

Mind Moon Circle

Winter 2011 / Jukai and The Precepts



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Koula Frantzi is editing the next issue of Mind Moon Circle. The topic is birth and death and what these events mean for our practice. There is the birth and death of people, but the terms can also apply to projects, belief systems, relationships and many other things. Please send all contributions to kyrfrantz@yahoo.com.au before September 15.

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Authentic expression

By Lee Nutter

I've always been an all or nothing kind of person, so when I got 'serious' about my Zen practice, living in a monastery seemed like the only real option.

Fortunately and unfortunately, I felt I had too much of a good thing going to just leave everything behind and disappear into the mountains so I remained a lay practitioner, struggling to integrate my practice into my daily life.

As I continued to sit, at home and at the Zen centre, I was able to let go of some of the ideals I'd built up about what it meant to be a student of Zen. I'd read about Jukai and felt it was the next step for me. At the time I saw it as a way to commit to my practice, and still appreciate the life I was living. The problem was that I was still so new to Zen practice and felt somehow unworthy, not having gained any great realizations or passed any koans.

On the second last day of the 2010 Easter Sesshin, Allan Marett retook his Jukai vows with Subhana. This was the first Jukai ceremony I had attended, and before getting started, Subhana talked a little about what Jukai was and went on to say that it was open to anyone who felt ready, and that it didn't signify any kind of special attainment or realization.

Allan's Jukai ceremony was incredible. His vows deep and sincere, each one accompanied by a poem or performance of some kind, emphasizing the breadth and depth of his commitment. Through

his vows and other offerings, it was made clear that his Zen practice had informed every aspect of his life.

This deeply moving ceremony helped convince me that taking Jukai was something that I needed to do. Sosan gave me an opportunity to confirm with Subhana that this was in fact something I was able to look further into, and the following Wednesday I was back at Annandale, talking to Gilly about getting started.

I spent the next few months reading Aitken Roshi's *The Mind of Clover* over and over. Each time taking notes, underlining, dog-earring and highlighting. I also found several other books and articles on the topic and read through each one with the same care and attention. Eventually it got to a point where I had to actually write my vows, and as useful as these books were, it became obvious that they didn't contain any right answers. My vows had to come from within.

I came to Gilly with pages of notes, but every week my understanding seemed to shift slightly. The notes I had previously written seemed less relevant than the week before, but this week's thoughts seemed unpolished and incomplete. Eventually though, things started to click.

Spring Sesshin approached quickly, and somehow, between my work, endlessly revising my vows and the rest of my busy

life I had managed to sew my Rakusu. I gave it to Gilly the week before Sesshin, but I was still revising my vows.

I spent Sesshin visiting Gilly and Maggie in Dokusan, fine tuning things. Despite the countless hours of reading, writing and talking with Gilly, it seemed I'd never be 'finished' refining my vows. Although this perfectionism caused me stress and concern, I eventually came to terms with it by integrating it into my vows. As far as I was concerned, if I wasn't continually working with and refining them, I'd be defaming the three treasures. And so, I take up way of not defaming the three treasures, I vow to practice faithfully and forever be refining my understanding.

During the ceremony I learned that I was the first student to take Jukai with Gilly. To be accepted in such a way, by Gilly and all the other amazing people that make up the SZC Sangha, was incredibly humbling. Taking refuge in the Sangha at this time was easy. I will support and be supported. Inspire and be inspired.

It's only been a few months since taking Jukai, and true to my vows, the way I look at the commitment I've made has already evolved. Initially it was a public and at the same time very personal commitment to my practice and this will never change. Now though, it has become much more than that. Receiving the precepts has helped bring practice into my everyday life. There is no longer my life and my practice; there is just a life of practice. The precepts have become more than just a few vows I once made, but a way of being that guides me towards the most authentic expression of my self.

Not that this is an end point either. I'll trip and I'll stumble, and just as I continue to catch myself when my mind wanders during Zazen, I hope to catch myself when I lose my way in my every day life. I'll continue to refine my understanding and feel confident that striving for authentic expression is all I need to find my way and maintain a clear heart.

What Jukai means to me

By Jennifer Gentle

I've just recently come back from Dharamsala. I had this idea a year ago that it would be really nice to spend Vesak in India to celebrate the anniversary of Buddha's enlightenment. So I booked myself into a wonderful guesthouse that was very monastic, complete with temple and spent 12 days reading, meditating on and embodying the Lotus Sutra. While I was there the question arose 'What makes a place spiritual?' I sat with monks from Gyuto Tantric Monastery and I sat with monks from Namgyal Monastery, the temple of the Dalai Lama. I even had the good fortune to see the Kalachakra Mandala and sat in front of the Dalai Lama during the actual full moon of Vesak itself. I had all these wonderful visual accompaniments but that really wasn't what was making the place spiritual. What was making it spiritual was the meaning, the significance I was giving to it all.

It was 16 years ago that I took Jukai. It was on that day, the 30th September 1995 that I took vows to live my life as a Buddhist. My rakusu and all that it holds and symbolizes for me, is without doubt my most prized possession. It always travels with me as hand luggage, something I never want to lose because it can't be replaced.

The precepts are not something I think about every day. In fact, I usually only think about them when something doesn't feel quite right. Very recently I've

had occasions to measure my conduct against the precepts. Here is one example: the temple that I meditated in each day while I was in India was one of the most beautiful temples I have ever been in. It has been created by master Tibetan artists and craftsmen in an attempt to replicate the old temples of their homeland. The temple is at Norbulingka and is called "Seat of Happiness". The main figure is Shakyamuni, he is surrounded by the five Dhyana Buddhas and numerous other Buddha figures, 1176 in all. What I loved so much about this temple is that it is for tourists and people from the local community. It is maintained by a solitary monk. I spent many hours watching many different nations and religious traditions come and go and interact with Shakyamuni Buddha. There was a mosquito, just one, that lived inside this temple. Every day it would come and feed off me, sometimes I would blow it away before it bit, sometimes it won and got its meal. Anyway, one morning I covered myself in citronella oil and thought myself safe, I could see it flying around trying to find a point of entry. My hands were in meditation mudra, it landed and bit my palm so hard I brushed it away a too vigorously and killed it instantly. A relatively minor incident but the remorse plagued me for days and does so even now. It felt like I had killed a friend.

On another occasion earlier this year I made the decision to deliberately break a

precept in a very major way. It was an unusual situation where my intuition was telling me to go against the guidelines set out in the precepts. So the question became 'do I follow my intuition or do I follow the precepts?' After a lot of thought I chose to follow my intuition because that is what I have always relied upon. I knew there would be major consequences to my actions, and there were, but I was prepared to do it anyway. What is really interesting is that I felt no guilt whatsoever. None.

What was the difference between the two transgressions? Why did I feel so remorseful for a minor incident and nothing for something so major? Because one was done without mindfulness and

the other was done fully understanding the implication of my actions. This year at Easter for some reason on the last night of Sesshin I fell asleep during the evening break and woke up just before Sutras were about to start. I love chanting the Sutras and would not miss them for anything but I arrived 30 seconds too late to enter the dojo. So I sat outside on the verandah listening to others chant for me. Then, without me expecting, the Bodhisattva Vows were being read by all - except me. That's when the full weight of my transgression hit me. It was like I was being shunned by all the Buddhas, by all the Bodhisattvas for what I had done. I wasn't allowed to take the precepts, not this year anyway. So, maybe I didn't get off scot-free after all.



Jukai and the path back to our Essential Nature

By Philip Long

Some weeks back a discussion on the Heart Sutra, led by Gilly Coote, was held at the Annandale Zendo. One of the participants asked what the purpose of suffering was. In the discussion that followed the suggestion was made that the cause of suffering was grasping or attachment but the questioner emphasised that he was enquiring about the purpose of suffering not the cause. The questioner wanted a teleology, an end point towards which the existence of suffering was directed. It occurred to me later that Zen practice does not concern itself too much with teleology. The general intention it seems to me is to remain open ended as to the outcome and the future as a whole.

But the connection between suffering and attachment could be reversed thus: the purpose of suffering is to let us know that we are caught up in grasping and to help us make the necessary change. In Christianity the state of sin is nowadays explained in terms of alienation from God. The sacrament of Confession is now referred to as Reconciliation on the grounds that it does away with, or ameliorates, that alienation. In Zen we would prefer to say that the state of ignorance (caused by grasping) is seen as alienation from our essential nature, our true or authentic Self. We are led away from our errors by the suffering caused when we go about things the wrong way. Our essential nature beckons us back but the cause of the suffering is the willfulness of our ego. The process in

Zen concerns itself with cause and effect rather than punishment. Thus the precepts are couched in terms of "I take up the way of..." Each step we take to implement the precepts, to realise our embeddedness in the Way and to be and behave accordingly brings a corresponding release from suffering. There is no all-or-nothing principle here; everything is a question of degree and process. Our essential nature waits patiently, with openness and love, while we stagger about on our usually non-linear dark paths.

Coming to Zen so many years ago I was looking only for release from suffering. I was not interested in any responsibilities there might be on my side. At that time I would have seen any such thing as a burdensome repetition of an excessively strict upbringing. I was interested rather in freedom. It took some time before I had attained enough insight to realise the complex but unified relationship between freedom and responsibility. Saint Augustine said: "Love God, and do what you will." The point is that to the extent that one is realised one is naturally inclined (compelled, if you like) to do the right thing in the circumstances. In the meantime, however, that is to the extent that one is not realised, there is a need for upaya, that is, skilful means, to correct our tendency to error, and to keep us on the path. Enter the precepts - the goalposts between which we should aim to make progress on the Path. As we deepen our realisation we move from

willfulness to willingness, from egocentricity to Dharmacentricity and the aspirations expressed in the precepts become a living reality.

As I began to understand this process in my own life, I was increasingly drawn to take the Jukai ceremony, to commit myself formally and publicly to the character-building side of our practice, the gritty soul work of working with our inherent tendencies to go astray. This I have found to be tough work indeed but also most rewarding. Taking the Jukai

ceremony felt to me like a full and unequivocal commitment to the Buddha's Way, to the Zen path. In fact my delight in the practice was such that I undertook the ceremony on 30 January, 1990, only 10 months after taking up the practice, with John Tarrant at the Annandale Zendo. In the year 2000 I had the privilege of renewing my commitment in a joint ceremony with Tony Miller at Gorrick's Run with Subhana Barzaghi presiding. Might it be time for another renewal?



Reflections from the mind of Jukai: fine words do not personalize the fact

By Kim Bagot

When I contemplate the photos from the original Jukai with Aitken Roshi in Sydney in 1986 memories and nostalgia well up, as well as gratitude to Roshi for opening the Zen way to us so clearly. Of that little fellowship already a number have passed away, drifted away or simply vanished. From the first Roshi held out to our group the truth enunciated in the Diamond Sutra, all dharmas are Buddha-dharma; but we need to work hard at zazen and dokusan to realize that fact, and also work earnestly to actualize a life of integrity and intimacy.

I always feel thankful for the inspiration of Roshi's shining integrity and utterly dependable example of a life well lived. He put Zen practice into practice. My sense of homecoming on finding the path of Zen was later tempered by hearing of episodes of abusive behaviour by teachers overseas who were supposed to guardians and spiritual parents of their students. I wondered whether their study had over-emphasised insight and intimacy and not trained them enough in applying their Zen insights to more mundane matters of common decency and integrity? I remember Roshi's disappointment at the failure of the first assembly of American Zen teachers in 1983 due to misconduct by esteemed teachers.

I want to emphasise here that I am glad that for a long time SZC has had regular meetings to recite, discuss and explore

application of the precepts to our busy, non-monastic lives. 'The "business" of Zen is the perfection of character', as Yamada Roshi said, the developing a character of integrity and intimacy that our close associates see and feel is marked by genuine peacefulness and Ahimsa.

The precepts we take up in Jukai are descriptors of the way of true peace and Ahimsa, as well the pathway to integrate cushion practice into daily life at home, at the shops, on the road and in the office. To help do this, Roshi suggested we review the precepts regularly and put our own words to them. This is a way of refining insights and moving from zazen as a hobby to integrated maturity.

The contemplation and cultivation of the precepts is the practice of observing the ethical and moral strictures, as well as becoming intimate with the dimension where there is no notion of a self, a person, a living being, or a life span, (as the Diamond Sutra says), or for that matter no Dharma, no Buddha or Buddhism. I am reminded of the response of Emma Ayres, the ABC broadcaster, when asked 'What is integrity?', after she had described an outstanding quartet as playing with integrity. Put on the spot she said, 'They play with accuracy and without ego'. Aitken Roshi says, "Intimacy is a step closer to the heart of things than Zen Buddhism itself. What is Zen after all? It

is just a word to describe coming home" ("Encouraging Words", page 10). Homelessness seems to be something of a modern plague. A lot of people seem to be pouring alcohol and cramming excess food into that dully perceived emptiness inside. I am experimenting with terming this hollowness, partly in view of the seemingly very solid materiality of the possessions we clutch more and more of. Lacking a deep sense of being at home more people seem to grasp after intimacy in fleeting or harmful relationships, or with fake friends inside the TV, or inside Facebook (fakebook?). The promises of politicians which dupe us regularly at elections perhaps ring loudly throughout the land because of their hollowness, despite appearing very substantial in our minds. The term empty derives from the idea of being spent or exhausted. A hollow is both a hole and a form. They say that true emptiness is true being.

Moving from our cushions to the motorway raises issues of how to make practice sustainable in our society. Thich Nhat Hahn says, "if Westerners bring into their society an exotic expression of Buddhism, thinking that this particular form of Buddhism is the only true form of Buddhism, (they will feel) like a drop of oil in a glass of water. Buddhism will only succeed here if it is built from your own experiences and with your own cultural ingredients. if you practice in exactly the same way we practice in Vietnam, Tibet, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Japan or Korea, the oil drops will always remain separate from the water"(The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion, Parallax Press, 2010).

The expressions of ritual and sutras we use in our practice are important. They point out that while forms of words are basically empty they are important. Saying publicly for example, I want to become a doctor, is not a big step in itself, but it can be an important milestone on a long, life-defining journey of hard study and practice. As an exercise towards personal understanding I am experimenting with language and cultural forms which might speak fairly directly and truthfully to the mainstream students I meet in my day job. A lot of them are striving very hard at work and study, as well as supporting families. Our increasingly speeded-up, 24/7 world seems more deeply etched in their faces as the years go by. We discuss questions about study/stress/life management; I let them know that I practice yoga and sit regularly. Also, I am acquainted with a number of very bright, questioning young people who seem to have no grounding in religious or spiritual issues that might have been assumed in earlier times. I ponder how to convey to them the dharma of true peace/Ahimsa. On any charges of blasphemy, I am not suggesting any changes- a friend advised me sagely that sanghas have split over small changes to translations. For myself, after a while at sesshin I still get lost in translations, and can un mindfully revert to any of the three versions which Aitken Roshi gave us over the years... feeling more of a goose in a bottle than usual.

Roshi encouraged us to personalize the practice and its basic terms; he said, if you do not realize there will be no realization. Our tradition interrogates us fairly thoroughly, so it might be

appropriate that we interrogate its forms to keep things fresh and relevant. In this mode, I like to look over differing versions of the sutras and Shodoka. The process of re-presenting a verse can work like public documents to set a standard. How do you present this line now? Shodoka is a great compendium of Zen insights bubbling with the author/s' joy in finding the Great Way and delight in sharing it, which resonates with my own experiences. I try to jot down an 'Aussie2011' version, rather than preach to the converted. Then next time I revise I usually find that more or less hollow and begin again.

I will only make brief comments here about word choices to keep things as succinct as possible. D.T. Suzuki in his Manual of Zen Buddhism presents translations of the ancient texts. They can seem somewhat archaic and more on the philosophical side than poetic and allusive and might sound a bit stilted chanted by Australian mouths in 2011 (notice I don't say Barbarian). I do find these differing versions very instructive. From the little I know of the Chinese originals (or translations of Sanskrit) they can be very allusive, without the many connecting words and suffixes of English. Thus it would be somewhat of a fool's errand to try to nail down in Teutonic-style, unique, closely definable meanings. As often with good poetry or music we are invited to be co-creators mobilising our own mindfulness. D. T. Suzuki's Confession: All the evil karma ever committed by me since of old, /On account of greed, anger, and folly, which have no beginning, /Born of my body,

mouth, and thought--/I now make full open confession of it.

By comparison, Pacific Zen Institute's website has this interpretive and perhaps more psychological rendering: All of the ancient twisted karma, /Timeless greed, hatred, and ignorance, /Born of my body, mouth and soul, /I confess openly, and let it go.

Confession nowadays can seem an antiquated, empty ritual. The original sense of confession is of public declaration of faith; if it is truly full surely it should carry through towards genuine character perfecting and atonement? There seems to me to be a sense of karma that can be manipulated to evade personal responsibility and initiative. Karma in the root sense means to do or to act, not to be passive or re-active. I prefer not to use the word "evil" in conversation, as I feel it can block consideration of deeper questions and facilitate dualising mind. I would want to say that Brother Number One or the Furher were deeply harmed and psychopathic, partly due to social conditions, and perhaps due to lifetimes of not accepting responsibility and atoning for their harmful actions. In Thich Nhat Hahn's poem responding to the horrendous predations of pirates on Vietnamese boat people adrift in the South China Sea, he concludes- I am that pirate. Racial purification has a bad history, with its own unfortunate versions in our would-be Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. My latest amateur explication for an uninitiated, south-land denizen would be:

Confession and Atoning:
For all the harmful actions ever
performed by me;
because of my endless grasping,
aversions and self-delusions;
through my doing, speaking and
thinking;
now I vow with all my heart fully
to atone.

D. T. Suzuki renders the Four Great
Vows: However innumerable beings are,
I vow to save them; /However
inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to
extinguish them; /However
immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to
master them; /However incomparable
the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.
The San Diego Zen Centre website
includes this rather free interpretation
which I enjoy turning over in my mind.
Practice Principles: Caught in the self-
centered dream, only suffering. /Holding
to self-centered thoughts, exactly the
dream. /Each moment, life as it is, the
only teacher. /Being just this moment,
compassion's way.

At the moment I am looking into the
meaning of vowing as a first step towards
taking steps to actualize the Great Mind
of intimacy and integrity-

Taking Up The Great Way: My
being is truly boundless, I vow to
wake to it endlessly;
My grasping, aversions and self-
delusions are endless, I vow to let
them go;
Dharma gateways are everywhere,
I vow to walk them;

The way of the Awakened One is
already complete, I vow to
accomplish it intimately.

The Shodoka rings with the author's
boundless joy in finding the Great Way
and keen delight in presenting it to fellow
seekers which resonate for me. I have
been revisiting this somewhat
meandering manifesto, which I never tire
of reciting. In "The Roaring Stream"
Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker talk
about its origins in their informative
preface. At early sesshin the wisdom and
inspiration of this old poem every
afternoon fell like a healing rain of
ambrosia on my tired body and mind,
sometimes after a long day's journey into
the dark night of the soul! D. T. Suzuki
commences his "Song of Enlightenment"
thus:

1. Knowest thou that leisurely
philosopher who has gone
beyond learning and is not
exerting himself in anything?
He neither endeavours to avoid
idle thoughts nor seeks after the
Truth;
[For he knows that] ignorance in
reality is the Buddha-nature,
[And that] this empty visionary
body is no less than the Dharma-
body.

1. Do you know that we walk the
Great Way in the peace which
passes all our understandings, not
striving in anything?
Neither trying to avoid idle
thoughts, nor grasping for truth;

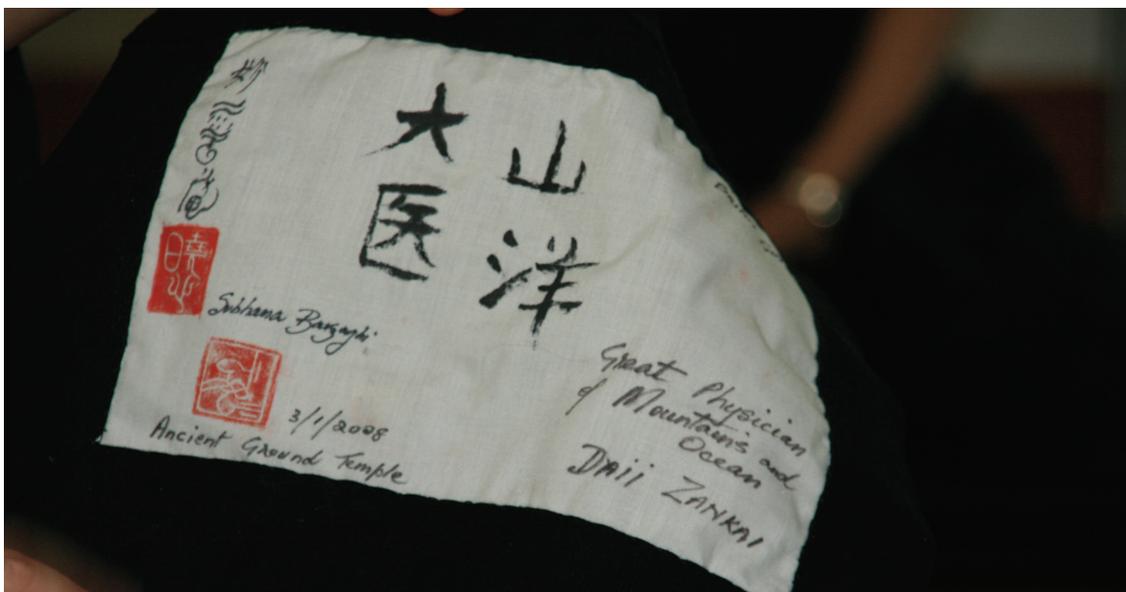
Do you know that our self-delusions really are Buddha-nature,
This hollow, illusory body is no other than the Dharma-body?

2. When one knows what the Dharma-body is, there is not an object [to be known as such],
The source of all things, as far as its self-nature goes, is the Buddha in his absolute aspect;
The five aggregates (skandhas) are like a cloud floating hither and thither with no fixed purpose,
The three poisons (klesa) are like foams appearing and disappearing as it so happens to them....

2. When you know the Dharma-body, there is no separate object to be known,
The original nature of all things is innately Buddha;

All our elements come and go like clouds drifting with no purpose;
Our grasping, aversions and self-delusions appear and disappear floating like foam on the sea.

This might all seem a bit eccentric, perhaps fundamentalist, but I do enjoy mulling over words- the words we use are living artifacts of human history. Engaging with words can be a way of presenting public cases setting standards for understanding. With contemplation a word can suddenly open out into surprising panoramas. Studying Robert Aitken's version of Shodoka is one way to encounter the mind of the Old Boss. I am happy to explore versions with others who are interested. I do recognise that this is not a mass-participation sport. As Roshi says ("Encouraging Words", p.94), "Fine words do not personalize the fact". But listening mindfully to other peoples' stories on the Way can be enlightening.



Living by Vow

By Sally Hopkins

“Living by Vow” is a term used by the Japanese teacher, Kosho Uchiyama. He meant -Living by the Great Vows we chant at the end of our evening sits, ‘Though beings are numberless I vow to save them’. Jukai for me is a ritual helping us to Live by Vow. It is a ceremony in which an individual, joined by the sangha, receives the precepts and vows to live by them. Like all rituals, it is mysterious, speaking more than is said. (The Latin root for ‘ceremony’ is ‘wax’- a very potent image.)

When I took Jukai I did not know why I was doing it, there was just a very strong inner urge pushing me in that direction. When I started sewing the rakasu, with all its exact requirements, and experienced the ease with which all the carefully measured pieces slipped slightly out of alignment, and when there were errors in the instructions, it was a wonderful practice. This stitch. This stitch. This stitch.

Also great practice was formulating my personal responses to the Three Refuges, the Three Pure Precepts and the Ten Grave Precepts. As our bi-monthly Full Moon Ceremonies show us, as we take up a particular precept each time, the precepts are deep, deep wells. We can take a cup full and think that is it. If we keep dipping, the waters grow sweeter, and more invigorating. We can plunge in and never find the bottom. They are lodestars that can guide, like the stars for the mariners, though we are going

nowhere. Coming up with the words to respond to each precept required the deepest attention to my thoughts, words, actions, in light of what I understood each precept was pointing to. And what was it pointing to? What had seemed quite clear, became quite hazy. I mulled, and sat, mulled and sat.

It all tied in with glimpses of mysteries. As Dogen Zenji put it, “...this whole-ten- direction-world is nothing but the True Way, and this whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but Self” (translation from Opening the Hand of Thought: Uchiyama) and “The Self- of –the-whole-ten-direction-world grows by VOW”.

The more I recite and dwell on the responses that the sangha make in the Jukai service, the more profound they become.

Some months ago I read Edith Grossman’s “Why Translation Matters”. She was mainly concerned with translation from one language to another (something that is of the utmost importance to all Buddhist traditions, especially ours). What really interested me was that she suggested not only that all art forms, music, painting etc are translations, but words themselves are translations. ‘Words themselves as translations’ seems to point to why having to form your own verbal response to each precept in the Jukai ceremony is such a great practice. I found it difficult to express all those years ago, and I

rather think it may be even more difficult now. It cannot be done lightly, off the top of your head; it has to come from your heart, your very core. You have to put into words what is not fully contained in words.

For some time I have not been wearing my rakasu when sitting. Again, this was not a conscious decision, and is not what should happen. 'I wear the robe of liberation, the boundless field of benefaction, the teachings of the tathagatha, saving all the many beings' is recited when putting on the rakasu. This does not seem like something to put on and off, but rather something to become

embedded, embodied, into Living by Vow. Yet I also see that it is good to be very often reminded in the noise and drama of our every day lives that 'Form is exactly Emptiness: Emptiness exactly Form' and that 'the whole-ten-direction-world is nothing but Self', and remind myself that I have vowed to live the precepts.

Jukai is an inspiring step in practice, practice, practice, of living by Vow, whenever, wherever, whatever happens, when we can truly experience the love and support of all on the path, and we can all walk together.



Thoughts on Jukai, March 3, 1986

By Maggie Gluek



When I unearthed these photos in an old album my first thought was “Everyone looks so young and beautiful.” A wistful confrontation with impermanence. When Tony was shown the photos his comment was “Everyone looks so grim.” Well it was a serious business. Aitken Roshi’s annual visit always carried a certain gravitas and this time he was bringing with him a special ceremony that he had never performed before. A ceremony in which students took and received the precepts, the ethical foundations of Zen Buddhism, made a bib to be worn as an emblem the Buddha’s robe, and were given a Dharma name by the teacher.

I can’t remember the exact time frame but, once announced, it seemed that we didn’t have long in which to consider taking this step. Those of us who participated plunged in holus bolus without knowing too much. Sometimes bypassing extensive deliberation can be a good thing. For me it felt primarily like a formal declaration of commitment to the Buddha Way, a non-negotiable commitment that already existed. I remember liking what Geoff Dawson said, that for him this ceremony was like getting married when you had been living with someone for a while. And it was an opportunity to enlarge practice.

The first matter to negotiate was making the rakusu, a fabric jigsaw puzzle. Some of us held sewing bees, doing the work together. I bow to Marion Bagot, master seamstress, who guided us and frankly relieved me of the trickier bits. Without her I may not have finished it in time. My rakusu was subsequently lost. Before it was found I had occasion to make another one, this time solving the puzzle entirely by myself. Then I could truly appreciate this meticulous and grounding activity, a Dharma craft, a needle's call to attention. When my sister made a rakusu at the Minnesota Zen Center, under the tutelage of Tomoe Katagiri, she was instructed to affirm with each stitch "I take refuge in the Buddha."

As to a name, I remember having negotiations with Aitken Roshi in the middle room upstairs at Annandale. He had asked those undertaking jukai to present him with a quality they aspired to and something in the natural world they felt an affinity with. I nominated "courage" and "tiger" respectively. The following Saturday morning he rang our home at 8 am. Phoebe answered the phone. I was deeply (and unnecessarily) ashamed that Roshi had caught me in bed when I should have been up doing zazen like a good student! For some reason, he said, tiger wouldn't work. He was giving me the name of Peaceful Dragon.

That name, worn next to my heart, original seat of courage (cor), was from the outset encouraging and empowering. And these wonderful names are nothing if not enlarging! Dharma friends, it turns

out, have the nature of woods and waves, birds and flowers, mountains and clouds. Some years later I thought of the cowardly lion in *The Wizard of Oz*. The rakusu Roshi bestowed on me, like the badge of honor the Wizard hung around the lion's neck, was not something delivered from outside but an emblem of what was already true in me, is true in all of us, a reminder of that place of peace where the precepts reside. You don't need a rakusu after all to receive the precepts and to live by them.

I can't find the vows I wrote for that jukai. For years they were on a piece of paper inside my rakusu case and then they went the way of all transient things. The only one I remember, for its pithiness, was the Fourth Precept. "I vow to keep my mouth shut." As upaya the vows are, of course, alive and present, hopefully informing my thoughts, words, and deeds.

After the ceremony had finished that evening, our family got in the car to drive home. I took the wheel, reversed to pull out of the parking spot and without looking crashed into the vehicle parked behind me. Was this breaking a precept or just breaking headlights? A lesson in cause and effect for sure. Everything we do has consequences! May these consequences, with the guidance of the precepts, be wholesome and life affirming. The cost of my inattention was almost redeemed by the effusive gratitude of the woman who owned the car (not a zendoid) when she found the apologetic note with my contact details on her windscreen. We made a warm connection

Establishing the precepts so all will inherit the wisdom of the Buddha

By Gillian Coote

Each time we come together as a sangha, we make our Bodhisattva Vows together. And, every month around the full moon, we conduct either a Full Moon Ceremony, with a sharing circle for exploring how a particular precept might be understood, or recite the precepts with Bodhidharma's and Dogen's responses instead of the usual sutras. Thus the Way opens out as we articulate an ethical and moral framework for our lives, lives of engagement, connection and compassion. Lives of benevolence and reverence.

Over the years, the cycle of exploring the precepts returns us again and again to the details of how we separate ourselves from other beings as we reflect on not killing, stealing, misusing sex or lying, on practising freedom from addictions, not speaking ill of others and not sparing the Dharma assets...we begin to see just how and when the Three Poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance rise endlessly. These circles provide precious space and time for sharing experiences, learning from each other and practising deep listening. The sangha circle is intimate. We accept that none of us perfect, that wherever we are on the path, the precepts serve as our guides. That there is no pressure to speak.

From time to time, when a student is ready to really internalise and personalise the precepts, a public, formal ceremony is held in front of the sangha called Jukai – literally 'receiving (ju) the precepts (kai)'.

This marks a formal transition in our lives as lay Zen students. It involves long preparation – reflecting on the precepts towards writing one's own vows to be made publicly, making a rakusu, a symbol of the patchwork robe of Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples and, with the teacher, finding a Dharma name.

Early in 1986, ten of us made this commitment in our dojo at Annandale after Aitken Roshi offered our sangha the opportunity of Jukai. (see group photos elsewhere in this issue) This was the first Jukai ceremony he had ever conducted as a teacher as, for various reasons, his own sangha had not yet taken it up. What a bountiful Aussie harvest!

Around this time last year, Lee asked about taking the precepts. He had been practising for some time and felt ready to take the next step of personalising the sixteen precepts and making them his own. Of course, this is a lifelong process but, like drafting and re-drafting an essay, the time comes when you must rule a line under it and, with a trembling heart, you step up to the altar, your rakusu sewn, your Dharma name known, and your vows expressing your heart-mind as best they can, at that particular moment.

For Lee, that particular moment came during spring sesshin last year. I'd hung Slapp's black and white portrait of a beaming Aitken Roshi in the dojo and Lee's mother Sue and partner Mel had

come up from Sydney for the event. After thanking them for their support, I said: 'This sangha supports Lee too – all of us here in the dojo today, and those back in town – the mahasangha of birds, frogs and stars – Robert Aitken Roshi – and all Buddhas throughout space and time. Lee has shown courage and determination to reach this point today – there've been months of reflection, clarifying how he intends to embody the Way in his life. He feels this is a never-ending process – he could go on refining his vows for many more months and years, and indeed they will inevitably change. But they are how they are today – he's given them his best.

The precepts arose in the Buddha's own community and they give form to the realisation of inherent good – not 'good' as opposed to 'evil', but self-nature, Buddha-nature, the separate self, forgotten completely. They're not prohibitions, rather they are guides showing the way of wisdom and compassion, moving us beyond greed, hatred and ignorance, beyond self-centred delusions. They are medicine for the Three Poisons – the Medicine Buddha Aksobhya here in action.

Jukai is the only ceremony in which we publicly announce our intentions as lay Zen Buddhists. It is a major step both for Lee and for me, as Lee is the first student to take Jukai with me. While we listen to Lee's vows, we can refresh our own intentions, whether we've taken Jukai or not. We begin our ceremony with three vows.' And so the age-old ceremony unfolded, with Sei Shin – Clear Heart – Lee - emerging at the other end. The

teisho of the actual body is the harbour and the weir.

As I said during Lee's Jukai ceremony, one can refresh one's intentions while another student takes Jukai. As well, just as after many years of marriage people sometimes renew their vows and re-commit themselves to each other, one can also renew one's understanding of the precepts and take Jukai again. I renewed my vows with Aitken Roshi at Palolo in 1994 after the Rohatsu Sesshin. Jitsu Mu – actualizing the mist - is my Dharma name. Both sets of vows are below, the renewal vows coming first.

The Three Vows of Refuge

I take refuge in the Buddha

in his realisation on this day and the brilliance of the light it shines throughout space and time.

I return to the Buddha, to realisation.

I take refuge in the Dharma

the middle way of wisdom and love, with profound gratitude to my teachers.

I return to the Dharma, to truth.

I take refuge in the Sangha

the mutuality and interdependence of all beings, and the support of loved ones.

I return to the sangha, to harmony.

The Three Pure Precepts

I vow to maintain the Precepts

as best I can so that Buddha's wisdom might be actualized in the world.

I vow to do my best to practise all the precepts.

I vow to practise all good Dharmas
responding as best I can to what comes up with integrity and love.
I vow to nurture the Dharma.

I vow to save the many beings
by being present and calm with whatever arises, and by not excluding life by self-preoccupation.
I vow to save all beings, including myself, from delusion and attachment.

The Ten Grave Precepts

I take up the way of not killing
of practising nurturing and compassion towards all of life.
I vow not to kill or hurt mindlessly.

I take up the way of not stealing
When greed and desire for things or experience arises, I vow to cultivate the trust that there is always enough to go around, and to be patient.
I vow to recognize thoughts of gaining.

I take up the way of not misusing sex
I respect the power of eros and vow to be honest in relationships.
I vow not to create unhappiness through acting selfishly.

I take up the way of not lying
I vow to remember before I use words that speech is a powerful action that can kill or give life. Even half-truths are potent.
I vow to try to speak appropriately and constructively in openness to all beings.

I take up the way of not giving or taking drugs
honouring my body, the bodies of all beings and the great earth herself, by being mindful about what goes in through the mouth, eyes, ears and what goes down the sink and into the rivers and oceans.

I vow not to cloud my mind or body, or cause others to be clouded, through indulgence in drugs, and to practise acknowledging feelings.

I take up the way of not discussing faults of others

I vow to practise intimacy and love when I hear myself or others discussing faults of others and to ask myself, is this is helpful or harmful?

I vow not to discuss the faults of others even though this is sometimes very difficult.

I take up the way of not praising myself while abusing others

and also not praising others while abusing myself, but to find the middle way of acceptance and love.

I vow to practise the open way of non-attachment to views and to receive others' views.

I take up the way of not sparing the Dharma assets

of living generously and holding back, enjoying the bounty and reciprocity of life.

I vow not to hold back from sharing.

I take up the way of not indulging in anger
irritation or defensiveness, to notice when it arises, and to look into its roots so it may be transformed.

I vow to be mindful of anger.

I take up the way of not defaming the Three Treasures

by practicing the precepts with the support of the sangha so I can actualise the Way in this life.

I vow not to create discord and to be lovingly protective of the Dharma treasures.

As lay people together, we do not have a model of a priest as a leader, and follow in the footsteps of a few great lay people, from Vimalakirti to Robert Aitken Roshi, who said, 'Our everyday life is a great, multifaceted koan that we resolve at every moment and yet never completely resolve... guided by these expressions of inspiration, the precepts.'

Jukai Vows, Allan Marett

The Three Vows of Refuge

I take refuge in the Buddha
I alone am the honoured one

I take refuge in the Dharma
The vast empty universe is no other than myself

I take refuge in the Sangha
I and all beings co-arise in this moment and throughout all space and time

The Three Pure Precepts

I vow to maintain the Precepts
I vow to live in harmony with the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and to realise the Buddha Way through my actions in the world

I vow to practice all good dharmas
I vow to realise the universal heart-mind and to extend its loving kindness to all beings

I vow to save the many beings
I vow to realise my intimacy with all beings by always acting with integrity, with a compassionate heart and with generous hands

The Ten Grave Precepts

I take up the way of Not Killing
Although in essential nature there is no killing and nobody to kill or be killed, I

recognise that killing has powerful karmic consequences and destroys universes. I vow to avoid killing and to practice non-harming.

I offer the following chorus from my Noh play, Oppenheimer:

So seductive; so technically sweet.
So seductive; so technically sweet
Dicing with God's building blocks, remaking the world:
The alchemists' ancient dream, realised at last.
At Los Alamos, blinded by his insight,
Oppenheimer, like Hyakujo, forgetting karma, sees
The ten thousand things coming forth without cause.

The cry of the small animal torn apart by the fox.
Screams of children burnt alive at Hiroshima.
What of these? What of these?
The threads of karma
Are tightly woven through the fabric of the world.
The laws of cause and effect cannot be evaded.
The laws of cause and effect cannot be evaded

I take up the way of Not Stealing
When the whole universe arises as myself and I arise as the empty universe, what is there left to steal? And yet as a society and as individuals we steal on a daily

basis from those less fortunate and less powerful than ourselves in order to support our affluence. I vow to cultivate an awareness of this 'structural stealing,' to avoid it where possible and to act with generosity towards those less fortunate than myself.

I offer another poem, this one from my pilgrimage on Shikokoku.

Breakfast at Tosa Kure
Five female pilgrims listen;
As a Korean monk holds forth.
"Buddhism is not
About acquiring things," he says
"Throw them all away"

I take up the way of Not Misusing Sex
Within the boundless freedom of the Way, I recognise that sexual acts, like killing, have powerful karmic consequences. The burden of shame that comes from inappropriate relationships that hurt rather than delight shuts me off from my lover and from those to whom I must deceive. I vow to guard my integrity with my life.

Another poem:

My Kannon pendant
Hanging at your throat
Reflects back to me
What it means to lose my heart.

I take up the way of Not Speaking Falsely
The Way is intrinsically and self evidently true. I vow not to deceive myself or the world and to avoid doing things that would require me to lie.

I offer part of the final chorus of the first act of my Noh play, Eliza:

Freed from falsehood
Her ghostly body falls away
And her spirit is delivered once
again into
The emptiness of country, where
every footstep
Marks the track of Eaglehawk.
Wing-tipped to the mirror lake,
she tracks the surface once
The mirror dances and she is free
The mirror dances and she is free.

*I take up the way of Not Giving or Taking
Drugs*

Video games, television trash, media gossip, drinking to dull the senses – Distractions are the poisons of our age – we are constantly surrounded by them. I vow to be alert to those things that distract me from the fullness of this moment and to learn to be careful around them. As for drinking wine and laughing with friends though, perhaps one day I will need give up even these, but not yet.

A poem by Ryokan:

Waiting for a friend, I drink four
or five
cups of this splendid sake.
Already completely drunk, I've
forgotten who is coming.
Next time be more careful.

*I take up the way of Not Discussing Faults of
Others*

Discussing the faults of others cultivates a world of me in here and you out there. It nurtures the Self and obscures the

vastness of my true nature. Nonetheless it is unrealistic to think that we can avoid making judgments about people in our daily lives, whether as part of our professional activities or in safeguarding the dharma. I vow to avoid careless judgments of other and when called on to judgments about others, to do so in a spirit of loving kindness.

A pair of loosely matching haiku:

“Allan could do better”
The litany of my school reports
Year after year.

And now young student
I offer you a dose of
The same medicine.

*I take up the way of Not Praising Myself while
Abusing Others*

When we are truly on our own ground,
there is nobody to praise and nobody to
abuse. When there is nobody to praise
and nobody to abuse we are truly one
with all being. I vow not to separate
myself from the great way by praising
myself and abusing others:

I offer this haiku:

Oh, what a relief
To walk the pilgrim’s pathway
As a nobody.

*I take up the way of Not Sparing the Dharma
Assets*

It is said that comes in through the gate is
not the family treasure, and that what
flows out covers heaven and earth. In
accordance with this, I vow to curb
stinginess in all things, to find generosity

in my heart and to let all that I am flow
out for the benefit of all beings.

A poem by the Tang poet Han Shan:

the unfortunate human disorder
a palate that's never weary
of steamed piglet with garlic
sauce
roast duck with pepper and salt
deboned raw fish mince
unskinned cooked pork cheek
unaware of the bitterness of
others' lives
as long as their own are sweet

I take up the way of Not Indulging in Anger
Anger is unavoidable and can be a proper
response to injustice, stupidity and
cruelty, which spurs us to action.
Sometimes, as in response to slights and
abuse, it alerts us to our own egotistical
clinging. Like all things, anger arises and
falls away. I vow to embrace it as a true
teacher, and then to let it go.

A recent poem:

Earth day evening
We turn out the lights
And venture out

The street is ablaze
The park is ablaze
Every house and every unit
Is ablaze with light

I'm furious at everyone
Outraged at the leaders
Who sanction such bad
behaviour.

Returning home I sit quietly in
zazen
What can I do next year
That will make this work better?

*I take up the way of Not Defaming the Three
Treasures*

Walking alone, as the vast and empty
universe, as the inter-being of all things:
this for me is the way of not defaming
the three treasures. I vow to do my best
to hold to this way in every moment and
in every place.

A final poem:

Hsueh-feng sits alone in the
empty hall
Shakyamuni and Hakuin wait in
the wings
We are all waiting in the wings

A sword flashes
Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
Skewed right through
AHHHHHHHHHHH

Jukai Vows, Sarah Kanowski

The Three Vows of Refuge

I take refuge in the Buddha
Small mind dropping away; endless
opening to the way things are.

I take refuge in the Dharma
The means of release, the way of
liberation.

I take refuge in the Sangha
Near and far, hard and sweet, unfolding
together: bird, stone, star, us.

The Three Pure Precepts

I vow to maintain the precepts
The precepts offer liberation from the
suffering of self-preoccupation.

I vow to practice all good dharmas
To discover and embody the way of the
Buddha, again and again.

I vow to save the many beings
Who and where are the many beings?
Practicing the precepts and living out of
the dharma is the means of seeing and
saving.

The Ten Grave Precepts

I take up the way of not killing
Not killing but cherishing life. Cultivating
kindness in thought, word and action.

I take up the way of not stealing
There you are, dreaming your
thirst
When the water you want is
Inside the big vein
On your neck (Rumi)

I take up the way of not misusing sex
The place of strongest holding on to the
storyline of me is the place of greatest
liberation.

I take up the way of not speaking falsely
Words have the power to harm or to
heal. Seeing the truth of interbeing allows
me to speak the truth, practice the
dharma, and nourish the sangha.

I take up the way of not giving or taking drugs
Not seeking distraction, may I instead
bring awareness and acceptance to the
experience of difficulty and fear.

I take up the way of not discussing the faults of others
Judgment breeds fear and false views.
Judgment is softened with forgiveness
and openness.

I take up the way of not praising myself while abusing others
In separate skin but standing on the same
ground, we unfold together.

I take up the way of not sparing the dharma assets
The well is bottomless. The way of giving
is limitless.

I take up the way of not indulging in anger
My original dharma gate, old friend, wise
teacher.

*I take up the way of not defaming the three
treasures*
Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. May we fully
realise the way together.

Jukai Vows, Nigel Pearn

The Three Vows of Refuge

I take refuge in the Buddha
Swimming out further than I can swim
back, I vow to realise that I am the ocean.

I take refuge in the Dharma
The truth is all that there is.

I take refuge in the Sangha
Wind works on stone as stone works on
wind. Hear it whistling and join in that
song.

The Three Pure Precepts

I vow to maintain the precepts
The precepts are the guide and goal.
What a fine knife for cutting pumpkin.

I vow to practice all good dharmas
Get out of bed and put on your work
clothes. Practice means being awake. So
wake up!

I vow to save the many beings
All things are related. Through practice I
save all beings.

The Ten Grave Precepts

I take up the way of not killing
Peace is the way in mind, speech and
action. There is no end to the path of
perfection.

I take up the way of not stealing
There is no need to collect. The moon
shares light from the sun when it shines
on all beings.

I take up the way of not misusing sex
My body is my teisho. Not proving
anything means saying yes to pure energy.

I take up the way of not speaking falsely
Who is this person who is speaking?
Stop. Not rushing in allows deep
listening.

I take up the way of not giving or taking drugs
Wine is just grapes but the canyon of
avoidance widens with watering. There
are other paths to take.

*I take up the way of not discussing the faults of
others*
Foolish people are rich with talents. Let
our better natures play together well.

*I take up the way of not praising myself while
abusing others*

Let compassion for myself and others
soften all these barriers.

*I take up the way of not sparing the dharma
assets*

Hiding it does not help. All things renew.
Celebrate it now.

I take up the way of not indulging in anger

Softening my morality lets me take the
hand of my little brother. When energy
flows I am creative.

*I take up the way of not defaming the three
treasures*

Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Three homes
to come back to together.

Eulogy for Sexton Bourke, Insight teacher & Zen Roshi

By Subhana Barzaghi



Sexton Bourke faced life and death with equanimity, he died a peaceful and graceful death on the 26th May at home in Bellingen surrounded by his beloved family. Sexton was a dear dharma friend of mine spanning over 35 years. He was a revered teacher in both the Insight Meditation tradition and Diamond Sangha Zen tradition. He was well known and much loved especially amongst the local Buddhist communities along the Eastern seaboard. He was a long-term member of the Sydney Zen Centre and received transmission as a Zen Roshi in 2010 at Kodo-ji Temple. He was a kind, generous, warm, wise and very unassuming humble soul. Over the years

his reputation as a fine teacher spread and he was also known and respected internationally.

Sexton had two great passions in life, his dedication and love of his family and his Buddhist practice. He was the primary career for his autistic son Edward, who is now twenty-one and managing to live independently in a shared house in Bellingen. His beautiful daughter Katrina, a brilliant and dynamic young woman gave the most inspired powerful, loving, moving, humorous eulogy that I have ever heard at a funeral. Many of us who stood and listened by the graveside,

envied such a deep loving relationship between father and daughter.

I first met Sexton in 1976 at one of the first Buddhist retreats held in Australia. Sexton was introduced to meditation back in those heady hippie days, by Victor von der Heyde, who is now an Insight teacher in Brisbane. Sexton turned up to a seven day retreat wearing his mechanic overalls. The rest of us were fresh out of India, wearing long hippie skirts and baggy pants. Sexton had no idea what to expect or wear at a retreat, mechanic overalls were not the norm, so he stood out for me from the very first instance.

Sexton studied with various teachers, Christopher Titmuss senior Insight Meditation teacher and Zen teachers; Joko Beck, Robert Aitken Roshi and John Tarrant Roshi and then took up koan study with me for over 10 years. Sexton was the founder of Tallowood Sangha in Bellingen.

Sexton was a humble man of deep integrity and wisdom with a down to earth style. He was originally trained as an aircraft mechanic and his mechanic skills served him well living in a rural community. He had an inevitable blokes shed, full of handy tools to fix anything and everything. His practical skills flowed over into his applied every day accessible teaching style.

Due to Sexton's caring role as a parent, it was hard for him to leave home and attend regular sesshins. His practice involved sitting every morning and studying koans. In 1987 we started

formal koan study together. This entailed a once a month trip on his motorbike to Kuan Yin Temple in Lismore for a 1 & half hour dokusan (interview) with me and then he turn around and drive back to Bellingen. When I moved to Sydney he managed to maintain this once a month routine, only it was a longer six-hour drive to Sydney. However, he was not deterred and stayed over night at Victor's place and trucked back to Bellingen the next day. Sexton maintained this regular practice and routine for approximately 10 years, which is an outstanding commitment to his practice.

Sexton was diagnosed with cancer seven years ago and despite the trials, pain and difficulties; enduring 4 major operations, several rounds of chemotherapy and the decline of his health, he hardly ever complained, such was his equanimity. Pamela his wife, who nursed him to the end, said emphatically he never complained, which is remarkable in itself. He was an embodiment of equanimity and deep peace right to the last breath.

There were a couple of striking things about Sexton, one was his presence, he was just right there with you, gazing at you with those steady clear blue eyes. He was open and warm-hearted with every person he met, it was though he had all the time in the world for you, even through his exhaustive illness. The other striking thing was his gigantic hands, those wonderfully talented hard working hands, that when they could no longer get out and tinker in the back shed to do their magic, they turned into expressive mudras whenever he spoke.

Sexton was a man who embodied deep wisdom and freedom. He was a clear example how one can find freedom and peace in any situation, whether it be; sickness and failing health, mindfully doing the mundane tasks of washing dishes or working on the farm. Several years ago, while we were teaching an Insight retreat at Wat Buddha Dharma, Sexton reported an experience to me. He said, that he awoke one morning feeling as free as a bird, as if he was let out of a cage. He described this freedom as a result of putting down the burden of the ego self. This was unlike other insight experiences and epiphanies where the Aha! moment peaks and then fades, however this feeling of deep peace and freedom stayed with him and permeated his days.

As Joko Beck another Zen teacher who also died recently said, “the important work of practice is to learn how to deal with the egotistic self, that’s the work, and it is difficult.” This is the inner work we do, day by day we keep shedding those crusty layers. (Interview conducted by Donna Rockwell, Shambhala Sunspace). How did Sexton, Joko and numerous other ancient teachers arrive at a place of deep peace, freedom and equanimity? I can hear Sexton say, Practice, Practice, Practice. He had a solid commitment to practice every single day.

After his fourth major liver operation where they also removed his spleen and part of his pancreas, there were a series of complications and he nearly died from a post-operative infection. Luckily Pamela, with her medical knowledge

realized his dire predicament and the doctors scheduled an emergency surgery in the middle of the night, which saved his life. It was not the first time that Sexton came so close to death’s door. His life was hanging by a thread and yet his mind was steady and at peace. He said, he felt like a leaf simply floating down the river of life and it was absolutely fine.

At this time, Sexton was at his lowest ebb, it was a real struggle fighting the infection. During his darkest hour, Sutta 143, “Advice to Anathapindika” in the Majjhima Nikaya, appeared in his mind. Sexton felt impelled to re-read this text. He requested the book and I had it sent over to him. A couple of days later I organised an impromptu healing circle for Sexton. A few Zen friends gathered around his hospital bed to offer a loving-kindness and healing mediation for him.

When we arrived, Sexton was looking so much better and perkier than how he was earlier in the week. In fact to our surprise he was sitting up in bed, he picked up the Middle length discourses and started reading Sutta 143 to us. These are the teachings that Sariputra (the Buddha’s senior disciple) gave to the devoted layman Anathapindaka who was dying. Sexton was very emotional, shaking and crying as he read these profound teachings. They were not tears of grief, but tears of joy and delight, his heart was overflowing with gratitude for these liberating teachings of not clinging to any aspect of body and mind and the encouragement to let go. Sexton seemed to morph into Anathapindaka, Sariputa and the Buddha all in one. What was touching for us, was that he was giving a

dharma talk from his hospital bed. He was teaching us on many levels, primarily that you can rely on the dharma, even in your darkest hour.

Due to this long stint in hospital with the disruptive medical routines and low energy, Sexton's formal meditation practice had waned. He left hospital feeling particularly depressed. At that time, everything around him, his wife, children, every thing he saw and experienced had turned to darkness and suffering. One day while walking to collect mail at the front gate of his property, a shaft of light penetrated through the bamboo grove and his depression lifted momentarily. He realised that he needed to re-establish a formal daily practice again. After doing so, three weeks later his depression lifted.

In the last 3 years of his life, he made a commitment to sit every morning with a small band of dedicated members from his Zen group in Bellingen. Even through his illness he continued to provide a dharma talk and dokusan once a month. The group sat from 6am-7am followed by breakfast together at a café in town. The group members headed off to work and Sexton would return home and rest or collapse. Sometimes it was the only thing Sexton could manage in a whole day, which was to simply attend the early morning sitting in town. He did not have the energy to lead sesshin or intensive retreats so he decided to inspire students to have a daily practice, through his example.

These wise teachers knew something about the value of sustaining a daily

practice. I remember, Aitken Roshi saying; 'make zazen the backbone of your life'. Joko said, 'meditation gives you the strength to face the more complex things of your life'. She defined meditation, 'as awareness of what is, mentally and physically'. This is being with the suchness of things as they are.

In the last few months of Sexton's life, I asked him what was his practice these days and are you at peace brother? Which was one of the questions the Buddha always asked and inquired about with his fellow monks. Sexton's response was, "I am just sitting here in my armchair these days, looking out of the garden and paddock on the farm. You know, the present is so fulfilling, so rich and abundant, so complete, nothing can be added to it. I am completely at peace here".

One of the hardest things for Sexton to let go of, was his responsibility for his son Edward. In one of the last connections he had with Edward, he told him, "I am indeed proud of you son for what you have achieved. This was very meaningful for Edward.

Another piece of Sexton's handy work and legacy is that he made several Temple bells for various local meditation groups. He heard that Sydney Zen Centre was looking for a Temple bell and made us a beauty, now installed at Kodo-ji, Temple of the Ancient Ground at Gorricks Run. The bells were made from re-cycled wheel rims, which represented the aesthetic of re-used things, which had Sexton's spirit stamped all over it. In a twist of irony he called the bell, 'Silence'.

When every the bell is struck, it is a call
to silence and stillness of the mind. He
wrote a poem for the bell.

The sound of the bell
Calls to the ten thousand things,
Wake to my silence!

Sexton certainly requited his deep
obligation to the dharma, to his teachers
past and present, and to the Buddha Way.
It was a privilege to be his friend, to work
with him and to know him through the
trials and tribulations of his life. Sexton

was deeply appreciated and loved by so
many, he will be dearly missed by; family
member, friends, community members,
and the wider Buddhist Sangha. His
memory and teachings, his penetrating
clear dharma eye, his loving presence,
unshakable freedom and deep peace will
rest in the hearts of those who knew and
loved him. We thank you Sexton for
being true to yourself, for above all just
being Sexton.

With deep respect and a deep bow,
Subhana Barzaghi

Planting Garlic, Grieving Sexton

By Diana Levy

Hearing the news, I head into the bush to grieve.

There is a sorry business place - a very small cave - and I find new furniture in it, a circle of stones made by some local kid. I make a new fireplace on a rock at the entrance and clear away the dead leaves. I make the effort to think it through, make a rake from a branch, imagine the horror if I start a bushfire here, the leaf litter thick. It is careful heavy work, as though each dead gum leaf was made of lead. Such is the weight of losing you from the world. But for you, perhaps a lightness, leaving dukkha behind, 'goodbye,' the weight transferred.

I crack sticks and tend the fire as carefully as you tended your son. What do I know about fires? You would know about fires. The sticks must be small enough to catch the heat of the leaves and burn right through, to give their energy away. There's a tiny orange flicker of fire in my brown pile of leaves and sticks. It is slow careful work, a dampness in the fuel - you cracked small sticks for years and added them to the fire in the family hearth. And Pamela cracking sticks and treading faithfully with you as your liver gives a great HOWL of anguish - blooming cancerous - your rocky hard

path keeps getting narrower and steeper...and all this time, Sexton, you practise.

After fire and tears, I avoid my grownup office work. I plant garlic, wondering why. I have to remember each of the garlic-growing steps, the things that Jan taught me, the things that John taught me, the things I've learnt myself. I feed and fork the soil, and think about the weeds and whether I'll give them to my neighbour for her chooks or whether it's too much trouble to reach beyond the Colorbond fence. I remove the rocks and smooth the soil as the day declines. Silent, solitary, calling the old dog for company, and I think, this is practise. I'm practising the growing of garlic. And I'm practising being in the world when you're no longer in it. Your body as cool as these creamy bulbs of garlic. I make holes with a stick and plant each clove, remembering to place them blunt end down. Last year I pulled some interesting 'S-bends' - Russian garlic planted upside down.

Small headstones - the white planter tags
- in a chocolate-coloured bed.

What will manifest here?

More on that Old Chestnut

By Gillian Coote

When epicormal growth - a sign of stress - appeared in the grand old chestnut tree at Kodoji, long before one half of it completely died, I showed various photos of it to an arborist friend. 'Well, one reason for the stress', he said, 'could be soil compression from cattle resting beneath it over so many years. You could aerate it but' - and he paused - 'it would be even better to plant a new tree.' We duly poked sticks into the soil beneath the tree. Meanwhile, I consulted Kathleen, my old school friend who lived on a chestnut farm at Mt Wilson, regarding which variety would best survive in our valley, given its extremes of temperature. She found the right variety and grower near Orange, and we ordered not one tree but three which, as Jean wrote in Mind Moon Circle, were

collected from the grower and ferried to Gorricks Run by Sally, Colin and Patrick Forman. They were planted on July 24, 1993, protected in wire cages from hungry wallabies, and named Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in a simple ceremony. At every monthly samu, buckets of water were lovingly lugged over to them for the next several years. As shoots sprung from the rootstock, they were cut. And when Buddha was faring less well, we dug it up and replanted it. During this time, the grand old chestnut tree finally let go, as Paul described in the last issue. All three chestnuts are now bearing fruit, to both the wombats' delight and ours. Jill Steverson cooked some at the women's retreat in March and during our building samu, and Glenys included them in her altarpiece. The trees of wisdom thrive.

Erratum

The short item 'Rainbow Buddha' on page 26 of the last issue should have read:

You will find our Rainbow Buddha - pink, lime green, sky blue, yellow ñ doing zazen in a small kuti under a tree in the gully to the south of the paddock. He was presented to us by Graeme Lyall, then President of the Buddhist Council of New South Wales, on the occasion of the dedication of Ancient Ground Temple on October 28, 2001.

Photo Details

Page 6, 8, 13: Brian Gutkin's receives Jukai, 03/01/2008. *Page 16:* Charles Saxon, Marion Bagot with daughter Katherine, Kim Bagot, Jan Saar, Tony Coote, Maggie Gluek with daughter Phoebe. Geoff Dawson, Roshi with Rose Bagot, Ian Ramage, Gilly, Diana Levy.



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