

Anchorage Zen Community

"The expanse of sky does not obstruct white clouds floating"

May 1996

Schedule of Events

Teacher in Residence

Special Activities May 5 - 23

Dokai Georgesen from the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center will lead morning and evening services, conduct evening lectures, and host a 5-evening series on Zen & Ordinary Life

* * * See inside for details * * *

Sesshin

Led by Dokai in Anchorage
May 16, 17, 18 & 19
Please contact Karen at 344-9840

Sunday Morning Zazen

Every Sunday, 8:25-10:15 a.m.
4141 B Street, Suite 208
(Note: Location changes during Dokai's visit. See inside for details.)

Board Meeting

Open to all members
Sunday, April 28
following Zazen (approx. 10:00 a.m.)
at 4141 B Street, Anchorage

Monthly Sangha Potluck

Third Saturday of the Month
6:00 p.m. - approx. 9:30 p.m.
at the home of Terry & Olcay
Call: 345-3577

Day of Mindfulness

resumes next fall

Opportunity

by Judith Haggar

On May 5, 1996, Dokai Georgesen will be joining the Anchorage Zen Community for three weeks of practice. Dokai will lead morning and evening meditation, give dharma talks, lead a three day sesshin (intensive practice of zazen), and present a class; "Zen and Ordinary Life."

Dokai was ordained by and received transmission from Dainin Katagiri Roshi, a line of transmission that comes through eighty-one teachers directly from the Buddha. Dokai has studied and practiced with Katagiri and at monasteries in Japan.

For three weeks you will have the chance to experience the practice of zazen which, in Japanese, translates as "to sit in tranquility." And Dokai, who has been practicing for twenty years, will offer his guidance and support. To practice zazen is to focus all of our consciousness on waking up. And then to bring that experience to our daily life. This spiritual technology can compliment any other religious practice or can be a way to start one.

Zazen is more than just a way to escape the noisy world and calm down. In practicing zazen we can transform our life from that of suffering to liberation from that suffering.

Thoughts arising from a Potluck

by John Daley

On Sunday, March 24, 1996 a Potluck Brunch was held at Elizabeth McNeill's home in Anchorage. About 35 people from various groups through out the Anchorage area attended. The "purpose" of the brunch was to meet with other Buddhists, Eastern Spiritualists, Meditators, etc. By most accounts it was very successful. If nothing else, there was an impressive assortment of vegetarian cuisine (Also known as a healthy free meal).

People with wide-ranging and diverse backgrounds attended. There were people who do not practice at all and some who do highly ritualized meditations. There were self-described eclectics and people who do no-frills meditation. There were Christians and Taoists and Buddhists and Quakers.

It was interesting to note the number of people from splintered or very small groups in attendance. It seems that there are as number of fairly serious spiritual practitioners in Anchorage that do not belong to an organized group. Many people are continuing a practice begun in the lower 48 or abroad. Others have found it difficult to maintain a cohesive group without a strong central teacher or master. Others still are somewhat private and shun organized religion in general.

There are a number of ways these types of gatherings can be beneficial. The simplest is to fulfill a general social need and to provide a means of finding out what's going on in the community. There is also the possibility of forming alliances, sharing mailing lists, exchanging information, sharing meeting spaces, etc. During the potluck there were discussions about:

- doing this again on a regular basis;
- having different groups host a meditation;
- investigating the possibility of forming a Buddhist center;
- building a retreat center.

In the midst of all these wonderful possibilities, it's important to remember and respect the "do nothing" option. As many of the spiritual traditions point to truly appreciating what "is" or the "simple things," by some accounts, it's quite enough to have enjoyed a nice brunch together.

Many Thanks to Stefan Otterson, Elizabeth McNeill, and all the others who contributed their time and energy to making this first Inter-Sangha Potluck a success.



Talkeetna Mountains Sesshin

by Elizabeth McNeill

Have you ever thought of flying in to a beautiful mountain valley at 4500 feet, setting up a base camp near a waterfall and, participating in a three day sesshin? Plans are forming to spend the 4th of July holiday sitting zazen in the wondrous scenery of the Alaskan wilderness.

Each morning we would sit for two or three periods of zazen and kinhin (walking meditation). After breakfast, one in the group could give a dharma talk, or share a reading, and lead a discussion.

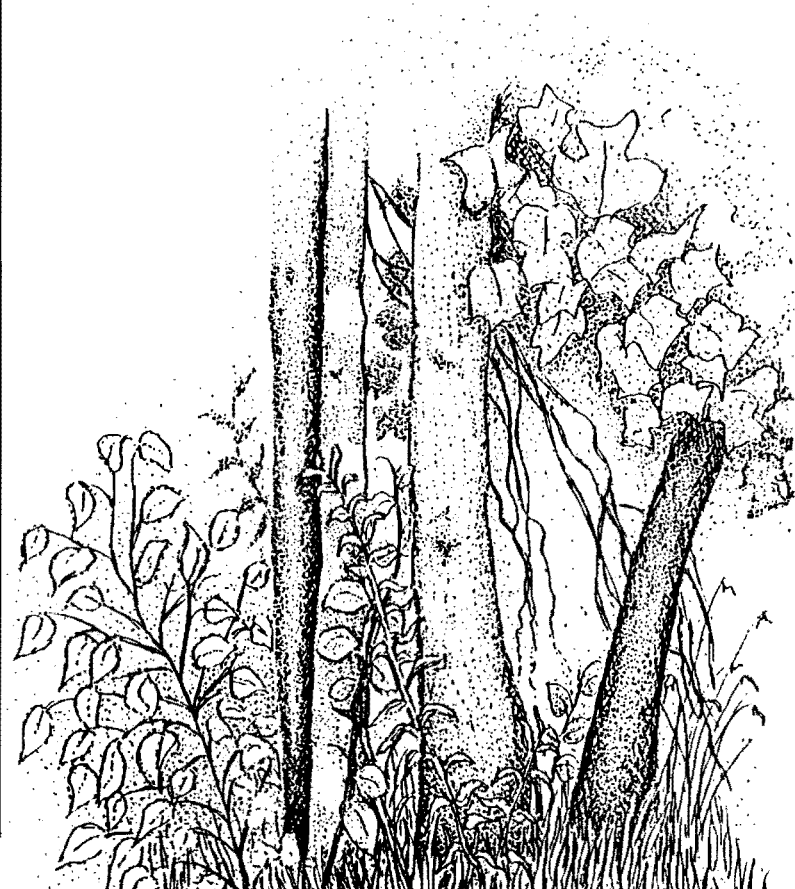
There would be time for a day hike, as this valley is filled with many possibilities, such as discovering goedes in the creek by our campsites, hiking to a 6000 foot pass from where you can see the glaciers in the Chugach Range, or perhaps watching Dall sheep sunning themselves on rocky ledges. After supper, we would sit for two more periods of zazen and kinhin.

While morning and evening zazen are in silence, the day hikes would not be. However, we would want to maintain a mindful, meditative attitude during our outings so as to continue the sesshin throughout the day, but in a different form.

Since there are no official runways in this area, we would be flown in one at a time in a Super Cub. The cost for the round trip flight will be between \$225 - \$250 per person. Everyone would bring their own camping equipment and food. At this elevation and time of year, be prepared for any type of weather -- from sunny to snarly.

For some, one way to go beyond our "small" minds is to surround ourselves with something that is so much greater than ourselves -- wilderness. This is an opportunity to bring the concentration and silence of our meditative practice into the silence of the wilderness. Or is it that we would bring the silence of the wilderness into our practice?

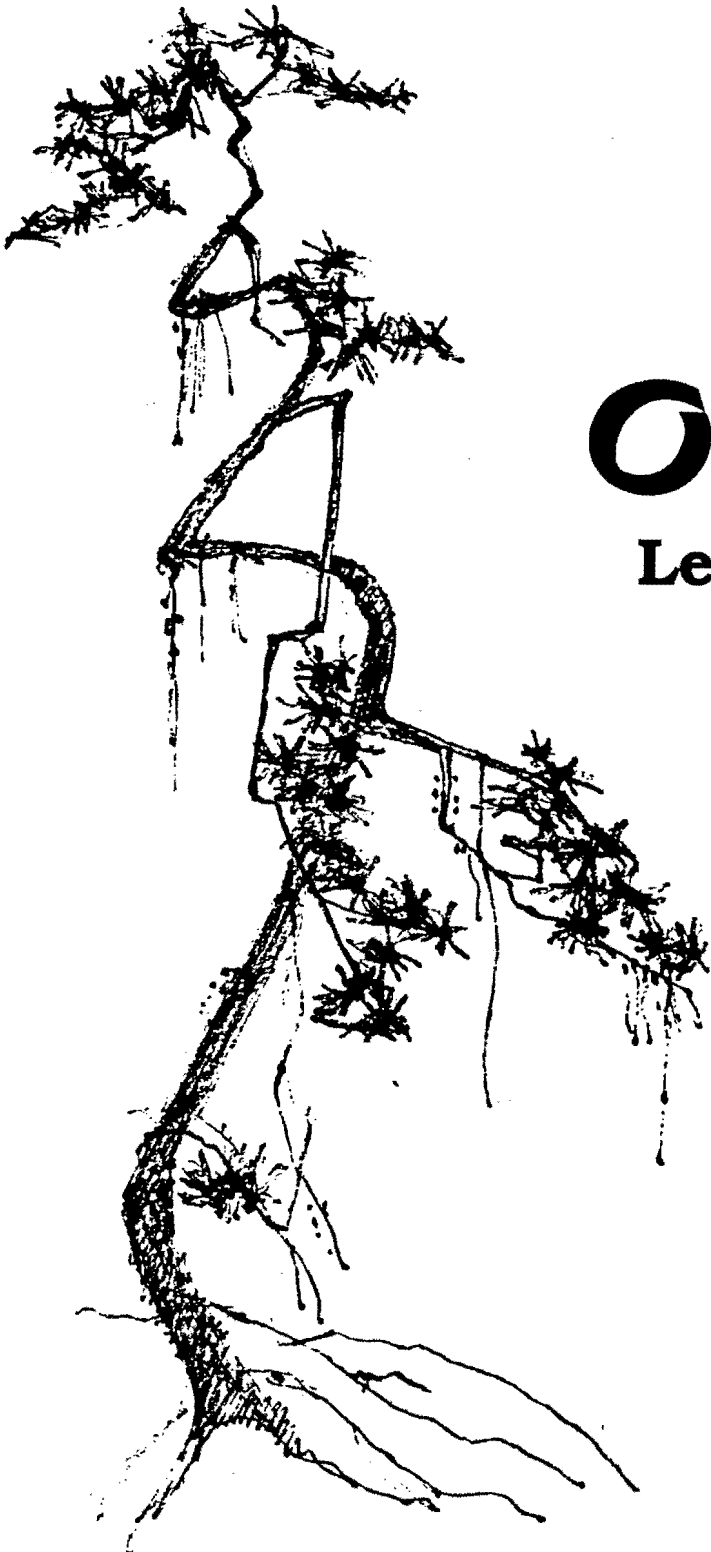
For further information, please call Elizabeth -- 248-2350.



May

Note: Sunday Morning Zazen on May 5th will be held at 4141 B Street, Anchorage. All the other activities will be held at the Boniface location. See p. 8 for directions.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
APRIL 1996 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	JUNE 1996 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30		1	2	3	4
5 8:30 AM Zazen Service Introduction with Discussion with Be Kind to Animals Week Begins Dokai	6 6 AM-7:20 AM Zazen	7 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 AM 7-9 Class	8 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 7 pm Zazen + Lecture	9 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 AM 7-9 Class Last Quarter Moon	10 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 Zazen 5:30 pm-7 pm	11
12 8:30 AM Zazen Service Lecture Mother's Day	13 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 Zazen 5:30 pm-7 pm	14 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 AM 7-9 Class	15 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 pm 7 pm Zazen + Lecture	16 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 AM Sesshin 7 pm-9 pm	17 Sesshin 8 AM- 8 PM New Moon	18 Sesshin 8 AM- 8 PM Armed Forces Day
19 Sesshin 8 AM- 5 PM	20 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 AM Zazen 5:30 pm-7 pm Victoria Day (Canada)	21 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 7-9 Class	22 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 7 pm Zazen + Lecture	23 Zazen 6 AM-7:20 7-9 Class Closing Tea	24	25 First Quarter Moon
26	27 Memorial Day (Observed)	28	29	30	31	



Zen

and

Ordinary Life

Led by Dokai Georgesen

Tuesdays and Thursdays
May 7, 9, 14, 21, 23
7:00--9:00 PM

This series of talks will give participants an opportunity to examine some basic Zen teachings and to discuss how they are applicable to our daily lives. Periods of meditation will be part of class. Students of all levels of experience are invited to attend. Tuition is \$60. Scholarships available.

For further information : Call 248-1049
Please register early. Send a \$10 deposit to:
ANCHORAGE ZEN COMMUNITY
2401 Susitna
Anchorage, Alaska
99517

Confessions of a first time Sesshin Sitter

by Judy Saha

Arriving at 10 p.m. Thursday evening, just after lights out, was definitely not a cool thing to do. But fumbling around in the dark I was able to deftly unroll my sleeping bag -- and sleep was a welcome relief to my guilt.

4:00 a.m. came early. I was eager to experience the remote peacefulness of the Meier Lake setting, the kindly silence of the other sitters and the vast stretch of time to "not think." I had experienced the delight of the Sunday morning sittings and, once before, I'd enjoyed an ashram experience (silence, early meditations, yoga, etc.) It had been a turning point for me and so I wanted *more -- and better*.

Vast stretches of time elongated as the morning wore on. At 9:00 a.m. after breakfast we had an in-depth discussion with members of the group, concerning Pain and Sleepiness (thank goodness I was warned ahead).

It wasn't long before the pain set in. Nerves I never knew I had began jangling -- demanding attention; like babies crying in the maternity ward nursery. Eventually -- that's how I handled them; going to visit each and every one -- adjusting posture minutely until only the knife firmly implanted under the scapula remained ahhh almost *comfortable!*

Mealtimes were a marvelous experience, with bowing and ritual. The rare opportunity to concentrate fully on each exquisite bite in silence, set my taste buds off like rockets; each bite more delicious than the last. Breads became only more tasty as I chewed; fruits were explosions of delight. It seemed as though all the best the world had to offer was in my bowl.

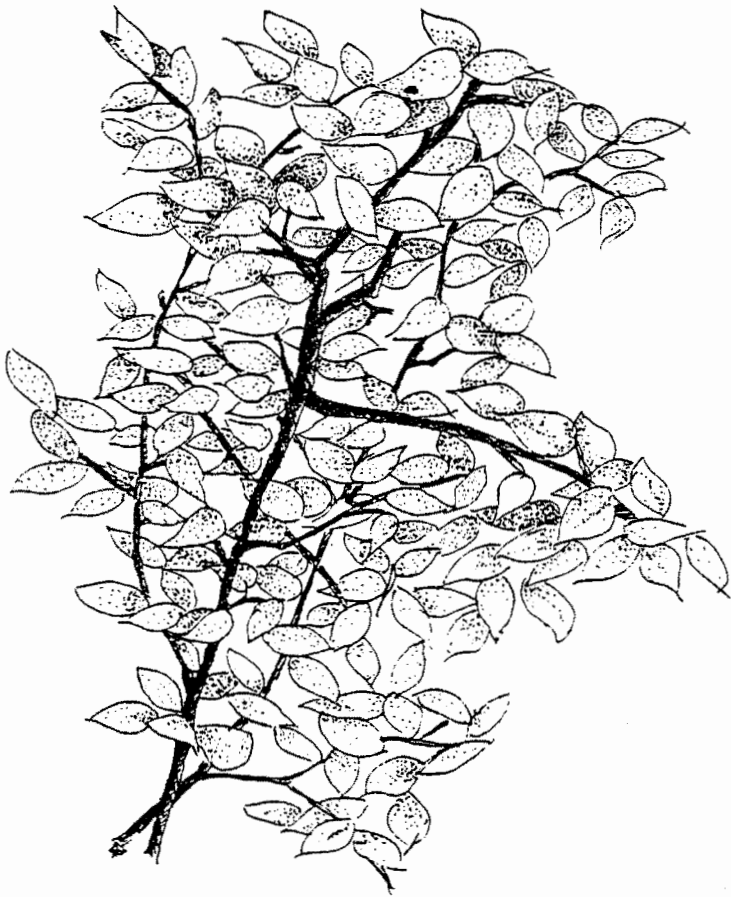
The days began to have a rhythm to them -- sit 'til the legs fall asleep -- then kinhin (slow walking) . . . then sit . . . eat . . . sit . . . kinhin . . . sit . . . eat . . . sit . . . kinhin . . . sit . . . eat . . . sit, etc. Time took on a "necklace effect" - each bead of experience shinier and more beautiful than the last. One morning before dawn, I glanced out the window to see snowflakes gently drifting down in the lamp light. The beauty of that moment filled me with adoration -- of my life, of nature, of the people and the situation around me.

Another aspect of sitting that was so amazing was a heightened awareness of the group. I felt what it must feel like to live in a goldfish bowl. I felt empathy with the rumbling stomachs around me. Someone sneezed -- I jumped; a yawn -- I felt sleepy; a cough was as though it were my own. I felt delicately tied to the human web around me. *The collapse of the dichotomy between universality and individuality* -- is the best I can do to describe what was a settling, albeit humbling experience.

Continued on Page 7

I had time and space to look at my life as though looking at clouds passing overhead. Once examined and dismissed, I have been feeling buoyant ever since -- energized, even joyful, one-pointed, less anxious about what the future will bring. Others described their lives as being in a quite happy, contented time of their life. Is this what is meant by en - lighten - ment?

Or . . . maybe that isn't it at all . . .



"By detachment I mean that you must not worry whether the desired result follows from your action or not, so long as your motive is pure, your means correct. Really, it means that things will come right in the end if you take care of the means and leave the rest to Him."

-- Mahatma Gandhi



The Big Sit

by Karen Laing

The warmth and energy generated by the recent potluck among various spiritual practice groups has led to an idea we have been calling "The Big Sit." The origin of this term comes to us from the Portland, Oregon Buddhist groups which share a single space for practice. Once a year they get together for a common meditation period.

Our current idea is to have a practice period on a Sunday followed by a potluck. The practice period would be planned ahead of time by representatives of whatever groups wanted to participate. Each group would have a part of the time allotted to their practice. Everyone would participate in each practice. The planners would also work together to make sure that no one would be asked to do anything that was objectionable to their practice.

The purpose of the Big Sit would not be to mush the various practices into one; but rather to mark our acknowledgment and respect for each others practices.





Directions to rented facility:

For almost all of Dokai's visit, AZC will be using a rented facility in a small strip mall on Boniface (at the intersection of Northern Lights Blvd.) The only exception is the first day, Sunday May 5, where the sangha will meet in the regular location (4141 B Street).

Due to the limited parking available at the site, everyone is being asked to park in the Safeway parking lot just across the street. The facility should be easy to find; it is located between Uncle Joe's Pizza and an Allstate Office.

Many thanks to Karen Laing and Judith Hagggar for their efforts in finding this facility.

Anchorage Zen Community
2401 Susitna
Anchorage, Alaska 99517

Mailing Label

Anchorage Zen Community borrows a quotation from Kosho Uchiyama to describe its "Statement of Purpose" -- "(to) cooperate with one another and aim to create a place where sincere practitioners can practice without trouble."

To add your name to (or delete it from) the mailing list:
contact Linda at 345-8515

To submit material:
contact Linda at 345-8515
I can take material at any time, in almost any format. It is my hope the newsletter will serve as a place for meaningful dialogue, art, opinions, stories and so forth.

Anchorage Zen Community
Board of Directors:
President -- Judith Hagggar
Secretary -- Elizabeth McNeill
Treasurer -- Karen Laing
Additional Directors: Keith Wiger
Stefan Otterson

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Artwork for this issue  
courtesy of Liz Byrne

