

zen bow

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zen bow

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INTRODUCTION

The contents of this issue of *Zen Bow* reflect a common theme -- the developing spirit of Sangha and expressions of this spirit in recent months. Participation in ceremonies observing Jukai, Thanksgiving and New Year's provided a sense of the power and depth of 'going for refuge' to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The source of this spirit is revealed in a member's reply to the question, "What does the Sangha mean to you?" -- "The Sangha is a group of people who share effort and appreciate effort shared." This refers to effort exerted in individual and group zazen as well as the effort involved in making ceremonies and special events such meaningful experiences. Such effort is a source of "the consistent energy necessary for real zazen" referred to in the Reply to a Letter from an affiliate group member. Continuing the theme, the article "Arya Sangha" (The Noble Brotherhood) speaks directly to the experience of "the wisdom and warmth" of the Sangha.

The New Year reminding us of the perpetual changing and newness of every moment, suggests the article "Turning Over A New Leaf." This article runs throughout the issue and can be identified by the lotus in a circle appearing at the top of right-hand columns on various pages. Each paragraph of the article deals with a different aspect of practice and can be appreciated in itself.

Everything in *Zen Bow* expresses and is an attempt to communicate the growing commitment to self-realization and to practicing with others similarly committed. As we pursue this commitment, the activity itself produces a deepening sense of Sangha. This spirit in turn energizes the very activity which produces it!

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A BUDDHIST THANKSGIVING

[Ed.'s note: Thanksgiving this year was celebrated at the Center both through devotional activities on Thanksgiving eve and more intensive zazen. In the zendo the zazen platforms (tan) were removed and numerous small altars and offering tables were erected for devotions. The 'temple' was open to children as well as to the older members. The following is an account of some of the activities of these two days, and some excerpts from a Dharma exchange that occurred between the Roshi and one of his students on Thanksgiving Day.]

Thanksgiving eve....Arriving alone, in couples, or in family groups, we find ourselves in a Buddhist temple decorated with sheaves of wheat, turning leaves, pumpkins. This is the one evening of the year given over completely to personal devotions. Every so often the quiet is punctuated with soft chanting from the sub-zendo, where the towering strength of Ananda presides over the room. In the main zendo there are other altars: to Shakyamuni, Kannon, Manjusri. We make our offering of fruit and vegetables, flowers and sea-shells, candles and incense. Whatever we bring, it is a gift for the Buddha, the teachers...how glad we are to be able to make this offering! One sees a child imitating his parents' gassho and placing his offering on the altar. Then in the kitchen the children are given cookies and orange Dharma flags to wave about while their parents step back into the zendo for more devotions of thanksgiving and repentance.

Thanksgiving Day...zazen, chanting service, special readings ...dialogues between the Buddha and three laymen -- a wealthy man, a herdsman, a poet...the Dharma is for everyone. A talk by the Roshi on the spirit and significance of a Buddhist Thanksgiving:

"...From a Buddhist point of view, our giving of thanks goes very deep. First and foremost we are grateful for this human body....Without the six

senses of the human body, we could never know the Dharma. And, indeed, without a human body we could never truly know and express gratitude....

"We are grateful for the rare opportunity to hear the Dharma, so profound and minutely subtle.... We begin to feel gratitude for much more than we can perceive with our senses."

And a reminder...

"There is another aspect to our gratitude. For spiritual growth it is much more important to be thankful for the painful episodes of our lives rather than for our pleasurable ones. It is easy enough to be grateful for a kind or thoughtful act. But genuine gratitude is gratefulness for the painful slur, the deliberate snub, the hostile act, as well as the sincere and unmotivated criticism of our teachers and friends. It is only by gratefully accepting these things that we can expiate the karma of which they are the end result and start to cultivate patience and forbearance....

"Let us be grateful for everything that has happened to us, the pain as well as the joy. Let us be determined to continue to move on, to continue to love, to suffer a certain amount of discomfort, of pain, and also of joy....This is life. You cannot do more than this."

Silence. A member stands to address the Roshi on behalf of the Sangha. In the past this was the time to present a gift to Roshi. But this time it is a gift of a different sort.

"Roshi Kapleau! What have you really given us since we've been here? We've all come looking for the Truth, the Supreme Teaching, for Enlightenment. All we've got is a hard time.

We've come to end our doubts and all we hear is more doubts. We've come looking for Enlightenment and you show us nothing. We've come looking for peace, you give us no rest. We have questions and you give us more questions. Our lives are difficult, you make them more difficult. Roshi Kapleau, you've given us nothing, and tried to take that nothing away....What do you have to give us? There's no one here to receive it, no one there to give it. Just as you've never begun to give us anything, neither have you ever stopped. Just as we've never begun to thank you for it, neither shall we ever end. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you."

The Roshi has been sitting with his eyes mostly closed, his head bent forward and a little to one side, a familiar manner when he is paying close attention. There is a short silence, and then his reply:

"This is why Mumon, the great Zen Master, said: 'Had I been present when the Buddha said, "Above the heavens and below the heavens, I am the most honored one," I would have cut up his body and fed it to the lions!'"

The intense feeling of this exchange passes through us all in the zendo as we clasp hands in chanting the Kannon Sutra.

In three days there will be Jukai, initiation into the Way of the Buddha. This Thanksgiving turns out to be good preparation for it.



JUKAI -- ENTERING THE BUDDHA'S FAMILY

The administering and taking of the Ten Cardinal Precepts and The Three Refuges, (by one's teacher), formally marking one's acceptance in the Buddha's Way, is known as Jukai. Traditionally, participating in Jukai is one of the most fundamental aspects of Zen practice. Zen Master Dogen has said that one who has never taken upon himself the vow to follow the Buddha's Way, embodied in the Precepts and the Refuges, can never hope to attain full Awakening.

And so the preparations for this ceremony are extensive. Notice of the ceremony is sent to all zazen groups affiliated with the Rochester Center. During the weeks prior to Jukai a series of teishos on the Precepts is given by the Roshi to help prepare us and foster in us a receptivity to the actual ceremonies. And the Center itself, only yesterday our Thanksgiving 'temple,' is transformed by the creation of passageways to express in a physical way the sense of passage inherent in a ceremony of initiation.

Throughout the weekend there are special chanting services, circumambulations, Dharma talks and ceremonies of purification and repentance. The Roshi has spoken of the great power in these rituals and observances: "They are structures and patterns that allow us to express our spiritual aspirations in a way that leaves a deep impression on our minds. Through them, we experience a heightened sense of awareness, a greater unity with the Sangha, and a diminishing, however slight, of the ego."

Because there are so many, 260 persons in all, wishing to participate in these initiation ceremonies, the main ceremony in preparation for Jukai itself, is held twice on the day before.

The activities on Saturday afternoon are first attended primarily by the out-of-town members. The afternoon of zazen is punctuated with summaries of the Roshi's teishos on the Pre-

cepts and talks by senior members as well as a work period in final preparation for the coming activities. Late in the afternoon the main preparatory ceremony begins....

As we rise from formal zazen the lead chanter intones the Heart Sutra. Joining in, we begin a circumambulation of the first floor zendos, offering powdered incense at the two altars as we pass.

Everyone having returned to his place, three members now stand before the Buddha at the main altar and begin chanting the Kannon Sutra. "KAN-ZE-ON-NA-MU-BUTSU-YO-BUTSU-U-IN." The ceremonial drum beats out a deep and steady rhythm. They go through one round of the chant and then begin prostrating while the rest of the Sangha picks up the chant. At the end of that round the three leaders begin chanting the next while the Sangha prostrates. The alternations between the two groups continue twenty-four times. Each time the chant and the prostra-

"TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF"



Sometimes we say: "Let's turn over a new leaf." We don't realize that without saying anything, without doing anything, without even looking, a new leaf is always here. The entire universe has already turned over in less than the blinking of an eyelash. We are constantly renewed every moment of our being, and not one particle remains of the old. Here for an imperceptibly brief span of time, everything without exception has instantly changed before we can even get a glimpse of it. What is there to take hold of? Who is there to know?

And yet we live, think, act and die as though we knew; and we are constantly trying to hold on. We have enduring ideas of ourselves, of other people and of the things of this world, and we cling to them for dear life. The small mind of ego and its world of ideas form one inseparable, deluded

tions are passed from one group to the other it's like a new wave opening out from the subsiding of the one before: the chanting becomes deeper, the prostrating less self-conscious. The vibrations of the drum resound within us. There wells up a natural feeling to let go of everything and just prostrate. Lower the mast of ego again and again and again -- before your own Buddha-nature. Just prostrate!

In the evening the local Sangha participates in the same ceremonies -- the zazen, the talks on the Dharma, the circumambulation, the chanting and prostration ceremony.

At last, late Sunday morning, we arrive for Jukai. Leaving coat and shoes at the doorway to the East Zendo, we enter. All is quiet except for a single voice droning a low chant, but one can't make out just where it comes from because there is a bending corridor of dark hanging curtains ahead. One can see nothing else. Walk ahead. The chant is the familiar Dharani for Removing Disasters. Why this chant? But walk on, around the curves in the passage. "No-mo-sa-man-da-moto-nan-o-hara-chi..." Look there -- the terrifying portrait of a being with swollen eyes, a screaming, distorted face; hand drawn back, ready to strike. It's Yamaraja, Lord of Karma, and we are passing through his domain. He reaches out and hands each of us a gold card depicting a pig, a cock and a serpent chasing one another in a circle, devouring one another's tails. Below them is printed: "klesa" (defilements). One knows that they represent greed, anger and delusion -- the sources of our own past deeds. The mad circle they run keeps us revolving on the Wheel of Samsara. The card is *your own* and each accepts it. Gassho.

Walk on down an unlit but straight passage. There is a light ahead. A different voice is chanting the same Dharani, while the Kannon Sutra is getting stronger. Up a few steps to another level and we offer our defilements to the hand of Maitreya; they are accepted. Turn and pass down a bright hall flanked with figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The light is welcoming and uplifting. At the end of the hall there is

an altar with a picture of Harada-Roshi. Before it we make an incense offering to our teacher, Roshi Kapleau, who will be administering Jukai. Gassho. Take a zazen cushion and pass on to the zendo.

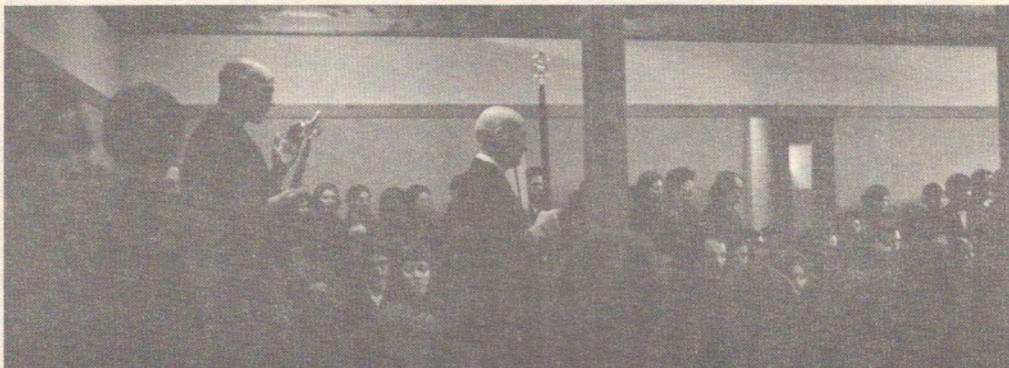
The ceremonial bell rings seven times. Representatives of the Center's affiliate groups enter the zendo and come forward to the altar to present offerings of fruit, cakes and tea. A lighted candle is placed with the offerings.

On the 2nd floor, above the zendo, the Roshi's wooden staff strikes the floor, and the metal rings at its crown jangle. This starts a procession throughout the Center to make offerings at all the altars. Roshi and four other voices take up the chant: "Hómáge to Shákya-múni, Hómáge to Shákya-múni ..." As they near the zendo the drum takes up the cadence. The Roshi and attendants enter, and everyone joins in. The chanting takes on unexpected life and depth: "Hómáge to Shákya-múni...." Then silence.



whole, just as the dreaming mind and what it dreams about are indistinguishable from one another. How successfully we have deluded ourselves into solitary confinement, each one into his own mind-created cell, lifetime after lifetime!

The Bodhisattva Dharmākara, who later became Amithābha Buddha, spent five incalculable kalpas of meditation and austerities perfecting himself for Buddhahood in order to liberate every last sentient being from suffering and bondage. In this undertaking he was encouraged by Lokésvarārāja Buddha with these words: "Even the great ocean can be exhausted to the very bottom by carrying away a bucketful of water at a time if one is determined to continue the operation to the endless end of eternity." We all can come to Realization if we work at it with the quiet power of a spring of water, patiently dripping, driving and dissolving its



Now the heart of Jukai begins. The Rōshi offers incense to the Buddha, prostrates three times, and sits before the altar. The bell sounds again seven times. A large black cauldron with lit charcoal is carried forward. The Rōshi administers the Repentance Gatha, and everyone repents of all their evil actions committed since time immemorial. The Repentance Gatha is recited three times: once each for evil actions committed through the body, through one's speech and with one's mind. This repentance is basic preparation for Jukai, as one hopes to enter the Buddha's family with a pure mind and heart. The defilement cards are brought forward in a bowl and dropped into the cauldron. Soon the flames burst and make an end to the mad round of the pig, cock and serpent. Repentance followed by the purifying flames -- Svaha! We are reminded: "Although retribution for evil cannot be avoided, through wholehearted repentance the burden is lightened....Strong faith changes not only us but others as well. It benefits sentient beings throughout the Six Worlds." With great feeling Rōshi administers the Three Refuges and the Ten Cardinal Precepts. We take each three times. The Rōshi rises to address the Sangha:

"You are now all in the Buddha's family."

Bang! Crash! All the instruments -- gongs, bells, drums, cymbals -- celebrate with a raucous cacophony of sound. The Rōshi bangs his staff and exits. We all gassho, to the Rōshi, to each other, to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

The Three Refuges

I put my trust in the Buddha and resolve that with all beings I will understand the Great Way whereby the Buddha-seed may forever thrive.

I put my trust in the Dharma and resolve that with all beings I will enter deeply into the sutra-treasure whereby my wisdom may grow to be vast as the ocean.

I put my trust in the Sangha and in its wisdom, example, and never-failing help and resolve that nothing will impede my progress towards full enlightenment.

The Ten Precepts

I resolve not to kill but to cherish all life.

I resolve not to take what is not given but to respect the things of others.

I resolve not to engage in improper sexual relations but to live a life of purity and faithfulness.

I resolve not to lie but to speak the truth.

I resolve not to cause others to use alcoholic liquors or drugs which confuse the mind, nor to do so myself, but to keep my mind clear at all times.

I resolve not to speak of the misdeeds of others but to be understanding and sympathetic.

I resolve not to praise myself and condemn others but to overcome my own shortcomings.

I resolve not to withhold spiritual or material aid but to give it freely where needed.

I resolve not to become angry but to exercise control.

I resolve not to revile the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) but to cherish and uphold them.

...In the course of the spiritual life, conflicts and changes inevitably occur, as people realize their mental conditioning and try to overcome it. This effort is part of the process of becoming an individual -- one who is self-aware, self-reliant, and who makes a determined effort to set his life upon spiritual foundations, no matter how insecure and unrewarding they may seem.

One of the things which seems to have gradually arisen among those active in this community is the consciousness of the great value of spiritual fellowship, that virtue emphasized by the Buddha in his reply to Ananda: "Ananda, say not that spiritual fellowship is the half of the holy life -- it is the whole of it." The truth is, it is very difficult indeed to travel the spiritual path alone although very easy to deceive oneself into believing that one is following it. This is the well-disguised trap into which many would-be adepts appear to fall. To such a person who travels the tortuous path alone, two things are likely to happen. He may become a self-appointed 'teacher,' confidently feeding eager disciples with the things they would like to hear, and thus, maybe unconsciously, bolstering up his own position as their leader and spiritual mentor. The second possibility is that he may despair of ever making it on the path, become filled with self-contempt, lethargy, and gloom, and eventually give up the assault on that ultimate fortress, the ego-based mind, perhaps ending up in some isolated mental hospital with a crowd of similarly hopeless wanderers, or else returning to the fog and mire of the ... [strictly worldly] life, destined to end his life as confused and unsatisfied as he began it.

A true spiritual movement may help the spiritual wayfarer to avoid both these dead ends, i.e., the Scylla of the triumphant ego, and the Charybdis of the devastated personality. An environment of both objective criticism and friendly and sympathetic encouragement is extremely valuable to one who is

struggling to tame the wild elephant of his mind and at the same time make contact with the dragon of creative energy which has its lair in the mountains of higher consciousness. Without these two allies the chances are that most of us will stray or stumble somewhere along the way.

Yet many people appear to be afraid of 'joining something,' preferring the darkness of the solitary journey, with its many false trails and deadly swamps, to the difficult task of entering into often painful and conflict-laden relationships with others following the same way. Understandable as this choice may be, for most people it is a 'way out' rather than a 'way through,' and hence, from the standpoint of the higher self, a choice to be avoided. Of course, there is a time for retreat, when solitary contemplation and silence become fruitful and creative paths; but this will most likely come only after one has been closely involved with



way through a solid sheet of rock. It is not the volume of water that counts but rather the relentless perseverance of even one drop of water at a time which penetrates a mountain. This is how we practice zazen from moment to moment, sitting to sitting, day in and day out, year after year, penetrating layer upon layer of our dark ego confinement.

As we achieve a measure of concentration it seems at times that the more we practice the more our head fills up with thoughts and desires; we get discouraged and disappointed. However, our observation is misleading: it is simply our awareness which increases and brings the activities of our small, selfish mind into focus for the first time. We must be very grateful for becoming aware of our restless, self-seeking mind. We have been ignorant of the immeasurably long time we have spent

others in the movement for a considerable time, and then it is not a light decision to make, as one must carefully distinguish the voice of the ego-based mind from that of the higher self. Failure to be aware of this distinction may lead to a mistake which may not be realized until years later -- when one's life may possibly have taken an irrevocable turn.

In the traditional scriptures of Buddhism there are many reminders of the good fortune of coming into contact with the 'true teaching,' and with those who practice it. In the West there has never been such a need for a true teaching as there is today, and consequently a need to come into contact with those who have some understanding of this teaching, and its application in the everyday life of the world. False paths and false goals are numerous, but the 'true way' is 'very narrow and hard to find,' and one who finds it should consider himself blessed with great good fortune, and devote every moment of his life to strengthening that contact and understanding its meaning. Like the secret path through the forest, leading to wonders untold -- a magic garden or an earthly paradise filled with priceless jewels -- once lost may require many ages of labor and darkness before it is found again.

Both the East and the West have, at various times in history, produced movements which valued above all else this spirit of spiritual brotherhood, and which formed themselves into orders, sects and esoteric societies, often based on an initiation ceremony. In Buddhism such groups of individuals are called the *Arya-Sangha* -- the Noble or Holy Brotherhood. In Hinduism and Sufism too the principle of *Arya Sangha* is also valued very highly. In the West there have been from the earliest times movements based on the idea of spiritual hierarchy: the Orphic cults, the Pythagoreans, Apollonians, and the followers of Plato are well-known examples. They all recognized, in their various ways, the apparently universal axiom that very little of worth can be achieved by practice entirely on one's own....

[The preceding editorial is reprinted with the kind permission of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, from their newsletter, No. 18, Spring, 1973.]



The drawing represents The Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.



prior to practice, roaming about aimlessly without even the slightest realization of our bondage. How fortunate we are to have found a way to arouse ourselves from deadly slumber.

Let us beware of practicing zazen in order to overcome our shortcomings quickly. We cannot magically escape from our own shadow of karma; it will be neither severed nor buried. Let us not practice zazen in order to solve our daily problems. They will remain with us for a long time to come. Let us simply practice zazen. Pure zazen. Zazen without expecting any results. Roshi says, we practice like a flower turning toward the light. It cannot help doing so anymore than we can help turning the light inward. We do not practice in another world, nor do we practice in order to enter another world. We practice right here, in the very midst of our most troublesome problems.

A Letter...



[This letter was written to a member of the Zen Center Staff by a leader of one of the Center's affiliate groups. The reply was made by the staff member.]

First, many gasshos to you and Roshi and the staff and everyone who made Jukai such an energizing thing. Since returning home, our zendo has seen some of the tautest and strongest sittings ever. You can't know what a positive effect a few days in Rochester has on affiliate group members.

Besides being energizing, this recent trip to Rochester was also very eye-opening. For it allowed me to see once again the very thing that was pointed out to affiliate members during the talk to us at the Jukai sitting. What happens to those of us in affiliate groups between the times that we come to Rochester for Jukai or sesshin or just for a few days of sitting with the Rochester Sangha? Every time, within a few weeks or perhaps a month or two, that energy starts to subside, to get lost. And we too often fall into that very dead sitting that was warned against. Why is this? Because we don't carry through with a consistent effort. But why don't we do that? Every time our group sittings wander into energylessness and then we go to Rochester and get roused in our practice once again, we have to learn the same lesson -- apparently ever and ever again. Why do we have to have this lesson again and again?

Don't misunderstand. I'm not discouraged, at least not since Jukai. But I am much preoccupied with this question for it seems such a vital matter for the affiliate groups and hence for the whole Sangha -- not to mention for Zen in this country.

Perhaps a really energetic practice can only be carried out in Rochester? One, for example, reads Dogen -- and then feels very sure that one must leave the affiliate and go live in Rochester. But then one reads Hakuin -- and now one has to stay exactly where one is. Better, probably, to stop reading!

But the question nevertheless persists.

Perhaps what I am trying to get at here is not a problem for all affiliate groups. We are all beginners in our group, including the group leader, so there are many difficulties. Yet, my personal experience tells me that many groups do share this problem to some extent or other.

What can we do, then, to maintain in our local groups that level of energy so necessary for real zazen? More frequent trips to Rochester are unlikely, particularly now with the travel problems coming about as a result of the energy crisis (no pun intended). Somehow we've got to do it where we are, with whatever we have to work with.

It so often comes back, for myself and many others, to the question of practice in Rochester or practice with an affiliate. Do we create an "island of sanity" -- or two or three -- and hope that the compassion and wisdom generated there will flow out into the rest of our desperately ill country, or do we try to develop that compassion and wisdom living wholly in the midst of that ill? I have always inclined to the latter, but I don't really know.

What is being asked of you who have already done so much for us, I guess, is to consider this and let us have the suggestions of your own experience. We're not about to fall apart or stop doing zazen if these things can't be resolved; after all, there's no other way for ourselves and our country but to rouse this energy and maintain it. But for those of us still on this relative side of time, it's a vital matter for our practice. And we'll keep working at it.

Energy to you--

...and a Reply

Thank you for your letter of December 5, which has been read with great interest and attention. How many times have each of us faced these same questions, perplexities and paradoxes?! ...Those of us living here in Rochester can only nod in empathy with what you have said; but our question is rather, "How do we keep our practice *here* in Rochester alive and thriving?" So often when Sangha members from out-of-town come to the Center for a ceremony or sesshin, they seem so fresh and sincerely motivated in their sitting. More importantly they exude a deep sense of gratitude for Roshi, the Dharma and the Center. Being in Rochester, on the other hand, one can take so much of what we have here for granted, with the result that one's sitting can also become stale and lifeless. Inevitably we come back to the fact that a vibrant practice is not dependent on the external conditions of one's life situation. Being in Rochester close to Roshi does not necessarily make for a strong spiritual aspiration, and being far away from the Center does not mean one is doomed to eking out an existence in a spiritual desert. And, yes, you are right, we hear these same words and learn these same lessons over and over again, but somehow it doesn't hurt to remind ourselves of the "Zen basics" just one more time....

How often have the Masters stated and restated that we each create our own worlds. Look at Ananda. Here he was the Buddha's closest and most beloved disciple, yet his inability to "rouse the mind that seeks the Way" cost him 20 years of effort before he came to his first awakening (and perhaps it was a shallow one at that!). And then in contrast there is Yaeko Iwasaki, a contemporary laywoman who, because of her weak and sickly physical condition, had to carry on Zen practice with little outside support and without being able to attend sesshin. Yet with uncommon ardor and devotion, and only periodic contact with Harada-Roshi, she came to open her Mind's Eye fully and completely before her death at the age of 25. As Harada-Roshi said of her profound enlightenment, it was "doubtless due to her deep and pure faith in Buddhism, to her vast and boundless vow (made through count-

less lives and embracing all sentient beings), and to her having listened with a believing heart to every word of authentic Buddhism spoken to her. The virtue of her life lies in its sterling example of how it is entirely feasible to practice Zen properly, and even experience perfect enlightenment, right in one's own home and partly from a sickbed. If there be strong determination, one can always practice zazen even with a frail constitution and without being able to attend sesshin. This it is which exalts her remarkable experience and must be recorded in the modern history of Zen."

Harada-Roshi used to emphasize to Yaeko Iwasaki that one of the most important aspects of experiencing one's Bodhi-Mind is the profound sense of gratitude that ensues.

In times of frustration and confusion it is so easy to forget the great gift we all share, without exception, and regardless of how difficult or



Zen Master Dogen says:
"You should establish your practice in your delusions." He does not say: you must get rid of your delusions before you can practice zazen properly. Dogen directs our practice into the midst of our delusions. We must exert ourselves to our very limit to awaken to the Truth that in the midst of delusion there is also Wisdom; that in the midst of defilements there is also utter Purity, Love and Compassion.

The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng said to one of his disciples: "Passions are precisely the highest Wisdom; they are not two and they do not differ." And: "While living in the midst of defilements our True Nature is not confused by it. While dwelling in the midst of samadhi it does not become static because of it."

Getting discouraged over our weaknesses is not the

inhibiting our life situation is -- that of having a human body and consciousness. With this "good" karma of having a human body our work is almost half done. With Roshi and the lives of the Buddhas and patriarchs to guide us, how can we go astray? With a wholehearted desire for truth, how can we fail to come to enlightenment? This is true whether practicing in an affiliate, practicing in Rochester or practicing all alone in the North woods; whether teaching school or being a chemist, having a family of 3 children or living the life of a celibate monk. So, then, how much more grateful and fortunate can we be for having others around us in an affiliate group, even if new and inexperienced, to share in our efforts.

And so you have asked, "What can we do, then, to maintain in our local groups that level of energy so necessary for real zazen?" The consistent energy necessary for real zazen must be generated from within, from within the group and from within ourselves. Our energy level is merely a reflection of the strength of our spiritual doubt and determination. If there is an overwhelming self-inquiry, the energy is naturally there, just as in pure love our feelings of love and warmth bubble up from nowhere, inexhaustibly, and need nothing on the outside to sustain them. When there is no self-inquiry our energy is shallow and our efforts without direction -- there is no "divine grace" in Zen and certainly no shortcuts. As you yourself put it, "Somehow we've got to do it where we are, with whatever we have to work with," and as Roshi has said to us over and over again, "In the last analysis one is liberated not by his fellows, not by the Roshi, not even by the Buddha, but by one's own unfaltering, indefatigable exertions."

Your last question is also a most fundamental one...."Do we create an 'island of sanity' -- or two or three -- and hope that the compassion and wisdom generated there will flow out into the rest of our desperately ill country, or do we try to develop that compassion and wisdom living wholly in the midst of that ill?" Is there truly a fundamental difference between the two? Are they not both being "in the world" and are not the ills of our country, and indeed the world, no matter

where we are, common to all of us?

We are not trying in our practice to insulate ourselves in a geographical island of sanity or a spiritual Utopia -- rather we are trying in our own daily lives, whatever forms they may take, and whatever our karma may be, to be responsive to the needs of others and to realize directly that we are the whole universe, perfect and complete and have never been otherwise.

In this light, if we absolutely need to go to Rochester to practice, we will find ourselves there. The true spiritual community however knows no bounds. As Roshi has often said to us, "When you're centered, you're at the Center."

Perhaps your question can only be lived, each according to his own karma, and not answered intellectually.

Above all else, the enlightenment experience is the bedrock of our vow to liberate all sentient



Way. Wallowing in guilt and remorse about our indomitable self-centeredness is not the Way. Analyzing and explaining our defilements is not the Way. Suppressing thoughts and emotions which have been judged "bad" is not the Way. Condoning our imperfections is not the Way. Zen training is neither an exercise in beating ourselves nor practice in resigning ourselves to our shortcomings.

What then is it? What are we trying to do? What do the Enlightened Ones mean when they proclaim: "Nirvana is no other than samsara and samsara no other than nirvana?"

A monk once asked a Zen Master: "What is great nirvana?" The Master answered: "Not to commit oneself to the karma of birth and death is great nirvana." "What, then, is the karma of birth and death?" "To desire great nirvana is the

beings and to come to its realization is our most fundamental responsibility as human beings. Upon awakening to our Buddha-nature we find that whatever our situation we are able to help our fellow men, on both the most profound and the most mundane levels, in an utterly natural and unselfconscious way. Harada-Roshi may have been addressing himself to this very matter when he said that to live a life of utter oneness "is to walk the supremely glorious Path trodden by all Buddhas. When one no longer is aware of the need for Buddhism, true Buddhism is manifesting itself. Should one, however, cherish even this conception, his life will become clouded with delusion. Devotedly wipe away such attachment and your life will be perpetually suffused with the warm sunshine of Spring. Who is Shakyamuni Buddha? Who is Miroku? They are no different from you. Look! Look!"

AFFILIATES OF THE ROCHESTER CENTER

In many cities of the U.S., Canada and Europe there are groups of people practicing zazen in the manner taught by Roshi Kap-leau. Through a communal effort they are able to greatly strengthen and encourage each other's personal development. Many of the groups are formally recognized as either affiliate "Groups," "Zendo's," or "Centers" of the Rochester Center, depending upon their facilities, the size of their membership, and the type of their leadership. These affiliates offer a conducive, supportive and disciplined atmosphere in which to practice formal zazen. In addition to regular periods of zazen which include Zen chanting, the affiliates have scheduled days when members of the group may come to work, sit and eat together. At other times, they observe various Buddhist holidays such as the Buddha's Birthday with appropriate and meaningful ceremonies. Recognized affiliates regularly receive

and play tapes of teisho (Zen talks) given by Roshi Kapleau. Members of these groups may also strengthen and deepen their practice by participating in all-day sittings, two-day sittings, group discussion and personal counseling.

All members in good standing of recognized affiliates are considered members of the Rochester Center Sangha. This means that, with the recommendation of their affiliate leader and permission from the Rochester Center, members of affiliates may come to the Rochester Center for workdays, all-day sittings, special ceremonies, and other events. They may also apply for the 4-day sesshins conducted during the Winter and Summer Quarters at the Zen Center in Rochester, again with the recommendation of their affiliate leader. Many of the groups are visited periodically by some of the Roshi's senior students. The type of training each person receives through practicing with the spiritual community of the Zen Center and its affiliates is that outlined by Roshi Kapleau and by his teachers before him.

Currently, there are formally affiliated groups, zendos or centers in the following cities: Toronto and Kingston, Ontario; Montreal, Quebec; Jacksonville, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Boston, Massachusetts; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Buffalo, Rochester, and Sharon Springs, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; and Madison, Wisconsin. There are also informally affiliated zazen groups in Denver, Colorado; Hamburg, Germany; Luzeren, Switzerland; St. Petersburg, Florida; San Cristobal, New Mexico; Binghamton, Schenectady, and New York, New York; Cincinnati, Ohio; Mill Hall, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Seattle, Washington. A list of the current addresses and phone numbers of these groups is available from the Rochester Center. Also, one of the Center's members keeps a file of individuals doing zazen around the country who are not part of any group but are interested in sitting with other people. Anyone wishing to have their name placed on this list can send their name, address, phone number, age and occupation to DeDe Densmore, 234 Milburn St., Rochester, NY, 14607. DeDe will also send a list of sitters in a particular area to anyone requesting it.



the New Year

"May the coming year be one
of peace and happiness,
free from the taint of greed,
anger and ignorance!

"May all beings be cleansed
of the old year's karma.
May this home be thoroughly
cleansed and purified!

"May the strong and sincere
practice in this home
help all beings to attain
Buddhahood!"

With this special gatha chanted at altars in Sangha homes, the ceremonies for the New Year 1974 begin. Prior to the visit of the two "wandering chanters" from the Center, the ritual cleaning of homes has occurred throughout the Sangha. This tradition originating in China, of cleaning out every dark and overlooked corner of the home just before the New Year, reflects the view of the New Year as a time for purification and renewal. The old karma that has been built up over the year is symbolically brought into the open and washed away. The demons in the corners are similarly brought into the light and dissolved. The Rochester Center -- from office to closet to zendo -- is also thoroughly cleaned in preparation for the ceremonies on New Year's Eve.

The Winter solstice had just passed; we had seen the longest night for this yearly cycle and could look again for the return of the light. On the main altar, the offerings of seeds and greens reflect this sense of return and renewal. A large relief of a phoenix rising out of fire, the great bird



representing death and regeneration, is another traditional New Year's decoration used at the Center this year.

The decorating and cleaning conclude around three in the afternoon. The smell of the pines over every door permeates the empty house. There is a quiet kind of light coming in the windows. By seven o'clock members begin to arrive... New Year's Eve...the zendos fill up...zazen, and then the ceremony of confession and repentance. Passing an incense pot from one to the next and holding it aloft, each person repents, either silently or aloud, some defiling deed of body, speech or mind which is weighing heavily upon him.

Ceremony Leader: "Brothers and sisters in the Dharma, to repent is to openly realize the evil in our own previous deeds and not to allow this realization to slip from the mind..."

"I am sorry that I am afraid of asking the Buddha for help."

"I repent my anger. It scorches everything it touches. I put my faith in my zazen practice to overcome this."

"...Genuine repentance is not merely the feeling of sorrow about wrong actions, but is an act of the whole person. In a spirit of honesty and trust, before Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and before our brothers and sisters in the Dharma, let us confess any defiling deeds of body, speech or mind that now weigh heavily upon us..."

"Repentance for not giving wholly but clinging to the illusion of self. This ghostlike state is like a man who has seen through a mirage but still tries to drink the water."

"I repent critical thoughts and words which cause painful separation."

"...Although retribution for evil must come, repentance lightens the burden and brings release and purity....So let us repent before the Buddhas with all our heart...

"I repent all the pain I have caused a woman I work with and resolve to open myself to her, that we may work in harmony - to let flow the love there is between us."

"...Repentance helps the growth in us of pure, unimpeded conviction and earnest effort. Pure conviction, once aroused, changes not only us but others, and its benefits extend to all sentient beings and inanimate things..."

One hundred twenty people, speaking aloud a statement of repentance, and not one of them you would not have made yourself!

Joining hands around the zendo, the concluding prayer of the ceremony is recited:

"To live and practice in the Buddhist community is an opportunity rare and precious. We ask the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to aid us in serving each other with humility and sincerity....May we constantly be aware that everyone we work with is a Dharma brother or sister, seeking to realize himself or herself. Let us honor the Buddha-nature of each of us...."

Tea break. Then everyone heads quickly back to the zendo. There's a feeling that doesn't want to be disturbed by talking.

A short talk of hope and responsibility by the Roshi:

"The other day a holiday card came here from a man who is not a member but who has a kind of peripheral relationship to the Center. Besides the usual printed message, the following was written in his own hand:

'A new day is dawning.
Truth is blooming.
Good will rout evil.
Light will dispel darkness.
There will be peace.'

"This startled me. The last time I had spoken to this man, he was very pessimistic about the world situation. And he is the kind of person who does not come easily by such sentiments as were expressed on this card. Nevertheless, here he was, writing these words with a great deal of conviction.

"What is the outlook for these hopes? What are the chances that what people are hoping for will come true? My feeling is that the chances are very good...that there has been a real turning point.

"For so long we've been hearing that we're in a 'Dharma-ending era,' and that so much of the violence, the brutality, the fear that is being generated today is due to this dying of one world-cycle and the struggle to be born of another. Now that this turning point has come, does this mean that we can sit back and expect a new kind of light to dispel the horrible darkness which has been enveloping us for so long? As Buddhists, we're far too realistic to believe that we can just wait and hope.

"Of course, the mere fact of even hoping is not to be derided as an empty gesture. People can only begin to hope when something has happened to them. It's as though you had fallen into a deep pit and were trying over and over again to climb out. At the moment when you get your first firm foothold, then real hope springs up. Thus we see that hope is based on something very real and tangible. And so it is with the hope we are seeing all around us today.

"Nevertheless, if this new hope is to become a reality, there is much that we have to do. The Buddha once said, 'If you want to know what you were in the past, look at yourself now. If you want to know what you will be in the future, look at

yourself now.' Every moment of living in the present, in the Now, is shaping the future. Through the inexorable law of karma, of cause and effect, we know that what we are doing or not doing now will leave its traces in what we call the future. And this will affect not only ourselves but also our family and friends as well as the world at large.

"Our great responsibility now, now that the wheel has begun to turn ever so slightly, is to give it a real shove. Unless there is an awakening in each one of us, there can be no awakening anywhere. This is the great responsibility that we face in this New Year."

Midnight....Carrying cymbals, drums, bells, gongs and horns, a procession led by the Roshi assembles in the center aisle of the zendo. Chanting begins... "Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!" ...the mantra from the Heart Sutra. And suddenly the total assault is on... all instruments sounded at once...nothing is held back



karma of birth and death."

The Dharma words spoken by the Enlightened Ones are Buddha Mind, Pure Wisdom, unclouded by any shadow of doubt. They are spoken because the Masters know about our constant doubts and suffering. Their words are left for us so that we too can awaken to that True Mind where no words are necessary. If Dharma words do not make any sense to our common understanding, so much the better. Let us put our explanation-craving intellect to rest and use our utter perplexity to power our deep search inside. Zen practice is unending search through all obstacles. Obstacles are no obstacles. Everything encountered on the Path, without exception, is a guidepost, a helping hand, an invitation to pass through.

In practicing zazen, our senses, through which we create the world of delusion, also become the very

...this to drive out all the ghosts and demons of the past year. The din continues at regular intervals, punctuated by the chanting in the zendo, as the group circumambulates the entire house three times, and the big bell continues with its relentless 108 deep tones. Finally we return for the last time, the bell stops, the drum ends and the chanting comes to a close with a resounding "SVAHA!"

Total silence....All take seats in the zendo for the reading of the resolutions. A confession and repentance sincerely made gives rise naturally to a resolution which serves as a reminder of one's faults and one's efforts to overcome them. Thus everyone attending the ceremonies has placed a written resolution into an offering bowl before the Buddha. It is from this bowl that some are picked to be read aloud....

"I resolve to leave all thoughts of small self behind."

"Again and again there has been so much less than full involvement! This has left room for uncharitable feelings and a lack of thoroughness in my work, and has strengthened the ferocious notion that there's really something substantial here to be protected....This New Year I resolve single-mindedness!"

"I resolve to see clearly into Mu. This year!"

"I resolve to live the truth in my daily life... to do what needs to be done, even though it may not always be 'kind,' and to work to know what really needs to be done."

"I resolve to resist the indulgence in a depressed and despairing mind-state, to see through the materialistic view that suffering is all there is, and to realize the truth behind all pain and suffering. Gassho."

The reading over, all slowly move out of the zendo in procession around the house, marking the beginning of a solemn yet deeply joyous candle-lighting ceremony. With zendo lights dimmed, we re-enter the zendo one by one to light our candles from that of our teacher. Gamalong gongs, keisus and hand bells resound gently but deeply in the silence of the zendo filling with light.

While all stand facing into the center aisle, faces illumined by the light of the burning candles, a prayer expressing the Sangha's hopes for peace and harmony is read as an offering...

"May all beings...who are suffering pain of body and mind, obtain by the merit of our practice peace and fulfillment..."

"May those suffering in the Hells find release..."

"May all Hungry Ghosts cease from their cravings and become selfless and serene..."



gateways through which we "re-enter" Buddha Mind. By not suppressing, not yielding, not fighting, not clinging, not separating, not knowing, but ever searching without ever stopping, mindfully, yet mindless of self and other, Knowledge abruptly dawns. No one is left to know; nothing left to be known. Instantly the small mind of ego is transformed into a bright clear mirror in which everything appears just as it is. How inexpressibly marvelous! The moment we see clearly, infinite compassion and understanding arises for all deluded thought and action, and the strong desire to free all life from unnecessary bondage and suffering. We are all free to work out our past karma willingly and joyfully - no one carries the burden. We are all entirely free to be what we cannot help being - defiled, yet simultaneously pure and without the slightest want.

"May all those wandering in the Six Realms take firm refuge in the Bodhisattva Jizo and their wanderings come to an end...

"May the earth be fertile...and may man live in harmony with nature...

"May the wilderness return...may the air become sweet...and may the lakes and rivers become free of pollutants...

"May those who have seen their homes destroyed by bombs, their loved ones killed, their own bodies disfigured...may their wounds be healed and may they not lose faith in their fellow-man...

"May all beings--pained and tormented by the illusion of 'self'--find release and liberation...

"May the path be open to all seekers, and may their yearnings for Buddhahood be fulfilled...

"At this moment, the beginning of a New Year, we earnestly pray that peace shall come into the hearts of man, that strife and dissention shall cease, and that all beings shall attain Buddhahood!"

New Year's 1974



*a pale frosty moon,
the crunch of snow;
who is it greets an old friend,
the New year?*

AT THE CENTER...

U NU

The former Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, accompanied by his younger son, Ko Aung, paid an evening visit to the Zen Center on Sunday, October 8th. His commitment to teach meditation brought him an invitation this Fall from the New York State University system and it was during this lecture tour that he found time to come to the Center.

Ousted by the Ne Win government in 1962, Prime Minister Nu spent several years in detainment in Burma, and later, six months as a monk in a Buddhist monastery. He now lives in Bangkok with his family.

Preceding dinner with Roshi and several Center members, the Prime Minister sat in meditation before the newly-acquired Burmese figure of Avalokitesvara and afterward spoke on Buddhist meditation to the Sangha, answering intense questioning with the peaceful mien and warm tones one might expect from a famous Buddhist statesman.

The Sangha particularly inquired about the role of the Arhat who saves himself versus that of the Bodhisattva who takes the vow to release all beings. Prime Minister Nu then detailed the states of enlightenment understood in Theravada Buddhism, stressing that all could aspire to be a Buddha. Once having gained nirvana, one could rest in and be strengthened by this awareness.

After the discussion, Roshi expressed the Center's gratitude and presented the Prime Minister with a gift of Zen books and incense.

