

Walking Mountains

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

Dear Sangha and Friends,

This month we celebrate the Buddha’s birth and we honor Roshi Phillip Kapleau – two ceremonies connecting the events and lives of those more than 2,500 years apart – and in so doing, all that lies between them. In other words, the endurance of our practice. How fitting we honor them in the spring when our world is abundant with the rebirth of nature.

It brings to mind Li Po’s poem, “Gazing at the Cascade on Lu Mountain”:

Where crowns a purple haze
Ashimmer in sunlight rays
The hill called Incense-Burner Peak, from far
To see, hung o’er the torrent’s wall,
That waterfall
Vault sheer three thousand feet, you’d say
The Milky Way
Was tumbling from the high heavens, star on star

We sit. We chant. We practice Metta. We walk the same path. Please join us.

— *Joan White*



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Discovering Gratitude

by **Sam Barnhart**



Beginning practice, and entering a Sangha, are major steps in the lives of the few who recognize transformation is possible, and necessary. For the novice who seeks truth, these shifts in priority come with big challenges. Having

experienced these things recently, with power and intensity, I asked for the opportunity to share my gratitude with you.

Before practice found its way into my life, I lived in a background static of pain and anxiety. Nothing

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MISSION

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.

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made me happy and all I wanted was the truth, but by my twenties, I mostly lost hope that it could be found. I jumped job to job always looking for something different and had developed a drinking problem that led to two DUIs. By 27, I knew that if I didn't stop creating problems for myself, I could become suicidal, yet I didn't understand how I was creating the problems in the first place. My confusion and frustration were through the roof. Intuition told me meditation was the key, and though I was skeptical, I knew I didn't have any other choice but to give it an honest try.

Sitting was extremely difficult at first; however, I believed it could work and I felt my anxiety slowly dissolving as I learned to let go of my worrying. Immersing myself in meditation books and overly excited about my little successes, I could feel the momentum building. I was really onto something! Within a year or so, I was completely convinced that I had found the tool I needed to understand life.

By the time I visited the Vermont Zen Center I knew that Zen was the approach that fit me. My first few visits were pleasant and intense experiences that initially left me wanting more. My sneaky ego however saw that its days were numbered and the skepticism started. I would think things like, *She could be a phony. These people probably have nothing better to do. How*

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could they understand what I am experiencing? If the Buddha did it on his own, then so can I.

This was a place like no other I had been before, and it is not surprising that I had trouble trusting the sincerity. I had learned not to trust anybody, because as far as I could tell nobody really understood anything. My conditioned mind just could not accept what was happening.

Some significant time elapsed before I realized that this skepticism was all ego babble. The Term Student Program looked like a great way to get involved, so I decided to approach it in the same way I initially entered practice: wholeheartedly. After a handful of visits, it started to become clear that what was being offered was the most wonderful gift that one could receive. The members I met were honest. They were

happy. They listened. They were generous and helpful. After a few weeks, I realized they weren't trying to get me to stay, they weren't just being nice. This is who they are. They are sincere in their practice. This is where I want to be. The members are present. They believe in this practice, and they are as solid as mountains. My motivation to go deeper into this practice soared, so naturally I went to the next retreat. It happened to be in Costa Rica, where I was received with the same sincerity, openness, and love as in Vermont.

On the second day of the retreat Roshi gave a teisho about a relative of the Buddha who joined the Sangha late in life and stubbornly wanted to do everything his own way. It was like she was speaking directly to me. I watched her gently guide my practice, nudging me in the right direction, and subtlety showing me how to trust my intuition while abandoning ego. It became apparent that my skepticism was no longer necessary and this was all quite real. I began to feel full of warmth, and it felt good, but I wasn't sure what was happening. A few times during the retreat I cried because it was so moving, but this new emotion was strange. What was it!

My last night in Costa Rica it was quiet at Casa Zen. A full day had gone by since the closing ceremony, and things seemed back to usual. I sat one last time alone in the zendo

(Continued on page 4)

Lessons on Log Town Road

by Kathy Clarke

Last week after a snowstorm, I ventured to East Calais to visit a friend who lives on Log Town Road. I had his address and I had my GPS for directions. I did not know that in the winter Log Town Road is not plowed all the way through. It is just open on either end. My GPS took me to the wrong end. The road was narrow, extremely steep, curved, and banked with 4 1/2 feet of snow. At an impossible incline, my studded tires spun uselessly. Backing down, the rear and driver's side of the car jammed into a snow bank and stuck hard. After several attempts to get free, I headed up the hill to find help. I came to an enclave with two large barking dogs, two small houses, several vehicles, and a KEEP OUT sign. A young man came out of a house and I explained my situation. He called to an older man down below who yelled that he'd be right up.

As we walked to the car, a young Rottweiler pounced playfully on clumps of snow. The young man told me he moved back home after he broke his femur. He had already had two surgeries and might need more. I asked him how it happened. "Fell off a four foot ladder. Only fell about two feet."

The man, in his 60's, joined us. He was dressed in total camouflage, and he was not happy. He began ranting about people with Priuses who couldn't read



Private Drive signs. His language was raw and unprintable here. His breath smelled of alcohol. He had to climb in the passenger side to get to the driver's side, and asked how to start the "damn thing." I apologized and explained.

His plan to turn the car around seemed an impossible one. He yelled directions to the boy and warned me repeatedly to get out of the way. Pushing the front end sideways while gunning the engine, the car rocked, slid, and suddenly, there it was, miraculously pointed down the hill. Getting out of the car, he continued his tirade, starting with the fallacy of global warming.

"Did you know that science can be manipulated? Liberals in their Priuses, getting subsidies. How much did you get? And that McCibbish fellow, he's just wrong. Liberal rubbish! The government wants water rights to my land. I grew up with nine kids in my family, and we never took handouts. I'll be so glad to get out of this state."

He was enraged, outraged, and steaming mad. I thanked him for helping me, apologized for making a wrong turn up his drive, and offered him some money. He waved it away. I reached out the car window to shake his hand. He tore off his mitten, shook my hand and barked, "God bless you!"

I said, with an emotion that took me by surprise, "God bless you, too, and thank you SO much." He heatedly said, "Just never pass by anyone in trouble." "I won't," I said, "I won't."

He told me how to get to the other end of Log Town Road. When I found it, my friend Peter was walking down the road, head-to-toe in L.L.Bean, to see if I was stuck in a snow bank. A wonderful sight to see, I asked him if he knew the astonishing Samaritan living on the other end of his road. He did not.

The phrase, "Bodhisattva in disguise" came to mind. I am so grateful to have met him. —

Zoom by Nathalie Sorensen

In his article titled "A Day in the Life" published in the December 2016 issue of *Walking Mountains*, Jim Kahle gives us a lively account of the many activities of Roshi and Sangha members as they prepare for a day at our Center. Sweeping the walkway, preparing food, cleaning, Roshi leading an introductory workshop and memorial service, and much more. I was impressed and grateful for all that they do, and also regretful for what I miss.

I live in Kingston, Ontario, a five-hour drive from the Vermont

Zen Center. It is not practical for me to be present at the Center except for sesshin and major ceremonies. For many years I have participated remotely in the Term Student Program, and I treasure this opportunity to meet Roshi and the Sangha on a weekly basis, but until recently this was my only remote participation in Center activities, and I had a limited sense of what goes on and the work required to maintain the life of the Center. I always look forward to reading *Walking Mountains*. It is a rich link

with the Center, but it is not full participation.

Now that has changed. We have Zoom. Through the power of this technology, I can take part in so much more. On the website Roshi has listed no fewer than eighteen opportunities to join in Center activities by Zoom in 2017. What a gift! Already I have tuned in to the Annual Meeting and the Buddha's Paranirvana ceremony. I look forward to joining in often. I feel it as a blessing. Thank you, Roshi and Ramiro for making this possible. —

(Gratitude... Continued from page 2)

with a strong steady rain quieting everything around. It was a wonderful parting gift. Then I prepared a small meal and sat in the dark in the veranda. With a mouthful of food, the warmth in my heart began to build again. Tears were flowing off my face and onto my hands and clothes. The earth joined me as the rain showed her beauty and lightning flickered in the distance. My ego was powerless and there was no holding back. I was overflowing. It was in this moment I realized that I was experiencing gratitude.

Gratitude, I always assumed, had to have an object, like going

around the table at Thanksgiving: "I am grateful for gravy..." This was not like that. My entire life, and all things working in harmony in this great mysterious universe, had led me to practice. This gratitude was for everything: the teaching, Buddha, Roshi, my friends and foes, joy and suffering, the earth and the moon, sun and the sky, you, me, everything. With this practice, I had gone from feeling like the weight of the world was on my shoulders to feeling like the weight of the world was holding me up, yet nothing about my essential nature had changed.

Since you are reading this, it means our lives have some resonance whether or not we have met or spoken. I am grateful for you, and your effort in practice, past, present, and future. Through people, practice spreads and peace finds its way into hearts. Because of your existence, I suffer less and cause less suffering for others. Because of you, I am no longer afraid of who I am, or what I might do. Because of you, I am on my way home. With my palms together, warmth in my heart, and a gentle smile on my face, I'm starting to understand. Gassho. —

May 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Finding Your Seat Meeting Tai Chi Course 1	2 PM ZAZEN	3	4 PM ZAZEN Famine Relief Ceremony	5	6
7 Taped Teisho	8 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 2	9 PM ZAZEN	10	11 PM ZAZEN Sitting & Workshop Prep	12	13 Workshop Ceremony Workday
14 Roshi Kapleau Memorial Extended Sitting	15 ZC CLOSED Tai Chi Course 3	16 AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN	17 Garden Intensive Deadline	18 PM ZAZEN	19 Vesak Workday	20 Vesak Workday
21 VESAK 	22 ZC CLOSED Tai Chi Course 4	23 AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN	24	25 PM ZAZEN Chanting	26	27 Weekend Indian Cooking Course
28 ZC CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY	29	30 AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN	31			

Song of the Cordwood Cabin

I've built a grass hut where there's nothing of value...

Though the hut is small, it includes the entire world.

Song of the Grass-Roof Hermitage Shitou Xiquian (700-790)

Life in my cordwood cabin is simple
wood stove, river bathing and candlelight.
We eat when hungry, sleep when tired
take our time under green leaves, white clouds.

Mornings, the river is like polished glass,
each swaying reed etched in slanting light.
Evenings under the moon, high branches
arch white and crickets chant the hours.

Fountains of frogs, green and gold, spray
as we pass; small blue flowers blink like stars
in the grass and the heron cries, great wings beating,
as he rounds the curves of the rippling river.

—Nathalie Sorensen

Indian Cooking Course: Weekend Lunch

Learn how to prepare a delicious and authentic weekend vegetarian Indian meal in the Vermont Zen Center's spacious kitchen under the careful guidance of Manju Selinger. Manju's courses are very popular and fill up quickly as they are limited to eight people. So, if you're interested, sign up soon!

Date: Saturday, May 27

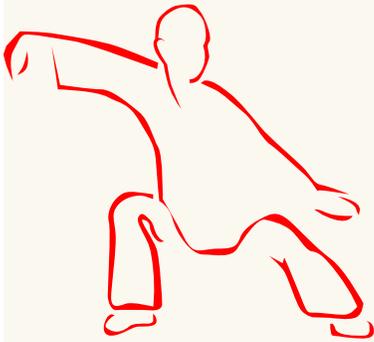
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Fee: \$85 (\$75 member discount)

More information and registration is available on the Zen Center's website at www.vermontzen.org/indian_cooking2.html



Tai Chi Course



Tai Chi offers many benefits for health, relaxation, and concentration. Numerous medical studies demonstrate the physical and mental benefits of Tai Chi.

Eric Berger offers two Tai Chi classes on Monday evenings in six-week courses offered four times a year. An additional four-week course is offered in November. For all courses, the first hour is for those who have taken a minimum of five prior courses with Eric. The second hour is for those who are new to the practice of Tai Chi or for those who have not completed five courses.

The next set of courses begins on May 1. Each hour-long Monday evening session includes instruction, practice periods, and Q&A.

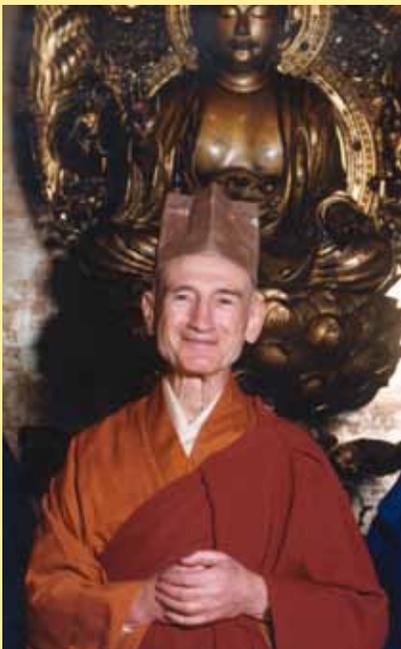
Time: Mondays 6:30-7:30 p.m.
and 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Dates: May 1, 8, 15, 22, June 5, 12

Fee: \$100 for the six classes

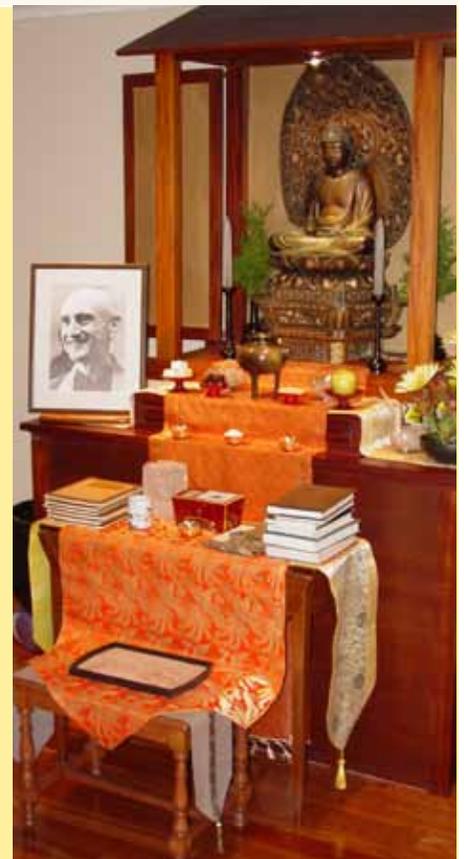
More information and registration is available on the Zen Center's website at www.vermontzen.org/taichi.html

Events in Honor of Roshi Kapleau



Roshi Philip Kapleau passed away on May 6, 2004 at the age of 91. As is our tradition, a special **Day of Remembrance** honoring Roshi will be held at the Center on **Sunday, May 14**.

On this day we will have an extended sitting beginning at **8 a.m. and ending around 2 p.m.** with a pot-luck lunch. During the day there will be a special chanting service including the memorial prayer. There will also be dokusan, and one of Roshi Kapleau's taped teishos will be played. Don't forget to bring some vegetarian food to share.



Vesak 2017



The Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Vesak, the celebration honoring the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha, will be on **Sunday, May 21, beginning at 10 a.m.** According to tradition, the Buddha was born on April 8. However, for purely practical reasons we celebrate this event in May when the weather is warmer and we can be outdoors. (This year the celebration is one week earlier than usual.)

Of all the Buddhist holidays, this one is the most fun. After all, it's a birthday party! People of all ages are most welcome.

Following the ceremony is a Pot-Luck Picnic. Please bring a vegetarian dish to share. The Center will provide plates, cups and utensils as well as drinks and birthday cake.

Part of the ceremony is to present a small, wrapped baby gift for the Buddha which is later donated to the Lund Home. Presents need not be expensive—diapers, pacifiers, bottles, bibs, booties, rattles—anything is appreciated. Please also bring a flower offering for the baby Buddha.

We hope to see you there!

Workdays **Friday, May 19 and Saturday, May 20**



Please lend a hand whenever you can. Help is greatly needed and truly appreciated with setting up for the Buddha's Birthday Celebration on Sunday.

Workdays start at 10 a.m. and end around noon with lunch provided by the Center.

Vesak: The Buddha's Birthday Celebration **Sunday, May 21—10:00 a.m.**

- Story of the Buddha's Birth
- Songs, Elephant Parade, Sleeping Sage
- Potluck Picnic & Buddha's Birthday Cake
- Gift for Children

Remember to bring

- a flower offering
- a baby gift
- a vegetarian dish to share





Vermont Zen Center

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Spring rain;

Rain-drops from the willow,

Petals from the plum tree.

-Shoha

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**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.**