



South Wind

the Newsletter of the KansasZenCenter

April ~ June

Sangha Notes

On January 6th, at the Kansas Zen Center, Rebecca Otte received her Dharma Teacher robes and Five Precepts were taken by Denise Low and Tom Davis. Congratulations to all!

Congratulations to Fiona Yap and Dennis Duermeier on their wedding January 12. Thanks to Rebecca Otte for performing a beautiful ceremony.

Board members were elected at this year's Annual Meeting January 26. New board members are Clark LaFever - president, Marie LaFever - treasurer, Jan Schaake - facilities and Betsy Forcade - secretary. New at-large board members are Loretta Pyles, Liatris Studer and Diane Silver.

Kansas Zen Center held 49 day ceremonies for John Talleur January 8th and Nick Vaccaro on February 20th. Our condolences to their friends and families.

Congratulations to Judy Wright on becoming a grandmother! Two beautiful twin baby grandsons were born March 1st, Benjamin and Jonah.

Deep gratitude and thanks to all who have worked so hard to maintain and support our sangha. Thank you for putting up posters, baking cookies, setting up the dharma room, cooking wonderful meals for retreats, doing committee work, and otherwise schlepping, hauling and caring so deeply.

The Four Noble Truths

Life is suffering.

Suffering is caused by desire, anger, and ignorance.

There is a way out.

Here is the way.

These are the four noble truths, also known as the four propositions. They are among the earliest teachings of the Buddha. Before he became Buddha, Gautama Sakyamuni had a great question: why is there so much suffering? So the first proposition is the realization that suffering exists. Life and suffering are not separate – if you are alive, you suffer.

This may seem alien at times. Here I am, sitting in my comfortable house, writing on my portable computer, a vase of flowers on the table, watching squirrels chase each other through the winter trees. What kind of suffering is that?

But the suffering Buddha was talking about is not necessarily the great suffering of painful disease or mourning the dead. The Sanskrit word is *dukkha*, which is related to the prefix *dys*, as in *dysfunctional*, and that basically is what it means: something is wrong. "Life is annoying, life is irritating" are, perhaps, better translations. We live in an ocean of suffering, an ocean of irritation, an ocean of annoyance. We are awash in it, wanting to be where we are not, wishing we'd done something we hadn't, wishing we hadn't done something we did, wishing we had what we don't have and don't have what we have. This restlessness, this inability to simply accept our situation, is the source of our suffering.

So the second proposition tells us the causes of our suffering, of this restlessness: desire, anger, and ignorance. A different version of the second proposition names the causes of our suffering as the twelve links in the chain of dependent origination: ignorance, karma, consciousness, name and form, the six senses, contact, sensation, desire, clinging, existence, life, old age/suffering/death. Each gives rise to the next, ceaselessly, with the last giving rise to the first, on and on, never stopping.

Both versions show the fondness of Buddhist tradition for relatively short lists that claim to be complete. In

The Four Noble Truths

Noble Truths - (continued)

some sense they, like all such lists, are arbitrary. Other formulations have arisen over the centuries – suffering is caused by attachment, by thinking, by a restless mind, by... But let's stick to these two lists and see what we can learn from them.

The shorter list is very concrete. We are all familiar with desire and anger. It is easy to see how these cause our suffering. We recognize how other people's ignorance causes suffering – that's what sitcoms and Ann Landers are about. It's harder to recognize our own ignorance, because we are under the delusion that it's knowledge.

So the second list fills out what's hard to perceive in the first list. It delineates the subtle ways in which our minds create reality and cause suffering. Ignorance eventually gives rise to everything, in particular to consciousness and to name and form – the two things we think of as knowledge. And everything in turn eventually gives rise to ignorance. Existence comes from ignorance and causes ignorance. Also, existence comes from consciousness and causes consciousness. And so on, each link turning into all the others until they are all one giant knot waiting to be undone. Right now my son's pit bull is frantically barking at some disturbance, probably blocks away. She can't help it, she is trapped by her instincts. She is miserable. She stops barking

“She stops barking only to whine...
Much of the time we are like this dog.”

only to whine. She runs from here to there and back. She sees no way out. Much of the time we are like this dog.

But the third proposition says: there is a way out. What a fantastic gift! It doesn't have to be this way! In one analysis, we need to be free of desire, anger, ignorance. (That is what the poems of the early Buddhist monks and nuns are about.) In another analysis, we need to break the links in the chain of dependent origination. There are lots of ways to describe what we need to do: don't make anything, don't check, don't discriminate... wake up, perceive your true self, attain "enough mind," attain "rest mind"... These are just different names for the same thing. But how can we find this thing? We need a technique, a method.

And this is the fourth proposition: how to do it. The classic formulation of this is the eightfold path: perfect¹ perception, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, meditation. You can talk a lot about the eightfold path, and a lot of people have. "Perfect livelihood," in particular, gives rise to a lot of speech, a lot of books, even a lot of anguish. But there's another formulation that cuts through all this: the way out is to practice.

¹ The word I'm translating as "perfect" is *samyak*, usually translated as "right" or "correct." But "perfect" is more accurate. This word occurs in the Heart Sutra - *annutara samyak sambodhi*, complete perfect enlightenment.

The way out is to perceive the processes by which we create the world and its suffering – don't talk about them, don't analyze them, just see them for what they are. When you do, they lose their hold. Maybe you have a sudden realization, and a big chunk of them are simply gone. Maybe you just notice one day that gradually, over time, they've lost their power over you - you're not sure when it happened, but things are different then they were before. By a natural process your perception is more clear, your thought more clear, your speech and action more helpful and less hurtful, your livelihood fills real needs, your effort is stronger, your mind more aware, your meditation clearer and more open.

So that is where the four propositions bring us: to the door of the dharma room, to the cushion in our bedroom, to the altar in our living room, wherever it is that we practice. We are brought back to our minds, the cause and the cure of the suffering of this world.

Judy Roitman, JDPSN (expanded from the Foundations of Zen class)

KZC Notes

Please send both surface and e-mail address changes to info@kansazencenter.org or 785.331.2274.

Please note that expenses have required us to increase our retreat fees by \$10 per day for all categories. There will very likely be another increase this fall. These increases will enable us to meet our operating costs, however no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Scholarships or work exchanges can be arranged with the teacher leading the retreat.

Contributions to the Kansas Zen Center are tax deductible and may be sent to the Kansas Zen Center at 1423 New York Street, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Kansas Zen Center

The Kansas Zen Center is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 in Lawrence Kansas. KZC is affiliated with the Kwan Um School of Zen Buddhism an international organization with more than sixty centers and groups founded by Zen Master Seung Sahn, the first Korean Zen Master to live and teach in the West.

Teachers: Dennis Duermeier JDPSN, 785.749.5744
Judy Roitman JDPSN, 785.842.7010
(guiding teacher)

President: Clark LaFever 816.686.6899
Secretary: Betsy Forcade 785.843.1605

Kzc Calendar

Regular Practice Schedule

Kansas Zen Center - 1423 New York Street, Lawrence KS - 785.331.2274

Monday—Friday 6:00 to 7:00 am

Saturday 6:00 to 8:00 am (kong-an interviews)

Sunday 9:30 to 11:30 am, dharma talk at 11:00, beginner's introduction 9:00 am

Wednesday 7:00 to 8:00 pm, (kong-an interviews twice a month)

6:30 to 7:00 pm special chanting

Prairyerth Zen Center - Unitarian Universalist Fellowship 4775 SW 21st St., Topeka KS

785.478.3478 (Rebecca) or 785.232.5958 (Bill)

Tuesday & Thursday 6:00 to 7:00 am

Thursday 6:30 to 7:30 pm (kong-an interviews second Thursday of the month)

Kansas City Zen Group - Unity Church on the Plaza - 816.361.2584 (Greg)

Tuesday 7:00 to 8:00 pm, (kong-an interviews the first Tuesday of every month)

Tall Grass Zen Center - Manhattan KS - 785.537.8713 (Christina or Margaret)

Tuesday & Friday 6:00 to 7:00 am

Wednesday 7:00 to 8:00 pm

Kansas Zen Center Special Events

Compass of Zen Class - For dharma teachers and teachers in training

May 5 & June 9 following Sunday practice. This is a continuation of the class from fall 2001.

You can start with any class. Held at KZC and taught by Judy Roitman JDPSN.

For more information call 785.842.7010

2 Day Retreat with Judy Roitman JDPSN - April 19-21

Retreat at KZC begins at 6:30 pm April 19 and ends at 12:00 pm April 21.

LINK volunteers - May 11

The KZC needs volunteers to cook for and/or serve at Lawrence Interdenominational Nutrition Kitchen May 11. Please contact Liatris Studer (lstuder@hotmail.com) for details.

2 Day Retreat with Dennis Duermeier JDPSN - May 17-19

Retreat at KZC begins at 6:30 pm May 17 and ends at 12:00 pm May 19.

5 Day Retreat with Dennis Duermeier JDPSN - July 16-21

Retreat at KZC begins at 6:30 pm July 16 and ends at 10:30 am July 21.

Precepts Ceremony - July 21

11:00 am at KZC. There will be a potluck lunch following the ceremony.

(If you want to take precepts, please contact Judy Roitman by June 15)

Please note that expenses have required us to increase our retreat fees by \$10 per day for all categories. There will very likely be another increase this fall. These increases will enable us to meet our operating costs, however no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Scholarships or work exchanges can be arranged with the teacher leading the retreat.

Please register for retreats at least five days before a retreat. There is a \$10 late fee. Retreats are now \$40 per day for KZC members and \$55 per day for non-members. Retreats are \$34 per day for dharma teachers and dharma teachers in training.

Two-day retreats cost \$68 for dharma teachers and teachers in training, \$80 for members, and \$110 for non-members. Five-day retreats cost \$170 for dharma teachers and teachers in training, \$200 for members and \$275 for non-members. To register send in the attached registration form or call 785.331.2274. You can also register via the KZC website at www.kansaszencenter.org

For more information, call Betsy or Tim at 785.843.1605 or email us at bforcade@kansaszencenter.org