



Note from the Editor:

It is our pleasure to from time to time reprint articles by Rev. Tozen Akiyama that appeared in early issues of the MZC Newsletter. The article below appeared in the February, 1989, issue, but its message is timely in any month.

Let Us Be Contented With Whatever We Have and Whatever Condition We Are In

February 15 is the Buddha's memorial day. The Last Teaching of the Buddha Sutra says:

You bhiksus! If you want to escape from all suffering, you must observe what contentment is. The law of contentment is, indeed, the place of richness and joy, and calmness and peace. The man of contentment, even though he lies on the ground, still is peaceful and joyful. The man of discontent, even if he were in a heavenly palace, still would not feel that it suited him. He who is contented, even though he is poor, is rich. He who is not contented is always pulled by the five desires and pitied by the one who is contented. This is what is called contentment.

The Japanese word for contentment used here literally means “knowing that there is enough,” and is usually translated as “contentment” in English. We tend to think that we suffer because we do not have what we need. But there are many rich people who suffer more than poor people. Also, modern people have many more material goods than did people in olden times and they are suffering anyway. The fact is, as is often said, that the more we have the bigger our desires become and the more frustrated we are—hence, the more we suffer. We should understand that we suffer not because we do not have enough, but because we do not think that we have enough. In other words, we suffer because we are not contented.

We are discontented not only with what we have, but also with the condition in which we are. We think that our condition is no good, that there should be an ideal condition somewhere, and that we can

be happy only when that ideal condition is realized. Thus we struggle to attain the ideal condition. But, as I always say, the world does not go as we wish. It may go as we wish once in awhile and we may feel happy then, but it rarely happens. Even when it happens and we feel happy, we are driven again by the next idea, feel unhappy, and chase after that idea. Because of this we see so many people struggling to attain their aim in vain. Eventually they get upset, begrudge others, curse the world, or become depressed. I know this well because I used to be one of those people. Because I have done the same things, I know what is wrong with them and I feel pain when I see what they are doing.

To be discontented with our present condition and chase after what we think is an ideal condition does not solve the problem, because the problem is not the condition but ourselves—we do not have contentment. We will never be happy unless we change ourselves. Any condition

is just as it is. It is neither good nor bad. An ideal condition or a desperate condition exists only in our brain. Again, we suffer not because our condition is no good, but because we do not think that our condition is good—that is to say, we are not contented. The man of contentment is rich in mind and happy in any condition, whereas the man of discontent is poor in mind, is unhappy in any condition, and continues to suffer while chasing after an ideal condition which exists only in the brain. How can we expect to be contented in other conditions if we are not contented with our present condition? Contentment also exists in the brain.

Let us be contented with whatever condition we are in and do our best in that condition, in exactly the same way that we just sit in the zendo, the practice hall, with our whole body and mind. Zen sitting is the practice of the most central teaching left by the Buddha.

—Tozen Akiyama

You Never Know...

A member of the sangha at Racine Correctional recently said something that struck me as a perfect expression of the truth of our lives. He was explaining how much he enjoys fishing, and mentioned that he used

to live on the Wisconsin River and could virtually

step out his door and cast a line into the water. He said, "It's like meditation. People could never understand how I could spend ten hours a day just casting, casting, casting again, and again, and again." Then with a glint in his eye, he offered the explanation: "You never know what's going to happen."

We are always here

and now, existing only in this moment. We can never predict precisely what's going to happen in the next moment. As we practice zazen and as we go about our daily lives, how wonderful it would be to be as keenly alert as the fisherman casting a line, because "You never know what's going to happen."

-Tonen O'Connor

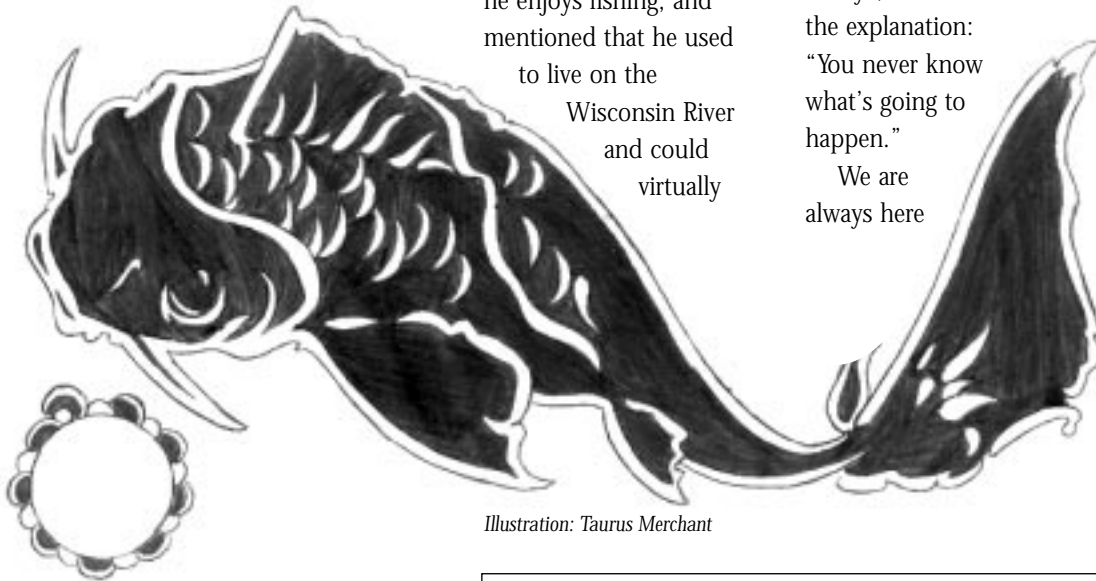


Illustration: Taurus Merchant

Two-Day Sittings Resume

On October 16 and 17, the Zen Center will resume its schedule of monthly two-day sesshins.

These days offer extended practice in the fruitful silence of zazen. The schedule also includes sutra chanting, meals with oryoki and Tonen will give a Dharma Talk on Saturday morning.

Individual kinhin and tea breaks are offered in the afternoons.

Zafus, kneeling benches and chairs are available and you are welcome to participate in any portion of the schedule.

Accommodations are also available for overnight stays. For the schedule, see our web site: www.milwaukeezencenter.org or call the Center for a printed copy.

Please join us for the joy of this deep practice.

News Notes

There was a very successful work day on July 17, during which the basement and shed were cleaned and reorganized, garden plants tied and staked, weeds removed from the front area and the herb garden and major trash taken to the Self Help lot on the south side. Thanks are due to all those who participated: Ben Ellingson, Colette Brown, Brian Curtiss, Dian Ericksen, Lora Fields, Linda Gee, Jim Gother, and John Rhiel and Gregg Wendlandt. In addition to the work, a very sociable pot luck lunch was featured.

On July 24, Peter Johnson and Tonen made a first visit to the brand new correctional facility in New Lisbon. Eight inmates participated in zazen, a service and talks by Peter and Tonen. A number of them had been transferred to New Lisbon from existing sanghas at other institutions and it was good to see them again. Although the distance is too great to make possible frequent visits, Peter and Tonen



A tent zendo, open to the trees, was part of the Milwaukee Zen Center's Door County retreat.

hope to get back to New Lisbon when time permits.

Tonen, ably assisted by Tim Cobb, officiated at the wedding of Alison Wetzel and Peter Tans at Elkhart Lake on August 7, and then that evening made brief remarks at the annual anti-nuclear event, Lanterns for Peace, downtown on the Milwaukee River. Bob Balderson manned a table at the event where people could create Jizos for Peace panels on the spot, or take home information on how to do so.

August 13-15, Peter Johnson hosted an MZC Retreat at his home in Door County. On Friday evening, Tonen gave a talk on Zen to a good crowd at the Door County Compass Internet Cafe. (Thanks to Steve and Elizabeth Kastner for hosting this public event.) In addition to Peter and

Tonen, Tim Cobb, Yan Li, Lorraine McNamara-McGraw, Linda Gee and Bob Balderson participated in a weekend of zazen outdoors in a tent zendo open to the trees, walking meditation in Peninsula State Park, an eye-opening ceremony for the Buddha on Peter's altar, oryoki meals and a delicious jointly-prepared barbecue as well as a quiet time in the evening around the fire. Artist Emmett Johns, donor of Peter's Buddha, joined morning zazen. It is hoped that this lovely experience will be offered to sangha members on an annual basis.

Thanks to Tim Cobb for acting as doan during the week that Tonen was absent on vacation in Japan.

Milwaukee Zen Center – Schedule

October

6 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
16 & 17 Two-day sitting

November

3 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
20 & 21 Two-day sitting
25 Closed for Thanksgiving

December

3 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
3, 4 & 5 Rohatsu Sesshin
25 Closed for Christmas
31 Zazen, renewal of precepts, party for the New Year

January

5 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
15 & 16 Two-day sitting

To see the entire 2004 Schedule and more information on Two-day sitting, visit our web site at www.milwaukeezencenter.org

Milwaukee Zen Center

2825 N. Stowell Ave. Milwaukee WI 53211-3775

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
MILWAUKEE, WI
PERMIT NO. 2686

Wed., Thurs., Fri.

6:15 am Zazen
(Zen sitting)
6:55 am Kinhin
(Zen walking)
7:05 am Zazen
7:45 am Service
8:00 end of practice

6:30 pm Zazen
7:10 pm Kinhin
7:20 pm Zazen

Saturday

6:15 am Zazen
6:55 am Kinhin
7:05 am Zazen
7:45 am Service
8:00 breakfast, oryoki
8:25 work period
9:15 break, coffee & tea
9:30 study class*
10:30 end of practice
**except on all-day sitting days*

Introduction to Zen

An informal presentation on Buddhism and Zen, followed by instruction in zen sitting, tea and discussion.
6:30-8:30 p.m.–first Wednesday each month.

Zen sitting instruction and private interview available by appointment. Call 963-0526.

Contact information

For messages: **Phone:** (414) 963-0526

Fax: (414) 963-0517 **E-mail:** tsoc@execpc.com

For information and schedules: www.milwaukeezencenter.org

Membership Information / Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip+ 4 _____

Phone _____

I am interested in a membership (tax deductible):

- General - \$25/month
- Supporting – \$30 or more/month
- Out-of-town – \$10/month
- Participating - any amount you can afford \$ _____

I would like to make a one-time contribution \$ _____

- Please add me to your mailing list
- Please remove me from your mailing list
- Please change my mailing address

TITLE	QTY	PRICE	TAX*	TOTAL
Sweat-shirt (size: available only in large)		\$25.00	1.40	
Eiheiji Incense — Short 5.5"		\$ 5.00	.28	
Long 10"		\$ 5.00	.28	

*Only Wis. residents need include applicable sales tax. TAX

Shipping - \$3.00 first two shirts or boxes of incense and 50¢ per item thereafter. SHIPPING TOTAL \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Milwaukee Zen Center

MILWAUKEE ZEN CENTER 2825 N. STOWELL AVE
MILWAUKEE, WI 53211-3775

