

Walking Mountains

“The green mountains are always walking” — *Daokai*

Dear Sangha and Friends,

The work sesshin behind us, the Zen Center gardens look as though a throng of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas descended upon them—and they did! Please don’t hesitate to take a stroll along the garden paths to savor the peony buds swelling, honey bees working, and rabbits darting ahead of you. But bear in mind that weeds also flourish. The gardens need our continuous care, our continuous practice. If you haven’t signed up for a garden plot and would like to, or have 10 or 15 minutes before a sitting, check in with Ti’an, Louise, or Joan to see what’s needed.

And what do gardens inspire? Why flowers and food on the table of course! We have both this month with a flower arranging course and an Indian cooking course. Both led by my skillful Zen Center members, they provide an opportunity to bring practice into our daily lives. Please join us.

— *Joan White*

Practicing Tai Chi, Practicing Zen

by **Josh Kelman**



Tai Chi classes have been conducted at the Zen Center for two years. I’ve been fortunate to have taken them from the beginning. Initially I was looking for another in a series of therapies for chronic back issues and a healthful exercise my sixty-something body could handle through ripe old age. This turned out to be naïve. Tai chi offers much more.

Our teacher, longtime Zen Center member Eric Berger, is a sanctioned teacher of Yang style tai chi. He gives his time

(continued on page 2)



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Practicing Tai Chi, Practicing Zen	1
Eliza, Owen, and Cartoons	3
Calendar	5
Training Program	6
Sangha Picnic	6
Summer Courses	7
Annual Yard Sale	7
Garden Mowing	8

The Vermont Zen Center’s mission is to create a peaceful and inviting environment to support those who seek wisdom, compassion, joy, and equanimity within a Buddhist context. The two-fold practice of the Center is to overcome the causes of suffering through spiritual development and to alleviate the world’s suffering through outreach activities and the cultivation of a caring attitude to the earth.

(continued from page 1)

freely, conducting weekly Monday evening classes in the Zen Center dining room most of the year, sending out lesson summary emails to his students, and being available to help those of us who have forgotten the latest postures. Like any good teacher, patience is one of his virtues. He is also a role model for us grasshoppers since he practices daily and his tai chi is inspiring to watch.

The tai chi that we are learning consists of warm up exercises, static postures called chi kung, and the long form which is what we are all familiar with as tai chi. While the long form takes considerable time to learn and become comfortable with (I am just now learning the final section), I was able to get immediate benefits from chi kung. These postures are held for 30 seconds or so and are key elements of the long form. But they have genuine value in and of themselves. It is quite instructive to just hold one of these postures and feel the unnecessary tensions that we carry. And one of the benefits of chi kung is in the reduction of these tensions.

As Zen students, we are always trying to bring our zazen awareness into daily activities. Tai chi is a good bridge for this. Both the long form and chi kung demand awareness. When simply

assuming the postures and flowing with the movements, it is not hard to let go of the wandering mind. Just to be the posture is in fact what correctly holding the posture demands. We get physical benefits plus we have a vehicle for practicing awareness. Win, win.

So what are these benefits? As a beginner I can only speak from my own experience. Lower back issues have diminished. While my degraded discs certainly have not grown back, the inflammation that causes pain has been reduced. Flexibility is improved. There is less bodily stiffness after twisting and exertion. Some of this is postural. Tai chi instills body habits that result in more centered and relaxed movements in daily activities. The flow that we create with the long form has an internal component that

releases local tensions so that in daily tasks, appropriate muscles are used and the rest are relaxed. Anyone who has seen the film, *Karate Kid*, will see a “wax on, wax off” analogy. Knowing that I have only scratched the surface of this practice encourages me that the benefits will endure and grow.

Roshi Kapleau, our dharma grandfather, derived great benefit from hatha yoga and credited his abilities (there are pictures of him standing on his head in full lotus) to zazen. And so with tai chi, and most everything else, zazen is a peerless foundation. Tai chi then, both benefits from zazen and, as we have seen, helps us actualize zazen awareness. “Being the posture” is fundamental blocking and tackling (sorry for the football analogy) for Zen students. And, as an extra bonus, it’s good for aching backs. —



Eliza, Owen, and Cartoons

by Jim Kahle

So let me tell you about my grandchildren, no really. My wife, Allyn, and I feel so very fortunate that in recent years we have been able to take on the role of grandparents. Our granddaughter, Eliza, is 2 ½, and our grandson, Owen, is 9 months old. My daughter, Erin, is expecting a boy in about a month. When her parents told Eliza she was going to have a baby brother, and asked her what they should name him, she quickly thought of one of her favorite things in the world. "Cartoons!" she chirped. This may change, but for the time being that is what he is called.

Not only am I lucky to have two great grandkids, I have been able to spend a significant amount of time with both of them. It didn't take too long to see that they are living a reality that I have forgotten, at least in part. The time that I spend with them is an opportunity to observe and learn about what it really means to be a human being or, as a dharma brother



put it, to watch this beginner's mind in action.

Even though they are at different stages of development, there is much in their behavior that they have in common. They are full of energy. They are never bored. Whether they are laughing, crying, sleeping, or singing, they throw themselves into life. Everything they do comes from the bottom of their little hearts.

As usual, Roshi spoke about the development of human consciousness at the last workshop. I listened closely. She spoke about the five senses along with the addition, from a Buddhist perspective, of a sixth sense, the discriminating intellect. This intellect allows children to interpret the information they are receiving from the other senses about the goings on in the world

around them. This is a natural and important aspect of the developing mind. Unfortunately the intellect bifurcates this information into two categories, the "me" in here, and the world out there. This bifurcation is essentially a mental construct with no intrinsic or abiding reality. While it is critical for development in the formative years, it becomes more and more problematic as we grow older. This sense of self and other, the ego-I, is said to start to emerge around the age of two.

All of us who live with Eliza can report that this sense of self is developing quite nicely. She has a very firm grasp of the concepts of I, me, mine, and no. Her current worldview is not a very complicated one. She just wants what she wants, more or

(continued on page 4)

less all the time, just like some of the rest of us. The difference between a child of this age and an adult is not necessarily in what they feel, but in what they manifest or express. Unlike the rest of us, Eliza hasn't learned to mask or cover up her feelings. It is this mind of separation that we regularly encounter on the mat and in our lives. We see evidence of its effects every day in this suffering world of ours.

The thing is, this sense of self isn't the only or even the most salient characteristic emerging in the personalities of my grandchildren. They both exhibit an intense curiosity regarding the world around them. I remember one day when Owen got his hands on a hardcover book. He opened and closed the front cover at least 20 times in succession. This curiosity or questioning mind is closely aligned with the desire for competence or mastery of their environment. These are very powerful animating forces in their lives. Most of the time when Eliza tells me no, it's when I'm trying to help her. She doesn't want my help. She wants to do things all by herself. There's nothing wrong with that. Eliza is displaying many other wonderful human qualities as she grows. She

loves her family and is very affectionate. She loves to play, have adventures, and kid around. She takes great delight in terrorizing her maternal grandfather. I love them both to pieces.

I remember one afternoon when Allyn and I were babysitting Owen. He was about six months old and just learning how to sit up on his own. I lay down on the floor beside him for a time. Whenever he would start to keel over, I would grab him and prop him back up, sort of like *A Catcher In The Rye* for infants. Later when I walked by, he looked at me with what appeared to be wonder and affection. Then he reached out to me. One reason that young children are so endearing is that they are utterly without guile. When they reach out to you with a smile or a gesture, they mean it. This yearning for connection, and the blossoming of love and compassion are visible in the very young. They emanate from the core of being. As Stevie Wonder said, babies are made from love. So are we. Buddhas and bodhisattvas, teachers and Patriarchs have offered us the means by which to wake up to this fact. Our practice allows us to open up to a life of joy and freedom that has been a part of

“ It didn't take too long to see that they are living a reality that I have forgotten, at least in part. The time that I spend with them is an opportunity to observe and learn about what it really means to be a human being or ... to watch this beginner's mind in action. ”

us from the very beginning. It is our birthright. I'm finding that my teachers come in all ages and sizes. I learn mostly from the way they live their lives. They manifest energy and happiness. They make the most of every moment, seemingly without effort. They are the embodiment of love. I am very grateful. —

June 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 PM ZAZEN	3	4 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Tai Chi Intensive</div>
5 Taped Teisho	6 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">AM ZAZEN MON-FRI</div>	7 PM ZAZEN Famine Relief Ceremony	8	9 PM ZAZEN	10 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">CR Sesshin</div>	11 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Flower Arranging Course</div>
12 Taped Teisho	13 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">AM ZAZEN MON-FRI</div>	14 PM ZAZEN	15	16 PM ZAZEN Chanting	17	18
Costa Rica 7-Day Sesshin 6/10-17						
19 Taped Teisho	20 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">AM ZAZEN MON-FRI</div>	21 PM ZAZEN Chanting	22	23 PM ZAZEN	24	25 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Indian Cooking Course</div>
26 Teisho	27 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">AM ZAZEN MON-FRI</div>	28 PM ZAZEN	29	30 PM ZAZEN Chanting No Dokusan		

July 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 <div style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 2px; text-align: center; color: red;">ZEN CENTER CLOSED</div>
3 <div style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 2px; text-align: center; color: red;">ZEN CENTER CLOSED</div>	4	5 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI</div> PM ZAZEN Chanting	6	7 PM ZAZEN	8	9 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Sesshin Deadline</div>
10 Teisho	11 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">AM ZAZEN MON-FRI</div>	12 PM ZAZEN	13	14 PM ZAZEN Workshop Prep	15	16 WORKSHOP
17 Sangha Picnic	18 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">AM ZAZEN MON-FRI</div>	19 PM ZAZEN	20	21 PM ZAZEN Chanting	22	23
24 Teisho	25 AM & PM ZAZEN	26 AM & PM ZAZEN	27 AM & PM ZAZEN	28 AM & PM ZAZEN	29 AM ZAZEN	30 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;">Sesshin</div>
Vermont Training Program (Sunday morning – Friday afternoon)						
31	AUGUST 1	AUGUST 2	AUGUST 3	AUGUST 4	AUGUST 5	AUGUST 6
Vermont 7-Day Sesshin 7/30-8/6 ZEN CENTER CLOSED DURING SESSHIN						

Training Program

Sunday, July 24, through Friday, July 29, 2016

For five days this summer, the Zen Center will offer a residential Training Program. Training Programs are a way to experience the discipline of Zen training through total immersion similar to living in a monastery. During Training Programs, trainees live at the Center and participate in all aspects of traditional Zen training. A core element of the Training Program is learning how to bring Zen practice into everyday life. Each day there is:

- Zazen
- Chanting
- Work practice
- Dokusan
- Teisho (Zen talk by the teacher) or talks by senior students

Participating in a Training Program can help anyone—regardless of age, occupation, or previous exposure to spiritual disciplines—learn more about Zen practice, strengthen their spiritual training, and learn to practice meditation in the midst of everyday life.

The cost is \$175 for members (non-members \$275). Applications are available on line. Please read “Information for Trainees,” on the Zen Center’s website before applying.

The Training Program begins on **Sunday, July 24 at 9:00 a.m.** and ends on **Friday, July 29** after lunch. Please note that the Training Program begins Sunday morning.

Local trainees can arrive at the Center in time for the morning sitting. Out-of-town trainees should arrive at the Center by Saturday evening.

Applications for the Training Program are on-line at: www.vermontzen.org/training_programs.html

Daily Schedule

5:30 am	Wake up
6:00	Zazen
7:00	Chanting
8:00	Breakfast
8:30	Work
10:30	Tea break
10:45	Work
12:15	Lunch & break
2:15	Work
3:45	Chanting
4:45	Supper
6:30–8:30	Zazen



Sangha Picnic at Shelburne Beach Park

Come one, Come all! Our annual Sangha Picnic will be on **Sunday, July 17** at Shelburne Beach on Beach Road in Shelburne, starting at **10:30 a.m.** There will be swimming, volleyball, bocce, basketball, kayaking, good food, and lots of fun.

Bring family and friends, musical instruments, sun block and bathing suits. And be sure to remember to bring a vegetarian dish to share. We hope to see you there— at **Shelburne Beach Park!**

Upcoming Summer Courses



Indian Cooking Weekend Meal

Learn how to prepare a delicious and authentic all-new vegetarian Indian meal in the Vermont Zen Center's spacious kitchen. Manju Selinger will guide you through the process of preparing the meal, which



all will enjoy for lunch at 1 p.m. With a cookbook of the recipes in hand and practical experience from the Zen Center's cooks, you will be ready to prepare a delicious Indian meal for your family and friends. No cooking experience is necessary.

Date: **Saturday, June 25**. See website for more information and registration.: www.vermontzen.org/indian_cooking2.html

Flower Arranging

Learn basic Ikebana and flower arranging elements used at the Vermont Zen Center: triangulation, depth, placement, color, container size and materials. Through understanding the interaction between spiritual practice and flower arranging, participants will gain an appreciation of the deeper meaning of flowers as offerings and as a way to bring a sense of tranquility to one's environment.

Date: **Saturday, June 11**. See website for more information and registration: www.vermontzen.org/flower_arranging.html



Donations for the sale may be left in the basement common room anytime after the August sesshin. This is a wonderful fund-raiser for the Center, as well as a great way to clean out your unwanted, unused, and unneeded stuff. The yard sale will be on **Saturday, August 13**.



Vermont Zen Center

Post Office Box 880
Shelburne, VT 05482

802-985-9746
www.vermontzen.org

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Shelburne, VT
Permit No. 60

*The epitome of goodness,
The extreme of beauty,—
Yet, a poppy flower.
—Issa*

CONTRIBUTORS:

- Jim Kahle
- Josh Kelman
- Roshi Sunyana Graef
- Greg Sheldon, *copy editor*
- Kelly Story, *production*
- Joan White, *editor*
- Maria Zamora-Crosby, *design*



**If you have time this spring, summer, and fall
to help out with mowing, weed whacking, or
gardening, please do get in touch with
Nōwa Crosby or Jim Kahle.**