

Southwind Sangha

An Affiliate of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center

1501 Fairmount, Wichita, KS 67208

www.southwindsangha.org

September, 2006

OCTOBER 20-22 EXTENDED RETREAT

Zenkai Taiun Michael Elliston-Roshi, Founder and Abbot of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center, will lead the Southwind Sangha extended retreat (Sesshin) October 20-22. All who are interested in deepening their experience of Zen are encouraged to participate. The concerns of every day are set aside and participants can commit to being completely present to the direct experience of zazen. Formal commentary (teisho) by our teacher enhances the experience of retreat.

Elliston-Roshi also offers dokusan (one-on-one interviews) at intervals during the retreat. This opportunity to express any dilemma about practice to an experienced teacher is helpful and clarifying.

Participation in the full retreat is actively encouraged, so that the student can settle more fully into meditation. But if you cannot take part in the full retreat, please enter on the hour or half hour during walking meditation. Newcomers sometimes note that some individuals sit through the five minutes of kinhin and conclude that walking is a “break” from meditation. Not so. Kinhin has the same three aspects as zazen: body/posture, breath, and mind/attention. We take one half step with each inhalation, one half step with each exhalation of breath, with dignity and attention to posture. We are attentive and maintain equidistance from others while taking slow, but continuous, steps around the perimeter of the room. Participants may choose to sit on the zafu through kinhin, or may choose to slowly, slowly rise at the signal of the wooden clappers and partake of walking meditation.

Tokudo will follow the Sunday 8 am service for those who have requested the ceremony. Tokudo is the initiation ceremony during which the person becomes a formal Zen Buddhist, publicly acknowledging his or her desire to follow the path of the Buddha. Those who wish to take this step should contact Kathryn Riley, Senior Teacher, as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements.

-- Del Yanagi Do Smith

The schedule for the retreat (subject to revision) follows.

Friday – October 20:	7 – 9 pm	Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting
Saturday – October 21:	6:30-8:30 am	Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting
	8:30-9:30 am	Silent Breakfast
	9:30-11:30 am	Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting
	11:30-12:30 pm	Silent Lunch
	12:30-2:30 pm	Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting
Sunday – October 22	8 am	Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting

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**An Excerpt from
“The Perfect Zendo: a Tale of Woe”**

by Ku Wasan Ann Glasmann

Once upon a time, long ago, in a land far, far away lay a village nestled in a valley at the base of Big Mountain. Like most mountain valleys it was protected from the harsh winds of winter and the heat of summer. A stream whose source sprang up high in the mountain provided every living creature with refreshment. The blanket of firs covering the rocky slopes of Big Mountain followed the stream, until it came to rest as thick groves on the valley floor.

The inhabitants of Big Mountain Village (to name a few) included mothers and fathers, children, horses, insects, grandparents, birds, farmers, teachers, dogs, cats, snakes, bakers, mice, painters, squirrels, a lawyer, a carpenter, a doctor, a medical transcriptionist, fish, and a few musicians. Everyone worked hard, and the village thrived.

Big Mountain Village awoke every morning to the sounds of meadowlarks. Soon after came the swallows and bluebirds. Sometimes the clatter of the great-blue heron could be heard far up the stream near the dark base of the mountain. At the same time in the morning the baker kneaded the dough with rhythmic “thwaps.” The milkman poured fresh milk into heavy cans. Chickens protested as women gathered eggs. Children protested as they were scrubbed behind their ears. Dogs barked as cats began to stretch in the warm sun.

Looking down from the highest point on Big Mountain, the village resembled a spiral. Its leading edge encompassed the stream, the following wide curve held the farmers’ fields and pastures. As the spiral tightened, the lumberyard was drawn in along with roads, pathways, cottages and a school. Shops were tucked into the nooks and crannies.

In the heart of the spiral sat Small Temple, whose grounds contained a small garden, a large compost pile, a tool shed, and an elderly cow who gave no milk.

Upon opening the heavy wooden door of Small Temple, the sunlight flooded the interior exposing floating layers of incense. When the door closed, the darkness was green. As the sun’s imprint left one’s

eyes, the light from the windows silvered the old pine floors.

The blue windows within became the sky.

It was a perfect zendo. Everyone said so.

As Small Sangha sat on their cushions, the breeze ran through the evergreen boughs, moving through the room in slices. Birds sitting in the pines made bird noises. Dogs shared their barking news. From within the zendo walls children were never seen but always heard – and the mutterings of grown humans out in the village came and went according to their tasks.

Small Sangha sat.

One spring when the rain fell, Small Sangha listened to words:

“At the place where you regularly sit, spread out a layer of thick matting and place a cushion on it. Sit either in the full-lotus or half-lotus posture. In full-lotus posture, you first place your right foot on your left thigh and your left foot on your right thigh. In the half lotus you simply press your left foot on your right thigh. You should have your robes and belt loosely bound and arranged in order. Then place your right hand on your left leg and your left palm facing upwards on your right palm, thumb tips touching. Sit upright in correct bodily posture, inclining neither to the left nor the right, leaning neither forward nor backward. Be sure your ears are on a plane with your shoulders and your nose in line with your navel. Place your tongue against the front roof of your mouth, with teeth and lips both shut. Your eyes should always remain open. You should breathe gently through your nose. Once you have adjusted yourself into this posture, take a deep breath; inhale, exhale, rock your body to the right and left and settle into a steady, unmoving sitting position. Think of not-thinking. How do you think of not-thinking? Non-thinking. This in itself is the essential art of zazen.”

Small Sangha was very busy. They thought about their ears and shoulders, their noses and navels, and their lightly touching thumbs. As spring flowed, these instructions seems to become easier. However, as the days passed, they were often forgotten, and their thumbs drifted apart... .

(To be continued)

WHY THIS PATH?

Kathryn Gekko Riley

You may have noticed that when we chant the “Four Great Vows” at the end of each meditation session, we say, “However innumerable all beings are, I vow to save them all.” Notice we don’t refer to men, mankind, or even humanity. We’re talking about ALL beings here, not just humans, not just animals, not even all “sentient” beings – after all, how do we know what is sentient and what is not?

When I was a little girl, my Catholic religion assured me that animals have no souls like us humans, that God gave “man” dominion over all the animals. Therefore, animals did not count. You may still see this attitude when a Catholic insists that “life is sacred”... but he only means human life, not animal life. In the Catholic view, 40 cells of human life is “sacred,” but 40 billion cells of animal life is just so much manure.

When I was a little girl, my gut instinct was that this biased belief itself was just so much manure. When I finally converted to Buddhism in my 20s, I rejoiced to find that my gut instinct was validated by Buddha himself. All beings have spiritual worth; all beings count to a follower of Buddha’s path. That’s one reason why I follow this path rather than another.

WHY DO WE SIT?

Shindo Robert Glasmann

A couple of years ago the Southwind Sangha had the privilege of hosting a group of high school students from Salina. At the end of the session, they asked us many probing questions about Buddhism and Zen. Their questions made me think: “Why *do* I sit here three days a week, week after week, year after year? Am I not trying to get something out of this practice?”

Our Sangha is a Soto Zen Buddhist group. For me, these words seem out of order. I feel that my path is “Buddhist Zen Soto.” Uppermost, I follow the path of the Buddha. If our Sangha in Wichita didn’t exist, then I’d be associated with another group that followed the Buddha way.

These words of the Buddha direct my life. They’re called the Four Noble Truths. Here is a lesson by the Dalai Lama about the Truths: “The Buddha said, ‘This is true suffering, this is its true cause, this is its true cessation, this is the true path.’ He also said, ‘Know suffering, and follow the true path.’ And again, he said, ‘Know suffering, even though there is nothing to know; abandon the causes of suffering, even though there is nothing to abandon; apply yourself diligently to renunciation, even though there is nothing to renounce; and practice the means of attainment, even though there is nothing to practice.’ These are the three aspects of the ground, path, and ultimate result of the Four Noble Truths.”

Happily, there is a Zen Buddhist group in Wichita. Our group is Mahayana – the Bodhisattva ideal of compassion and wisdom – wherein we vow to help all others in their aspiration for enlightenment. We sit with no goal for ourselves, only with the aspiration to be enlightened, to be awake to the true nature of reality, to cultivate *bodhicitta* – the awakened heart/mind of Mahayana Buddhism – for the benefit of all sentient beings. It’s only through our own awakening that we can fulfill our vows to save all sentient beings.

May we develop deep faith in our Zen practice. May we aspire to awaken for the benefit of all sentient beings. “May the Dharma, the only remedy for suffering, / The source of every bliss and happiness, / Be nurtured and upheld with reverence, / And through a vast continuance of time, endure!” (Shantideva)

SANGHA PRISON OUTREACH PROGRAM
Don So Nento Riley

The Sangha received a request from a convict incarcerated in El Dorado Correctional Facility to help their newly formed Buddhist group. They meet twice a week and there are about 15 participants. In my initial contact, I asked what we could do for them. They had no structure to their meetings although they had done a good job in accumulating some basic literature, incense, a Buddha statue, a gong, and a drum. They wanted me to come their meetings as often as possible. So I will go about twice each month.

Since our Sangha chants the "Heart Sutra" each time we meet, I suggested they do the same and furnished them with copies. With some guidance, they decided meditation was important and decided to start out doing zazen (seated meditation) for 10 minutes followed by five minutes of kinhin (walking meditation) followed by another ten minutes of zazen. The remaining half hour would be spent in reading or discussion.

It is very challenging to seek out a "generic" Buddhism that is appropriate for such a mixed group. There are several prisoners that are fairly interested in Tibetan Buddhism, and some interested in Zen. Many are just interested generally in Buddhism and don't know much about it.

It is difficult for me to remember that these young men are convicted felons when I am there. They are respectful, attentive, open minded and friendly. It is my hope that they will become as interested in practicing what the Buddha taught as they are in learning what the Buddha taught. This is something I can really identify with as I would much rather be scholarly than live the precepts and follow the eightfold path.

After all, as Dogen Zenji taught, isn't practice enlightenment and enlightenment practice?

Southwind Sangha Finances

Shindo Robert Glasmann, Treasurer

The finances of the Southwind Sangha are healthy, thanks to your continued support. As has been reported in past issues of this Newsletter, the Sangha recently incorporated in the State of Kansas as a non-profit religious organization. With that incorporation, the Sangha has experienced greater cash outflows over the past few years.

Total expenditures since 2003 are:

2003	\$1,750.18
2004	1,672.52
2005	2,897.34
2006	1,610.55 (through August)

Our major expenses include insurance, accountancy fees, contributions to the Unitarian Universalist Church and Atlanta Soto Zen Center, website hosting, and postage/supplies.

The Southwind Sangha needs your ongoing financial support. Monetary donations are greatly appreciated and go completely to the operations of the Sangha. If a donation is within your means, please make a check payable to the Southwind Sangha and place it either in the donation basket on the library door or mail it to us at 1501 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS, 67208.

We accept cash, too!

Thanks for your generosity.

OCTOBER SCHEDULE

Wednesdays – 7 pm

Oct. 4 – Introduction to Zen Meditation- Kathryn Riley

Oct. 11 – "Expectation: or how to cook brown rice" -
Ann Glasmann

Oct. 18 and 25 – Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting

Thursdays – 7 pm

Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting, Reading

Sundays – 8 am

Zazen, Kinhin, Chanting, Dharma, Talk

(Usually followed by social hour at the Panera Bakery)