



MEMORIAL FOR DAE WON SUNIM JDPS (1950–2011)

Early Life

Dae Won Sunim JDPS, born Ban Le in 1950, was from the small village of An Ngai, in Binh Dinh Province, Vietnam. His parents, Tra Le and Tam Thi Tran, raised him along with his four younger siblings in the tradition of Buddhism.

Dharma Path

Dae Won Sunim entered a Buddhist temple at the age of nine, learning under the venerable Thich Tam Tinh. He was fully ordained

a monk at the age of 20 in 1970 in Da-Nang Province. He studied at Nguyen Thieu Monastery and at Tô Đình Long Khánh (Long Khanh Temple) in Binh Dinh Province. After receiving his bachelor's degree, he attended Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon until he left Vietnam in 1975.

Dae Won Sunim was sponsored by the venerable Thich Thien An, the founder of the International Buddhist Meditation Center in Los Angeles, which was the first Vietnamese Buddhist Temple in the United States. Dae Won Sunim came to Los Angeles and lived there for two years. From there, he traveled to many temples in the United States in his path of learning, practicing and teaching. One notable stop was the City of 10,000 Buddhas in Ukiah, California. In this place he made the vow to sleep upright, which he continued to do until his death. Dae Won Sunim never stayed in any temple for too long, traveling where he could in order to help others. He also practiced in remote, forested and mountainous locations and has traveled to Myanmar in his path of learning.

In 1990, he became a student at the Kwan Um School of Zen, under Zen Master Seung Sahn. Dae Won Sunim received inka in March 1999.

Death

In 2004, Dae Won Sunim founded the Dai Bi Quan Am Temple in the San Bernardino Valley in California. Dae Won Sunim chose this remote area, surrounded by mountains and deserts, as the seat from which he practiced and taught until his passing on July 7, 2011.

Literary Legacy

Dae Won Sunim translated many works into Vietnamese and was also involved in the translation of Stephen Mitchell's compilation of *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn*. Dae Won Sunim also leaves behind the original work *Liêu Quán Thien Tông Pháp Môn Tu Chung*, a discourse on Zen Master Lieu Quán's path to enlightenment. ☸



During Zen Master Seung Sahn's funeral, Dae Won Sunim stood near the coffin, out in the rain all by himself. Most of that time he was crying. He told me that Zen Master Seung Sahn saved his life, saying "he treated me with more compassion than I have ever experienced. He believed in me." —*Zen Master Soeng Hyang*



At Dae Won Sunim's funeral, we asked a monk friend of his how Dae Won Sunim had actually come to die. His answer: "Leaves turn yellow and then fall down." —*Mu Sang Sunim*

[1]



During one of Dae Won Sunim's talks at Kyol Che at Mu Sang Sa in 2007, he said that one day as a young person in Vietnam, he toiled in a muddy field. He looked up at the blue sky and prayed to have enough to eat and to become a monk. —*Lesley Eisele*



When I stayed with Dae Won Sunim in a hotel room during Zen Master Seung Sahn's memorial tour, he would wake me up 5 in the morning to do 108 bows on the floor! After bowing, he looked out the window and said, "Suffering does not take a rest, so we do not rest from practicing." —*Jason Quinn*