



Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Fall 2003



Participants of the August Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

The opening talk of the August 22-24 Mountains and Rivers Sesshin given by Sensei

This being our first Mountains and Rivers sesshin, it will probably be a bit rough in form. As we go along we will find the right forms for us. But I urge everyone, don't ever lose sight of the fact that this is a sesshin. It is not a hike in a beautiful setting. Our aim is to become still and quiet through and through and find that place beyond thought and come to know no-self or the universe as self.

The heart of our temple sesshin is sitting. The heart of our Mountains and Rivers sesshin is walking. Dogen writes in his Mountains and Waters Sutra, "Because the green mountains are walking, they are permanent... If you doubt the walking of mountains, it's just that you don't clearly understand walking. It is not that you don't walk, it is just that you don't clearly understand walking..."

We embark on this sesshin with the intent to clearly understand walking. This requires all of our attention. Set aside subsequent koans and focus on each step.

We are already accustomed to doing kinhin or walking zazen. The word "kinhin" translates as "walking the sutras" or "sutra walking." One Zen teacher said, "In Zen, when we walk, we take a complete step. When we walk completely and with the whole body-mind, this is the Buddha's wisdom unveiling itself, displaying itself step by step".

The Center held its first Mountains and Rivers sesshin on the weekend of August 22-24. Fourteen people participated in the sesshin. Participants' response to the retreat was uniformly positive, and the Center will make this form of sesshin a regular part of the summer schedule. Dates for the next Mountains and Rivers sesshin will be forthcoming

The sesshin took place along the North Ten-Mile Creek Trail near Frisco. Participants backpacked about five miles from the trailhead to the campsite, a large meadow on the other side of a willow covered swamp (a nice natural barrier to other hikers!). Rain was a problem on the first day; shortly after arriving at camp a heavy thunderstorm blew in, which mellowed into a steady rain that lasted into the night. Because of this, future sesshin will take place in July,

before the monsoon season begins. The weather was much more cooperative the next day, and participants were able to follow the schedule without a hitch. Formal zazen was conducted in a circle in a meadow first thing in the morning, late afternoon, and evening. A hike of several hours to a glacial lake took place after breakfast, with lunch by the lake side. Hiking was the main focus of practice during the sesshin, and participants walked in silence, staying just within sight of one another. Initially, walking out of sight of each other was attempted, but proved to be problematic. Dogen Zenji's "Mountains and Waters Sutra" was read in parts at different times of the day for contemplation. Dokusan was held during evening zazen. On the last day, participants broke camp and hiked back to the trailhead after zazen and breakfast. The sesshin was followed by a celebratory lunch at Beau Jo's Pizza in Idaho Springs.

Rocky Mountain Buddhist Peace Fellowship Ceremony for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament

Twenty-two members of the Rocky Mountain Buddhist Peace Fellowship gathered at missile silo N3 on State Highway 71 on Saturday, July 26 to participate in the Adopt-a-Silo nuclear missile protest.

Eager to add our voices to this coordinated demonstration (intended to draw attention to the dangers posed by the 49 Minuteman nuclear missiles in this region and to support the courageous peace actions of Dominican sisters Ardeth Platte, Jackie Hudson, and Carol Gilbert), BPF members from Denver, Golden, Boulder, and Longmont gathered early in the morning and drove in a caravan to the site. Upon arriving we set up a simple Buddhist altar and a display of statements about peacemaking and the power of nonviolence from some of history's greatest advocates of peace and justice. Two large, white, peace-dove kites provided a simple, beautiful accent to the "zen-do" we quickly constructed on the dry prairie in front of the chain-link fence that surrounded the silo.

Several members of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship had prepared a ceremony of peace and compassion drawing on core elements of the Buddhist tradition, and when the space was prepared, we all sat in a semicircle around the altar and sat in silent meditation for about twenty minutes. Following some opening remarks and reflections about the significance of this event and our commitment to the work of peace, within and without, we chanted the Heart Sutra. Then we engaged in a powerful "talking circle," in which each person had an opportunity to invoke the spirit and presence of people, animals, other beings, or ideals that we wished to be present within our circle of awareness. This was followed by a circumambulation of the altar with offerings of incense or other symbolic items. The group then performed the metta, or lovingkindness, prayer.

Our ceremony of peace and compassion continued with the following dedication:

*Upon this arid plain beneath the great sky
Before the machinery of destruction that is the fruit of our
beginningless greed, hatred, and ignorance,
We have unfurled the tathagata's teaching
Of wisdom and compassion,
Turning the wheel of truth that reveals the boundless light of
eternal peace,*

*Pervading the ten directions at every time and place.
May our efforts open the hearts of those who in fear threaten
the whole world with annihilation, that they may instead
take up the way of harmony and love.*

*Together with all beings, we remember Hiroshima and
Nagasaki and all who perished and suffered there.
We remember the lands poisoned, peoples displaced, and the
destruction of myriad beings through nuclear testing.
We remember the courage and sacrifices of those who have
sought an end to this madness, undeterred by threat of
imprisonment and violence.*

*It is to you that we offer the merit of our ceremony,
With our whole hearts we pray that the nuclear weapons of
our nation and all other nations be abandoned and
dismantled, never to be used again.*

*May these prayers fill the universe and awaken the hearts of
all beings.*

May all beings attain Buddhahood.

After the dedication we chanted the Buddhist "Great Vows" and performed several prostrations. We concluded our service by walking slowly, in silent meditation, around the silo site, bearing witness to the destructive power of these missiles and the many entrenched forces that enable them to exist, while bringing the power of our intention and awareness to the ongoing work, our path, of peace, wisdom, and compassion.

We broke down the altar and temporary zen-do, paying respect to this sacred Pawnee land, and drove to Stoneham to join the gathering of the many other groups participating in the day's demonstration. It was a great joy to join together with so many individuals and groups committed to the work of peace. Saturday's coordinated action proves that together, we can indeed make a difference.

-Susan Bridle

This text and photos of the event can be found on the web at www.coloradopeace.org

Mountains Talking is a quarterly newsletter published by:

The Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver:
3101 West 31st Ave. Denver, CO 80211
303-455-1500 (Tel.), 303-455-1062 (Fax)
E-mail: office@zencenterofdenver.org
Website: www.zencenterofdenver.org
Spiritual Director: Ven. Danan Henry Sensei

Sangha News

Prajna Ango Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony of the fall 2003 Prajna Ango will take place after the teisho on Sunday, October 5. With the enshrinement of Manjushri Bodhisattva on the Zendo altar, we will officially mark the start of a three month period of intensive training at the center, where we focus our energies on the wisdom aspect of the Dharma. It is a time for us to deepen our motivation and resolve, to push ourselves a little more. Unlike the Sila Ango, where the focus is practice in the midst of daily life, here the focus is on temple practice: zazen, teisho, samu, ceremonies, and sesshin. Three months go by very quickly, so those who wish to make the most of this opportunity are, beginning with this ceremony, strongly encouraged to jump right in.

BOD Elections

Board of directors elections will be held during the Sangha meeting scheduled for Sunday, November 9th. Three positions will be open, as Jim Hubbell, Patty Kelley, and Mike Tabor will be stepping down. A nominating committee, consisting of Shonen Dunley, Becky Wethington, and Cathy Wright has been formed and is accepting nominations from the Sangha. Candidates must be 21 years of age, been a supporting member of the Center for at least one year, and cannot be in the same family as a current board member. Board members serve for a two year term, and can be reelected one time. If you would like to be considered or suggest someone for nomination, please contact the committee. More information about qualifications and responsibilities of board members can be requested from Shonen Dunley in the office.

A quorum of in-town supporting members is required for an election, so please make every effort to be at the meeting. If you are unable to do so, you can give your proxy vote to someone who will be attending.

Renovation Update

We are now on the verge of beginning construction of the first phase of our renovation. This initial phase will level the lower half of the auditorium to create a new zendo space. When it is completed, all of our zendo functions will take place up there, freeing the entire lower level for such things as yoga and tai chi classes, and a secondary zendo for use during sesshin. The plans are completed and

in the process of receiving approval for a building permit. Once the permit is approved, we will begin construction. Creating a new zendo will require a great deal of effort from all of us to succeed, but this is a joyful work that will help us to grow as a temple and sangha. Further announcements will be made as events unfold.

New Residents

Ken Morgariedge and Jason Polk will be moving into the Center at the end of September for a period of residential training. Residential training at the Center is for the purpose of intensified temple practice, and is offered when space is available. Residents simplify their lives by reducing various obligations so they can focus more exclusively on formal practice. They are expected to attend as many temple functions as their life circumstances permit, and share housekeeping responsibilities. Let's welcome Ken and Jason as residents and wish them the best.

Computer and Audio/Video Help

The center is in need of volunteers to be in charge of the computer and audio/video committees. If you are a supporting member with experience or expertise in these areas, we could use your help. The computer committee works with the office manager to keep the center's computers running smoothly, maintains the website (Bob Fallbeck is currently handling this responsibility), and to make recommendations for upgrades of software and equipment. The audio/video committee is responsible for maintaining and using the center's audio and video recording equipment, and sound equipment in general. Please contact Shonen Dunley in the office or Peggy Sheehan if you can help.

Dues

A reminder to all supporting members that membership dues are due at the beginning of the month. Dues are vital to the financial well being of the center, so it is very important to keep them up to date. The current rate of dues for in-town supporting members is \$35/month (\$20 for out of town). As is our general policy, no one is turned away from practice due to financial need, and arrangements can be made to reduce or eliminate dues entirely. Likewise, those who are able to do so are encouraged to donate more each month.

Gassho Corner

Deepest thanks to the following persons for their exceptional contributions and efforts on behalf of the temple:

- Clayton Cole and Melanie Short donated their services in designing the first phase of the auditorium renovation.

- The yard committee, consisting of Josh and Mickey Devitt-Mather, David Graf, Bill Hamaker, Richard Miklic, Joel Tagert, and Lindsey Trout, have done a tremendous amount of work on the grounds surrounding the temple. Thanks also to Dennis Sienko for rototilling the strip around the parking lot.

- Mike Tabor and Dennis Tesar have put in a tremendous amount of preliminary work on the renovation, such as checking the plans for accuracy, surveying the auditorium, meeting with the architects, etc.

- Jann and Mike Griffiths took time scouting out the location for the Mountains and Rivers sesshin, and helped everyone tremendously (particularly those of us with no backpacking experience) with preparations, lists of equipment, and so forth. Without their efforts, the sesshin could not have gone as well as it did.

Upcoming Events

Sesshin Application Deadline	Oct. 1
Prajna Ango Opening Ceremony	Oct. 5
Sesshin	Oct. 18-25
Kannon Ceremony	Oct. 28
BOD Meeting	Oct. 29
Repentance Ceremony	Nov. 6
Sangha Meeting	Nov. 9
Zazenkai	Nov. 16
Sesshin Application Deadline	Nov. 19
Fast for a World Harvest/Ceremony of Aid	Nov. 20
Teisho on the Precepts	Nov. 23
Thanksgiving Ceremony	Nov. 27
Jukai	Nov. 30
Rohatsu Sesshin	Dec. 6-13
Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony	Dec. 13
BOD Meeting	Dec. 17
Ritual Temple Cleaning	Dec. 30
New Year's Ceremony	Dec. 31

Zen Center of Denver
3101 West 31st Ave.
Denver, CO 80211