Seung Sahn to come to give the dharma talk at a large temple near the ocean. But he could not go, because of his health, so he stayed in the city. So, Zen Master Dae Bong and Hyang Um Sunim JDPS and myself went. To our surprise about five hundred monks and nuns came to the talk. They all were very hungry for our teaching. At first we had reservations because we



were all, except for Hyang Um Sunim JDPS, not Asian people. We're western white people and we are going to give a dharma talk to all these Asian monastics? But they showed us wonderful hospitality. They gave us a special VIP escort into the temple and did all the chants formally requesting the dharma. Zen Master Dae Bong went up on the high seat and gave a formal dharma speech. Many of the nuns had very sincere questions. One of the nuns, who was abbot of the temple, asked Zen Master Dae Bong, "What is the Patriarch?" He said, "Come closer."

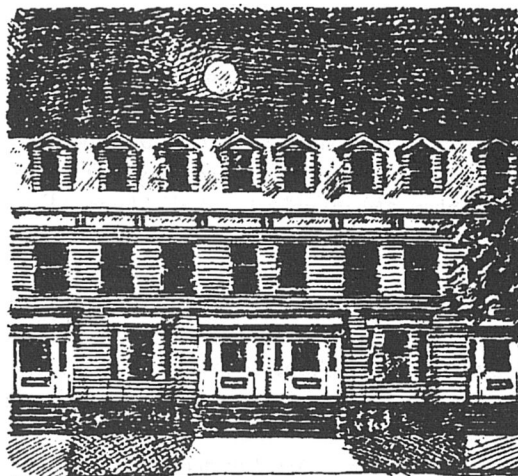
Then he lifted his Zen stick and said, "I hit you, tsssk!"

She was a little confused.

Then he said, "I hit you, then what, what do you say?"

Then she said, "Sokamunibul" and made a big bow to him. Then he said, "Bowing, that's good, but that's not the correct answer. Somebody hits you, then what do you say?" I was sitting next to him so he said, "I hit Mu Shim Sunim JDPS... what does he say?" Then he hit me hard, BAM, "ouch!" Then everybody was very surprised and happy. After the dharma talk was finished, one of the older monks got up—he was one of the sutra teachers there—and said that they were very pleased to have us; it felt like a visit from the old monks of China.

A prominent Vietnamese monk, the abbot of three or four temples there, likes our school very much and wants to become Zen Master Seung Sahn's disciple. He has told Dae Won Sunim JDPS that he will give him a parcel of land of about three acres where he can build a Zen Center. So, it looks like soon the Kwan Um School of Zen will have a center in Vietnam.



The Cambridge Zen Center is a residential meditation center under the direction of Zen Master Seung Sahn. Students from various countries and backgrounds participate in this innovative combination of monastic training and an urban setting. In addition to morning and evening Zen practice, the majority of residents work or are students in the Boston area. Cambridge Zen Center offers a variety of programs, including weekly talks, interviews with Zen teachers, monthly retreats, and meditation classes. Cambridge Zen Center welcomes visitors and new house members.

For more information contact:

Cambridge Zen Center

199 Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

(617) 576-3229 • cambzen@aol.com

www.cambridgezen.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The Kwan Um School of Zen, 99 Pound Road, Cumberland, RI 02864-2726 U.S.A. • FAX (401) 658-1188 • kwanumzen@aol.com

___ For a six-issue subscription, I enclose:

\$24 in U.S. \$30 in Canada \$36 international

Payment in U.S. dollars by:

VISA/MC/AMEX/Discover credit card; personal checks drawn on a U.S. bank; postal money orders; or bank checks payable on any U.S. bank or banker's agency.

credit card _____ exp. _____

Signature _____

___ Please make the following change of address:

(Please enclose the mailing label from this issue)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ___ Zip _____

Country _____

e-mail _____

Subscriptions to PRIMARY POINT and the school newsletter are included in membership of affiliated North American Zen centers (page 30). Notify us of your address change to ensure you receive every issue.