

## Noteworthy News

Thanks to everyone who helped raise the Yurt on February 3, 2007! You can go here for pictures:

<http://swzc.org/Html/News/Yurt.html>

Seisen received Inka on February 17, 2007 from Roshi Bernie Glassman at the House of One People.

Kokyo received Dharma Holder on April 8, 2007 and now is serving as assistant teacher for Seisen Roshi.

The training period is from May 31<sup>st</sup> – July 15<sup>th</sup>. You can check the monthly calendar for more details:

<http://swzc.org/Monthly%20Schedule.htm>

Seisen Roshi is now podcasting her dharma talks. You can go online and listen at:

<http://swzc.org/DharmaTalks.htm>

Jukai will be given on May 27, 2007 at 11 a.m. in our newly raised Yurt. Please come and support those who will be taking their Buddhist vows!

Rosaleen McCormack and Larry Drown are both being treated for cancer. Please remember them during the healing service.



## A Message From Our Abbot:



### **Swiss Dogs — GENJO KOAN**

*“this traceless enlightenment is manifested completely”*

While visiting the Aarau Zendo in Aarau Switzerland last month, I was able to do many walks along the river that runs through the town. It was a beautiful spring with sun, flowers and many dogs. It seemed to me that the best kind of life must be that of these Swiss dogs. Their people seemed very happy to take them out to the river and spend time throwing the stick into the water for retrieval. The dogs were consumed with joy playing.

I was suffering some from the inevitable jet lag that affects me when I travel, but looking into the face of one of these delightful Swiss dogs erased all pain. Their wriggly happy bodies telegraphed the total bliss of a river, a stick and an accommodating person. We call this total joy of the moment *jijuyu zanmei samadhi*.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

## Life of an Urban Head Trainee

Create a schedule, follow a schedule, zazen, interviews, projects, zazen, remember to let others know what the schedule is. It's been an interesting and challenging period of training for me. Being the third head trainee at Sweetwater Zen Center and the first non-resident trainee has been full of learning experiences.

When Seisen Roshi first asked me to accept the challenge, I was both hesitant and anxious about starting out. The normal pattern is for the trainee to commit to 90-days of residence at the Center with a commitment to follow the entire schedule, add extra study and reflection time, have extensive interviews with Roshi, and reflect on past, current and future learning. As a non-resident, Roshi and I have had to create a distinct path for me as we go along. There is still a 90-day commitment, but in this design we have spread it out over a year. This has its advantages as well as creating problems.

We acknowledged from the beginning that along with the commitment to teacher, sangha, and Center that I would also have continuing commitments to fulfill to family and home. This complicates things.

I tend to be a person who looks at goals as to whether they get accomplished rather than when or how. It took a while for Roshi to move me to the mind-set that when a schedule is announced, it must be kept. It is part of the experience to demonstrate that I can accept and complete the schedule. Since I have posted my training periods, there have been times when other non-residents have joined me. Some residents hear the han and come to sit even though they had no plan to do so. Most of the time it's just me. Since I have several months to go, let me send you this message: "Please sit with me." Watch for upcoming postings of my schedules.

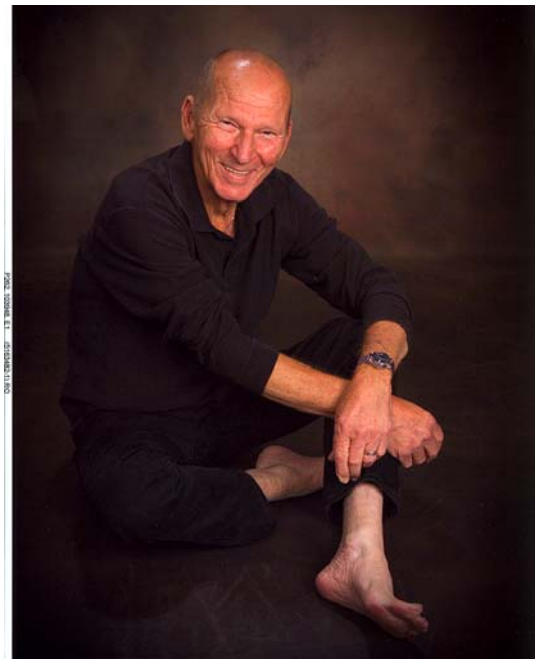
This is a large time and emotional commitment. I have friends outside the Zen community who have asked, "What are you going to get out of this?" Sometimes, when my home chores don't meet my wife's schedule, even she asks this question. Our elderly mothers ask, "Why couldn't you just be drinking tea with me?" Another reaction was from my pre-teen grandson, "Papa, will you come speak to my 6<sup>th</sup> grade class about Zen?" I don't think that I anticipated or now expect to "get something" out of the experience. I have experienced a deepening of my practice, whatever that means.

In the beginning I expected to learn a great deal about myself, but I hadn't planned to learn quite this much. Self discipline has not always been one of my strengths, but to get and give the most from this endeavor requires a great deal of self-discipline. Roshi has been both patient and directive that this must be accomplished and demonstrated.

There are times when I ask myself, "Why am I doing this?" It would be a lot more fun to spend time at the beach. But I just keep coming back. Partially, I think, because I made the commitment to myself and want to complete it and more because I am learning so much, even though it is often uncomfortable.

So what is the bottom line for me thus far? I don't know. I've gotten to know sangha members a lot better. I've had time to bring together what I have learned over the past 15 plus years and realize just how much more I've yet to learn. I've learned that every one is my teacher, especially when the lesson is difficult to learn. I confirmed that I was right those years ago when I first visited Zen Mountain Center, had the Zen experience, and said to Carole, "I'm home."

*(Continued on Page 3)*



Now as we go into the last months of the training the intensity accelerates. I will be doing another week or more of my individual sesshin and following the entire schedule in June. With the increasing demands on my time because of family issues, it will be a real challenge to keep all the pieces together and in balance.

With what I know now I ask myself: Would I still accept the challenge? You bet.

Gassho,  
Gacho



Thanks to Saranam for all the beautiful pictures in this edition!

Best Wishes and Welcome!

SWZC would like to say good-bye, thanks and good luck to residents Glenn Kanpo Friedman and Caite Mathis who are leaving the Center. All the best on your upcoming journeys.

Welcome to new resident Catherine Rogers. And also welcome new members Michelle Hotaling and Adrienne Moore.

Watching dogs, I had an insight about the 10<sup>th</sup> precept “Do not speak ill of the Three Treasures,” which has always been a bit opaque for me. The Three Treasures, of course, is Buddha, Dharma and Sangha which is the oneness, differences and harmony of our life. Or more simply the Three Treasures is my life, your life, all our lives. I was reflecting that when I am anxious or depressed or in despair or in any way not experiencing the joy of life then I am in some way not in touch with the truth. For me the precepts are guides to help me check on what is separating me from the innate joy of being. So, when I am angry, I don’t try to push the anger away or make myself wrong for the anger but allow myself to open up to the anger, to investigate if there is action that I need to take and to let go of the anger. In the same way, when I am anxious or depressed I want to embrace that neuroses as a prelude to doing what I need to do to let it go and experience the joy that is my life.

This dog analogy fails when it comes to the intrinsic perfection of our life. The dog is happy when he’s playing in the water and not so happy if he’s left home alone when his person goes to work. However, this *jijuyu zanmei* samadhi is always our nature regardless of our situation. That being so, we still feel anger, yearning, despair and fear. And many times those feelings are indications of action that needs to be taken.

Last weekend on Earth Day I had such a strong feeling of sadness about the deterioration of our planet. Because of those feelings, I renewed my vows to do what I can to raise consciousness about direct and speedy action towards saving our home. I did feel despair about the human situation and because I also know that life is good and playful, I could renew my vows to take action to make a difference.

Walking back from the river in Switzerland, filled with the joy of Swiss dogs, I came across a little fur bundle of a dog being walked by her person. A few steps away, a big dog also noticed little one and, as well trained as Swiss dogs are, he could not avoid the notion that here was a little dog that could be taken. Like a streak of lightning, the big dog attacked the little one with humans pulling on leashes and gathering them in. Oh well.

“However, flowers fall giving rise to attachment, and weeds spring up, arousing antipathy.”

Seisen

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## Poetry Corner

bodhisattva

you will blow your first breath into  
gods harp  
until you become the instrument we  
listen to for hope  
you will dance our steps and your  
rhythm will move us  
into the arms we need to hold us  
we need you to be here  
because you cry our tears and  
release our flood  
born from the pieces of your story,  
the puzzle of your glory emerges  
under fire and forges our hope,  
in your art of love we are drawn into  
your picture,  
as god pours through you like  
stained glass  
you filter the beauty of this path into  
the steps we take,  
there is nothing beyond you  
because you are the final door  
please, hold yourself open  
and we will bow to crawl through  
you until  
we all emerge with wings  
and you will hold our passage safely  
until every last  
fear has been quelled, and all our  
hope is destroyed,  
for what is hope once you have saved  
the savior?  
your ancestors clap as you begin  
your steps  
they will not invite you into any  
space you will not go  
who will you become as you  
remember we were one.

By  
Joseph Herbert Deer

## A Note From The Editor:

I wanted to thank everyone at the Zen Center for showing so much care, concern, and support for me and my family during Bob's deployment to a detention camp in Afghanistan. In March he first left to Fort Jackson, South Carolina for two weeks of grueling boot camp. Thereafter, he took a charter flight over to Kuwait where he again went to boot camp in the desert. While there, he lived in a tent through wind storms, rain storms, and heat, wearing ten pounds of body armour for twelve hours a day. It took more than three weeks for him to get to the detention camp in Afghanistan.

Now he lives in a B-hut with eight other men. He is not allowed off the base where 12,000 people live, including NATO forces from all over the world (Kazakhstan, Poland, Ukraine, Germany). The base is one of the safest in the region, but conditions are austere and all his work is classified. He is immersed in American military culture there and spends six days a week working long hours as the only psychiatrist on the base. Fortunately, we are able to talk everyday via computer.

For me, as a mother of three children who ask daily why Daddy isn't at home and when is he coming back, I wonder to myself: Is there a Zen practice somewhere here?

I had the singular experience of talking with Claude Anshin Thomas while he visited the Zen Center. He wrote the book At Hell's Gate – A Soldier's Journey from War to Peace. He very kindly related his experiences in Vietnam. Admittedly, our talk was difficult for me. It became clear to me that Bob's deployment will change him. And it will change me too. And if I drop all my ideas and concepts. If I drop all the ideology that comes with "serving our country". Then who I am?

Bob will return in October and these are the kinds of questions we are both asking. The road feels long. But what I particularly took away from listening to Anshin was that the most important thing is to establish a strong practice. And within the practice, the awareness of right action will come. Bit by bit.



In gassho,  
Enju

### SWZC Mission Statement:

*Our purpose is to end suffering.*

*Our practice is to study the self, maintain the precepts and serve others.*

*Our mission is to provide the teaching, training and transmission of Zen Buddhism; to be engaged with our community and with interfaith activities.*