

Anchorage Zen Community

May 2000

Tozen Akiyama to Visit

by Keith Wiger

Tozen Akiyama Sensei will be presenting a series of lectures in Anchorage during the week of June 2-9, 2000. Reverend Akiyama, abbot of the Milwaukee Zen Center, is coming to Anchorage to explore the possibility of residing here for a period to time in the near future. To that end, the Anchorage Zen Community has structured a number of events



during his stay to meet with him and mutually explore this possibility.

Tozen Akiyama is native to Japan, born in Takasaki City, Japan in 1936. He is a graduate of the University of Tokyo in economics. He first became interested in zen while traveling in the United States and Europe teaching yoga and Akido from 1965 to 1967.

Reverend Akiyama began his formal zen

training in Japan in 1970. he has been an ordained priest of the Soto Zen School since 1974. He returned to the United States in 1979 as a priest with the Zenshuji Soto Mission in Los Angeles, and relocated to Milwaukee in 1985 to serve as resident priest with the Milwaukee Zen Meditation Center.

Tozen recently retired from teaching Japanese in a university setting in Milwaukee, and has been turning over his duties as abbot of the Milwaukee Zen Center to one of his ordained priests. Tozen is uncertain how well he would tolerate the cold, dark, long winters of Alaska, but is interested in exploring such an encounter with members of our community during his visit.

The possibility of having a zen priest-in-residence in Anchorage is an exciting one. We look forward to meeting with Tozen and exploring the details of how such an arrangement might work. All are welcome to all to meet Rev. Akiyama during his stay. Several events are planned and are open to all. They include the following:

- Friday, June 2nd - Potluck dinner at Olcay & Terri's home - 7:00PM
- Saturday, June 3rd - Change Your Mind Day on the Park Strip
- Sunday, June 4th - regular Sunday sitting and dharma talk: 8:30AM
- Monday - Thursday, June 5-8th - morning zazen: 6-6:40AM, 6:50-7:30AM morning service: 7:30AM
- Monday - Thursday, June 5-8th - evening zazen: 7-7:40PM dharma talk/discussion: 7:50PM



Stone sculpture, Thailand. Courtesy of Art Today

Change Your Mind Day

This is the second year Anchorage is involved in the national buddhist event known as Change Your Mind Day, sponsored by Tricycle magazine. We join New York, San Francisco, Austin, TX., Kansas City, KN., and Montoursville, PA.

Different Alaskan buddhist groups will meet at the Rose Garden on the Delaney Park Strip, Saturday, June 3rd from 12:30 to 5:30 PM to listen to dharma talks, music, poetry, etc. and to meet with others sharing similar meditation practices. Last year the Anchorage Zen Community was represented and will be again this year.

Each city will begin and end their gathering with 108 soundings of the gong. You can imagine the ripple effect of sound from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The different groups presenting will be:

- ***The White Lotus Center for Shin Buddhism
Rev. Yuho & Diane VanParijs
- ***The Alaska Tibet Committee
Denise Lassaw, Speaker/Poet
- ***The Anchorage Zen Community
Rev. Tozen Akiyama/ Milwaukee Zen Center
Judith Haggar, Poet
- ***Tromge Ling (Anchorage Sangha)
Lama Chodak Gyatso, representing
Chagdud Gonpa
- ***Kung Fu San Soo - Meditation in motion
Bruce Bibee
- ***International Assn. for Spiritual
Consciousness
Rev. Debra Lachinski
- ***Soka Gakkai Youth Group

[To practice giving] is to give away unneeded belongings to someone you don't know, to offer flowers blooming on a distant mountain to the Tathagata, or, again, to offer treasures you had in your former life to sentient beings... Even when you give a particle of dust, you should rejoice in your own act, because you correctly transmit the merit of all buddhas, and for the first time practice an act of a bodhisattva.

Zen Master Dogen

Home Based Practice and the Dharma Ecosystem

by Doshō Port, Clouds in Water Zen Center, St. Paul, MN.

(excerpts reprinted with the author's permission)

The Japanese Zen word for a practice community is "sorin". Literally, it means "harmonious thicket". We're working together to establish a harmonious thicket - a thriving dharma ecosystem with a rich diversity of inhabitants. It's vital that we support diversity by encouraging five types of practitioners; young people, elderly people, people doing monastic practice, center-based practitioners, and home-based practitioners.

In the home-based practice the intention for practice really needs to be alive in you. The motivation needs to arise from each practitioner's heart and guts. Someone else doesn't ring the bell to get a home-based practitioner out of bed.

To maintain and deepen a home-based practice, a number of elements are important. First, most practitioners require regular contact with a teacher. Second, the support from a practice community - connecting with like-minded people - is indispensable.

Third, create a sacred space in the home that invites formal zazen practice and facilitate bringing the zazen mind into the world.

Knowing that the cushion and altar are there and available makes formal meditation more likely to occur.

Many home-based practitioners have aroused the Way Seeking Mind and yearn for deep practice. Many disparage our home practice and yearn for a simpler lifestyle. At least if we could be center-based practitioners, then we'd really be getting somewhere!

However, the importance of a home based practice is illustrated by this story from a famous family of home-based practitioners, the P'ang family:

"The layman was sitting in his thatched cottage one day. 'Difficult, difficult, difficult,' he suddenly exclaimed, '[like trying] to scatter ten measures of sesame seed all over a tree!'

"Easy, easy, easy,' returned Mrs. P'ang, 'just like touching your feet to the ground when you get out of bed.'

'Neither difficult nor easy,' said Ling-chao, their daughter. 'On the hundred grass-tips, the [ancestor's] meaning.'

(From *A Man of Zen: The Recorded Sayings of Layman P'ang*, translated by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, Yoshitaka Iriya, and Dana Fraser)



Buddha statue in Kamakura, Japan, Courtesy of Art Today

In Gratitude:

Thanks to all who helped with the sesshin in March with Jan Chozen Bays.

Thanks to Gretchen for transporting zabutans from Seattle for some of our members who will experience future sesshins in a bit more comfort.

Thanks to Nirava & Yuri for the gift of mala beads from their recent trip to India.

Thanks to Ronn for computer assistance for this issue of the newsletter.

Next Board/Sangha Meeting

October 8, 2000

Future Sesshins

November 4 & 5, 2000

January 13-21, 2001

March 2001

Next Mindfulness Days:

July 1st and August 5th at Karen's. Ask Karen for directions to her house.

Zazen, potluck, & discussion 9AM-1PM.

The Tea Ceremony

by Steve Vilter

The Urasenke School of the Japanese Tea Ceremony was demonstrated by Steve Vilter, Michiko Senega, Kay Gatlin, and Yuri Upton this past February for the Anchorage Zen Community.

The tea ceremony or chanoyu is an aesthetic activity of Japan which features the preparation, serving and drinking of matcha, a powdered green tea. Matcha arrived in Japan in the 12th century and was used by Zen priests and the upper class.

Toward the end of the 15th century, a commoner named Murata Juko, who had mastered the art of chanoyu which had become popular with the upper classes and which had evolved to include an appreciation of Chinese arts and crafts as well as a formalization of rules of conduct of the dominant Samurai class, proposed another type of ceremonial tea drinking. This wabicha was based on Japanese sensitivities nurtured by the spirit of Zen Buddhism. In the later half of the 16th century, Sen-no-Rikyu established wabicha as the form in which
(Continued on page 6)

**Dead,
My bones scattered
About the mountain.
The sunset,
How beautiful.**

by Buz Blum, March sesshin, 2000

5 Synopsis of the Minutes from the Board Sangha Meeting

on April 9, 2000

by Judith Haggar, Secretary

After a potluck lunch, a statue of the baby Buddha was set in a bower of daffodils. One at a time we approached and bowed and bathed the Buddha with a ladle of sweet green tea to celebrate Buddha's birth 2500 years ago.

For the coming year, Keith Wiger is serving as President and Judith Haggar as Secretary. John Daley will continue as Treasurer and Judy Saha and Colleen Pierce will continue as Board members.

The main topic of the meeting was extending an invitation to Tozen Akiyama to visit Anchorage. We decided we would like him to come for the first week in June so we could meet him, and he could meet us. After the visit, we would then decide what the next step should be. Refer to the article on the front page for the week's activities with Rev. Akiyama.

We discussed the use of alternate translations of the chants used at Sunday service. We agreed that the Doan (bell person) may do that. So, if you get some new chant sheets at your seat, do your best. Often seeing a different translation can give insight into the meaning of the chants and reawaken our attention.

Nancy Bain, a physical therapist, offered to demonstrate ways to ease the physical pain of zazen and to put together a packet for those interested.

Tea ceremony, con't from page 5.

chanoyu is practiced today.

Sen Rkyu was once asked to explain what the Way of Tea entails. he replied that it was a matter of observing but seven rules: Make a satisfying bowl of tea; Lay the charcoal so the water boils efficiently; Provide a sense of warmth in the winter and coolness in the summer; Arrange the flowers as though they were in a field; Be ready ahead of time; Be prepared in case it should rain ; Act with utmost consideration toward your guests. The questioner was puzzled by Rikyu's reply, saying these were simple matters that anyone could handle, to which Rikyu replied he would become the disciple of the person who could carry them out without fail.

The way of Tea is basically concerned with activities that are a part of everyday life, yet to master them requires great cultivation. Sen Shoshitsu, the 15th generation Grand Master of the Urasenke School has sought to disseminate chado throughout the world to bring "Peacefulness through a Bowl of Tea". Starting in 1951, he has traveled throughout the world with the belief that the spirit of chado, expressed in the ideals of Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility could help lessen the possibility of futile and destructive wars happening again.

Sumie Ward, teacher of the Urasenke School of the Japanese Tea Ceremony, will be in Anchorage July 9th - 18th to give lessons. If you're interested, contact Steve Vilter.

Meditation Retreat in the Wrangell Mountains

Plan for a week long retreat in McCarthy from August 25th to September 1st with Eileen Kiera, dharma teacher in the Zen lineage of Thich Nhat Hanh. We will camp and sit silently at the edge of the ice, walk upon it and under it, and through simple yoga asanas watch life's rhythms in our bodies as in the land. Our siting meditation practice will be led by Eileen Kiera, who is also an experienced Alaska ecologist. Guidance in gentle yoga will come from Marci Thurston. Ben Shaine of the Wrangell Mountains Center faculty will lead outdoor walking meditation and deep looking as we daily explore the unstable ground of the glacier edge on foot.

While our experience will be shaped by Buddhist practice, we envision this retreat as appropriate for people from Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and other meditative traditions.

Cost of the retreat (Friday to Friday) is \$390. Those registering after June 15 will need to pay a late registration fee of \$25. A small pocket of funds for tuition waiver is available in case of need.

For further information, contact Marci Thurston at (907) 554-4430, or email: marcithur@aol.com, or write to The Wrangell Mountains Center, McCarthy #20, P.O. Box MXY, Glenallen, Ak. 99588-8998.



**Spring Sesshin with
Jan Chozen Bays**
by Judy Saha

For me, the recent sesshin with Jan Chozen Bays was a wonderful awakening. As most of my time was spent in the kitchen in meal preparation, my meditation was not "deep" but rather it seemed "grounded". I love the focused feeling that working in the kitchen brings with it.

Preparing food for others is my idea of a dream come true. Textures, colors, tastes, and smells - all combine in a heady swirl of challenge and timing with the comings and goings of the silent friends that make it all possible.

So as I worked in the kitchen, I felt fortunate to have one foot securely planted in reality while

silently penetrating the mystery of the universe in every chop, chop, chop, sniff or taste.

Chozen, however, mentioned in one of her talks that after a few days of silence, we might feel the weight of our concerns lift from our shoulders. I certainly didn't hope for any such thing; I was too busy in the kitchen. On Sunday morning, however, I awakened to feel as though there was no weight on my shoulders at all. I might even have felt my shoulders to see if I were warm enough - so tangible was the feeling. Nothing had changed; I'd tried to catch as many "sits" as possible - but they were few in comparison to others. But I found myself asking "So what's all the fuss been about?" I felt a wonderful sense of lightness. My confusions evaporated - much as steam rises, curls and disappears from a hot cup of tea.

Our purpose is to cooperate with one another and create a place where sincere practitioners can practice without trouble.

Anchorage Zen Community

Established; 1984

Non-profit status: February 9, 1995

Board of Directors

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AZC Web Site Master: Mark Standley

Voice mail: 566-0143

E-mail address: zen@alaska.net

Web site Address: www.alaska.net/~zen/

Weekly Zen Buddhist Meditation

The Anchorage Zen Community meets each Sunday morning at 2610A Spenard Rd. If you are interested in joining us, please arrive by 8:20 AM, as sitting begins on time & is silent.

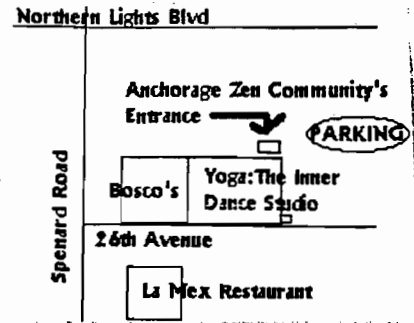
8:30 zazen (sitting meditation)

9:10 kinhin (walking meditation)

9:20 zazen (sitting meditation)

9:50 service (chanting & bowing)

10:05 introductions, news, & tea



Please remember to enter the zendo quietly, as this is our sacred space.



Anchorage Zen Community
2401 Susitna
Anchorage, Alaska 99517

Mailing Label