

## DOGS MEETING AT A CROSSROADS

*Mukyong JDPSN (Roland Wöhrle-Chon)*



My wife, Namhee, and I met Zen Master Seung Sahn for the first time in spring 1991. We were both 30 years old, and after many efforts to meet teachers and gurus in India and elsewhere, the time was finally ripe to meet our great teacher. So far we had

learned yoga and meditation in Asia, and we started our Zen practice in the Japanese Soto school. In 1989 we joined our first Kyol Che in the Kwan Um School of Zen in Falenica, which is part of Warsaw, Poland. It had a strong impact on us, and thus we continued to visit parts of each Kyol Che in Poland for the following years. The retreats were led by Andrzej Czarnecki and sometimes by Zen Master Wu Bong, with whom we developed a close student-teacher relationship.

In early 1990 we opened our home in Berlin for regular Zen practice on Tuesdays and Sundays. Slowly people joined us and eventually our flat became the first location of the Berlin Zen Center.

Then in spring 1991 we received this remarkable phone call from Zen Master Wu Bong announcing that Zen Master Seung Sahn and his entourage could come to Berlin, if we wish, because the scheduled retreat in Paris had been cancelled. They would arrive in two weeks or so, which left us almost no time for preparations and organization. However, the hotels were all full due to a number of conventions going on in Berlin right then, so we couldn't get any hotel rooms for our important guests on such short notice. That's why they all had to be accommodated in our student apartment, which was also the Berlin Zen Center. We had a well-off Zen student who offered his home for the guests, but Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "We stay at the Zen Center, no problem!" So our great Zen Master Seung Sahn stayed in our bedroom and slept in our bed. Zen Master Wu Bong, the monks, and everyone else stayed in the dharma room. It didn't seem like Zen Master Seung Sahn had any problem with the situation, even though we students had little space or comfort, and not even proper showers. Still everything went smoothly. Every two days we went to the public bath together. During this time I heard Zen Master Seung Sahn often say, "You like, I like." So he just followed the situation. That was a great teaching!

But the climax for me was this unforgettable private

conversation I had with him at the Berlin Zen Center. I told him that Namhee and I planned to get married later that year, and I asked for his teaching. Then he took off his glasses and looked at me with his dark, sharp eyes and said, "One time a dog started from point A to have a walk on a road. At the same time another dog started his walk from point B on a different road. There was a junction where both roads met. There the two dogs had a good time together for a while." You must understand that I am quite a romantic person, and that this kind of teaching did not impress me at first. I thought, why would he say this to a couple who loves each other and is about to get married soon? But I had to admit that he is right, and that it is just that simple! This message of being simple and not holding anything has been Zen Master Seung Sahn's most important teaching to me until today.

A few weeks later we met Zen Master Seung Sahn again in Warsaw, where we joined the Yong Maeng Jong Jin and became dharma teachers. During our stay I once approached him in his room and told him with great sincerity: "Zen Master Seung Sahn, I want to follow you!" This determination was of great meaning and significance to me. So far I was proud to be independent and my own master. Now after I made this decision I expected something special. But Zen Master Seung Sahn only said, "Please rub this ink stone." He was about to make calligraphies and needed ink. So I sat there alone with him in his room rubbing ink. He said almost nothing. No verbal conversation. Only calligraphy and ink rubbing. From time to time I asked him: "Is it enough?" And he would say: "No! More!"

These were my important first encounters with Zen Master Seung Sahn. On both occasions I made heavy and important decisions for my life, and on both occasions I received Zen Master Seung Sahn's simple, profound and clear teachings. Unforgettable!

## MATCHBOX PRACTICE

*Andrzej Piotrowski JDPSN*



There is an old saying: "When the student is ready the teacher appears." But in my case it was a teaching that appeared first, and I had to wait some time to experience the true source of it. What made me ready was long years of traveling without any clear direction, getting through risky psychedelic and chemical experiments, which resulted in confusion and per-