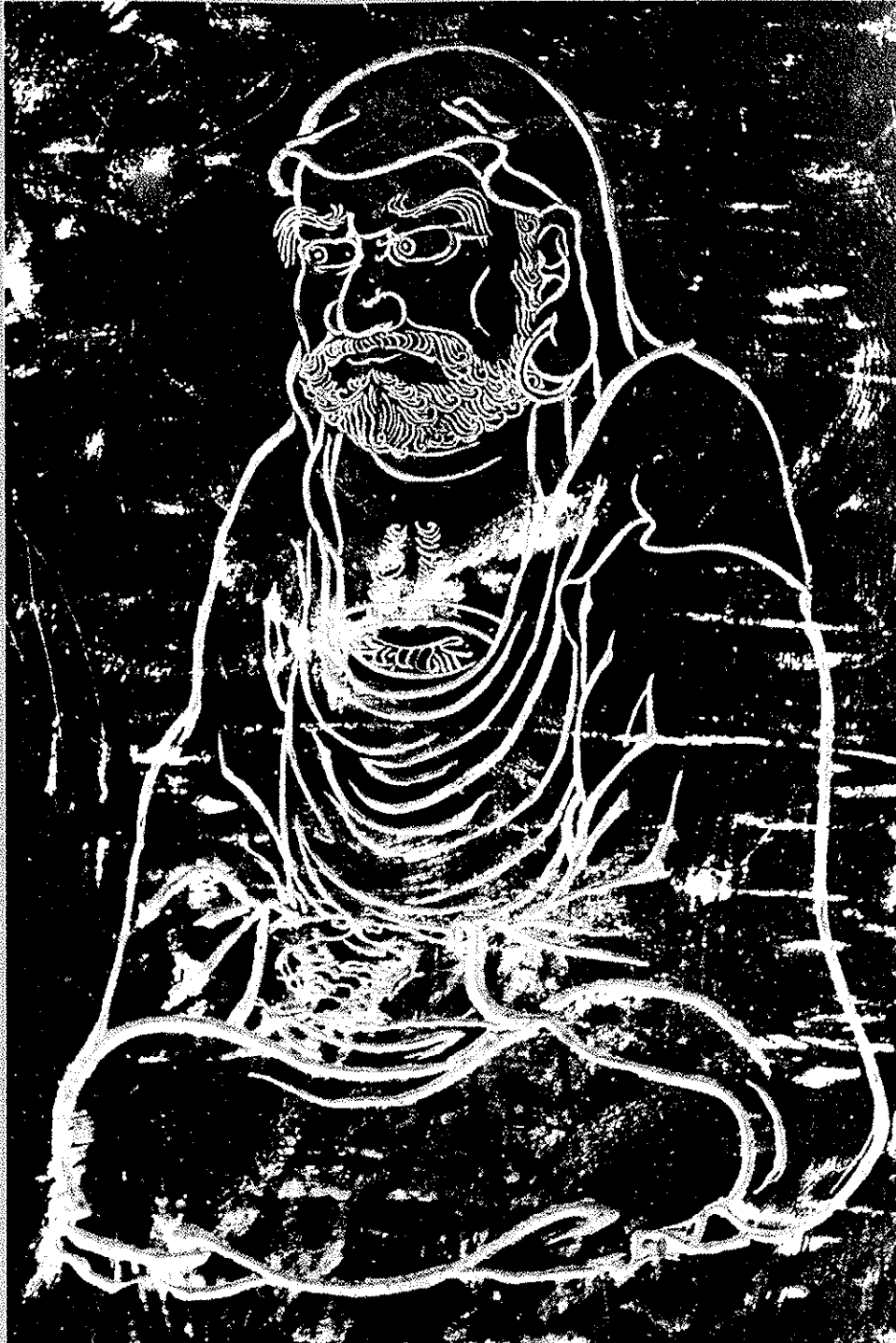


# Zen Bow

A PUBLICATION OF  
THE ROCHESTER ZEN CENTER

VOLUME XXXI • NUMBER 3 & 4 • 2008



COMING TO PRACTICE

# *Zen Bow: Coming to Practice*

---

VOLUME XXXI • NUMBER 3 & 4 • 2008

---

Coming Out to Practice <i>by Brad Craddock</i>	3
40 Wasted Years <i>by Jim Buchanan</i>	6
Winding Road <i>by Rebecca Gilbert</i>	9
Burning Embers <i>by John Canino</i>	11
Labor Pains <i>by Andy Stern</i>	14
Longing for ... What? <i>by Elizabeth McMahon</i>	17
From Silenus to Joshu <i>by Massimo Shido Squillioni</i>	20
Following the Lead of a Child <i>by Steve Davis</i>	22
Mother Superior and Me <i>by Lou Anne Jaeger</i>	25
Thanks, Fidel <i>by Amaury Cruz</i>	29



---

COPYRIGHT © 2009 ROCHESTER ZEN CENTER

EDITOR: Donna Kowal ♦ IMAGE EDITOR: Tom Kowal

COVER: Richard von Sturmer

PROOF READING: Kathryn Argetsinger ♦ Mark Argetsinger ♦ John Pulleyn



Richard von Sturmer

## Coming Out to Practice

BRAD CRADDOCK

The heart is like a garden. It can grow compassion or fear, resentment or love. What seeds will you plant there?

—The Buddha

‘There is an internal landscape, a geography of the soul,’ writes Josephine Hart in her book *Damage*, ‘where we search for its outlines all our lives. Those who are lucky enough to find it ease like water over a stone, onto its fluid contours, and are home.’ For me, the search for that elusive home began with a subtle realization when I was twelve. I was homosexual.

While this personal self-awareness did not quake the pillars of the universe, my family was not ready for such an epiphany. Despite my convictions, they ignored my declaration, per-

haps in hope to extinguish abnormal adolescent behavior. In that silence, I had little choice but to turn inward. I hiked my awkward inner landscape hoping to catch a glimpse of divinity, of purpose, or at least connection with nature.

Loneliness is common in adolescence. It was magnified by being gay. I had no one but my family with which to discuss such feelings, no outlet but losing myself in books, games, and art. Religious questions burbled, percolated in my mind. Why was I like this when no one else I knew was? What reason would a loving God have in making me an outcast? In the tiny rural township of Chesterland, Ohio, I remained isolated.

The path to the Dharma is varied and long; one does not always come to it like stumbling

across a neon signpost. Perhaps more than anything else, I was looking for a place to fit, a place where what I observed about the world was true and natural, a spiritual home where I could throw down my bundle and rest. John O'Donohue writes that, 'The hunger to belong is not merely a desire to be attached to something. It is rather sensing that great transformation and discovery become possible when belonging is sheltered and true.' Until I could realize an accepting Sangha, my spiritual life would remain stunted.

Like many, I grew up amid the turmoil of the 1980s. Gay was still a stigmatized word, made fearfully real from a rampant AIDS epidemic. Being called gay was synonymous with being a leper. Patients were being turned away from hospitals; people were being cast from their homes. With gay visibility came violent attacks. Senators suggested quarantining. In a 1986 *New York Times* OP/ED article, William F. Buckley, Jr., proposed that 'Everyone detected with AIDS should be tattooed in the upper forearm, and on the buttocks.' A majority of frightened Christians believed that gay AIDS victims deserved what they got because they refused to repent their homosexuality.

The Catholic Church, like my family, remained silent, condoning vicious acts of unchristian behavior. Institutions do not make the swiftest decisions in moments of crisis. I don't remember explicit condemnation from my own Catholic parish, but I recall priests in the media speaking out against the 'sin' of homosexuality. With the church touting doctrine that declared it hated the sin and loved the sinner, I saw myself as a candidate likely to burn in Hell.

There is a folk belief to which my family and, consequently, I myself held to: that whatever happens to us through the machinations of fate, is our own doing. This sort of idea persisted then within the Church, too.

Like most youth, I was impressionable. I learned from school and community that I was an outsider. For me, the psychological damage from Christianity was deep and scarring. Their attitude and behavior knelled clear as a church bell. I was an outlaw in my own community. A

sort of damned, invisible monster. It mattered little whether I was infected by the unknown disease or not. My kind and, by extension, I myself were not welcome.

Perhaps, if anything, gender issues, similar to cultural issues, allow us to see 'the other.' Gay or straight, black, white or otherwise, these identity labels compartmentalize our egos. There is, of course, extreme spiritual danger in this. Without the insight that we are all in this together, personal and communal prejudice separate us. Most of the sorrows of the earth humans cause for themselves, said the Buddha. When confronted with the other, in any form, we are given the chance to see through the illusion of separation. The overt discrimination against gay and lesbian people is only one aspect of a greater error humans make. When churches and institutions make this mistake, the damage is magnified.

I have always been a spiritual child. For spirituality to thrive, a person needs an environment that allows the seed of faith to grow. It was clear that Christianity, for me at least, was not the fertile ground from which to grow anything but animosity. I scouted far afield to find a religion that accepted me as a total person, not merely as a behavior or sexual identity.

After taking a comparative religion course, I gained great respect for Buddhism. The Buddha did not speak of sexual orientation. He encouraged his disciples to examine and question religious teachings before accepting them. A non-harmful action is not good or evil. Buddhism seeks to limit opposite extremes. At its core Buddhism promotes the ideas of non-violence, helpful actions, and equality.

Robert Aiken notes that Zen Buddhism does not 'make a distinction between heterosexual and homosexual' sex. It encourages sexual relationships that are 'mutually loving and supportive.' While other sects of Buddhism still struggle with gender-identity issues, Zen is characteristically quiet concerning it. Compared to other religions, its lack of misogyny and homophobia attracted me immediately.

If dissatisfaction concerning queer issues lo-

cated Zen as a potential discipline, it was something else that nudged me in its direction to take up practice.

Around the same time, I was busy wrestling with the dark night of my soul something life altering occurred. I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. At twenty-one, I thought my life over. Here at last was the manifestation of God's punishment. At first diagnoses, I thought the cancer was HIV. While this did not turn out to be true, I came face-to-face with my human mortality at a young age. Death is, perhaps, the great motivator. It is the ultimate change. For most, it remains background noise. For me, it was the whack of the kyosaku stick.

I began treatment shortly after my spleen was removed to prevent metastasis. After eight weeks of radiation therapy, the tumors growing through my lymph system melted. Two years later, the disease returned. Doctors located four tumors growing on my heart. I had no other choice but to endure chemotherapy.

Put simply, chemotherapy works by slowly killing you. Poison is injected into the system and weaker cells are destroyed. Unstable cancer cells die off more quickly than healthy ones. I was lucky in that I was young, and my was body strong, even if my spirit needed nourishment. After twenty-four weeks of treatments I emerged, healthy, but scarred.

Throughout my treatment, the concern that the Christian church could provide no spiritual aid troubled me. With death sitting in the next room, I had little time to decide whether the Church was in fact correct, or whether I should be true to myself. As long as I was gay, there could be no redemption. Yet, I could not let go of my identity.

It took me several years to understand the importance of my disease. Diagnosis of a fatal illness sharpens one's focus. Many aspects of my life changed because of what I endured. The most personal was the way I learned to look at myself.

Self-acceptance can take several years. I did not learn to love myself overnight. As the Buddha said, 'True freedom comes when we follow

our Buddha nature.' Faced with death, I had to make a choice. I could either stay nailed to a set of religious presumptions of my youth battling back and forth the issue as to whether or not I was a sinner just for existing as nature made me, by engaging in the simple act of loving, or I could find my home elsewhere.

'In contrast to how a child belongs in the world,' writes John O'Donohue, 'adult belonging is never as natural, innocent, or playful. Adult belonging has to be chosen, received, and renewed. It is a lifetime's work.' I took up the search for spiritual growth again after a few years in remission, allowing my body and spirit to repair. My internal landscape looked familiar even after being razed by cancer treatment. I was more fluid, more exact in what I wanted from this life.

Desire, then, brought me to Zen. I wanted. I wanted a safe place to call home, I wanted to be accepted for who I was without question or condemnation; I wanted the possibility of seeing myself as divine and natural, a part of the whole, and THE whole. I wanted to belong.

Zen practice has granted me inner peace. I am whole when I meditate. With each breath I confirm my place in the universe. I am, I am, I am. And though my journey is not over, I know the map of my inner self like the back of one hand.

*Brad joined the Center in 2002. He is the author of Alice's Misadventures Underground and teaches at Rochester's School of the Arts.*

#### References

Robert Aitken, 'A Zen Buddhist Perspective on Same-gender Marriage,' <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/religion>, 1995.

Josephine Hart. *Damage*, Random House, NY, 1996.

Jack Kornfield. *Buddha's Little Instruction Book*. Bantam Books, NY, 1994.

John O'Donohue. *Eternal Echoes: Celtic Reflections on Our Yearning to Belong*, Cliffstreet Books, Harper Collins Publishers, NY, 2000.

# 40 Wasted Years

JIM BUCHANAN

Moving from Atlanta to Rochester in 1969 was an act of desperation. Reading *The Trail of Tears* in 1960 was an ominous beginning to a decade of turbulence that took its toll on me. After I finished college, four years of working as a teacher had become unsatisfying, and returning to school turned into a dead end. Then, there was the Vietnam war and the civil rights movement, which was active in Atlanta, the home of Martin Luther King, Jr. By 1968, I was tired of the war and burned out from protesting something which seemed to be hopelessly interminable. The King assassination shattered everything.

Somehow, someone introduced me to Roshi Kapleau's *The Three Pillars of Zen*. I went to an RZC workshop in April 1969, and by June I was walking up the driveway of 7 Arnold Park grasping for a spark of hope. I did a six-month training program, but for the most part I worked at various jobs in Rochester and lived near the Center. Then, in 1975, wanting to become closer to the Center and attend more sesshins, I applied for staff and was accepted. That spark of hope had been ignited. It was unimaginable to me that it was connected to a stick of dynamite.

By the spring of 1976 conditions began to change; an impasse developed between Roshi Kapleau and me. As months went by, I dearly hoped that the matter would be resolved, but a year later all hope for a resolution vanished and I resigned from staff. As I was removing boxes of personal items from the attic and loading them into a rental car, Roshi appeared in 'the link.' He asked, 'What are you going to do now?' I said, 'I don't know.' We hugged and I walked out the door. The only thing I knew was that in a few minutes Rochester would be in the rearview mirror. I started the car and drove away in tears.

After my eight years in Rochester, I headed back south to see if I could somehow start over.

Not wanting to go back to Atlanta, I aimed for north Georgia, not far from the Appalachian Trail. Mildred, a friend from school, was living there and I thought I could find a job nearby. I continued to try zazen, but everything seemed hopeless. I thought that my time in Rochester had been a gigantic waste. Eventually I quit even trying to sit and wrote the Zen Center to drop my membership. But the pain would not go away. At work and at home, every single day was a tear-inducing day. I came to call this state SAD: severe anguish and despair.



In the spring of 1988, I was living north of Cleveland, Georgia, in an old farmhouse that had electricity, but no plumbing or telephone. At this point, I had been gone from Rochester for eleven years and was not doing any zazen, not even a minute a month. It would take a major crisis to change that.

The evening of April 28, 1988 was a mild one. There was still some daylight left when there was a knock at the door. It was Bob, a supervisor at work, who was holding a scrap of paper with a phone number written on it. The number was for the sheriff's office in Jackson, Georgia. Something was wrong, and I needed to call them.

A drive to Jackson would be about three hours. I grabbed my credit cards and headed to Mildred's house to use her phone. Mom's voice was a little faint, but she said she was fine and didn't seem to know what the problem was. According to the officer, someone had seen her on the shoulder of a ramp along I-75, south of Atlanta. She seemed confused, so they called the police. There was no sign of an accident or mugging.

Mother was seventy-seven and lived in a retirement complex in Blairsville, a town about thirty miles north of my place. She loved going





Tom Kowal

out for a drive, but this location was way out of her usual orbit. It was about midnight when I arrived. I asked the officer if he thought she could follow me back the next morning, and he said, 'yes.'

As we drove to a motel, my mind was racing. I tried to find out what she was up to, but she rejected any notion that she was in trouble. She had just gone for a ride, so what's the big deal? She opened her purse and said, 'I'll pay for the motel.' But she only had a couple of dollar bills and no credit cards. She couldn't explain where she had spent the night before or what she'd been doing for food. She did not see what the fuss was about and resented questions about it.

The next morning we ate breakfast, retrieved her car, and headed north on 1-75. I kept a close watch in my rear-view mirror, and as I passed the Forest Parkway exit, I saw her drive right up the exit ramp. I slammed on the brakes and

pulled over beneath the overpass. Not ready to back up on the shoulder, I ran up the hill toward the ramp as fast as I could, but she turned right and was quickly out of sight. Surely she was going for gas and would be right back ... but there was only one gas station visible and her car was not there. I didn't dare leave the corner long enough to return to my car, so I stood there and waited. And waited. And looked. And waited. I may have waited on that corner for forty-five minutes before returning to my car.

Not wanting to drive to the next exit and return, I backed up slowly on the shoulder of 1-75 with traffic rushing by at 75 mph. I drove slowly down Forest Parkway, checking every gas station and every parking lot. I turned around after a few miles, then retraced the same route over and over. Out of luck, I found my way to a small police station. On a quiet Sunday morning there was one person on duty. When I told him I'd

lost my mother, his response was, 'Well, how did you do that?'

It was another two days before the police called. Mom was okay. A store clerk had noticed someone who was browsing and acting a little strange and called it in. Mother's doctor refused to use the 'A' word, but my brother, sister and I began to call it Alzheimer's, and there was no treatment for it. We agreed that she could never drive again, but logic and reason would not work with my mother, since she could not see that there was a problem. We would just have to take her car away—'we' meaning me!

It was due to this situation with my mother's illness that I came back to the mat. Ironically, never in her right mind would my mother have done anything to bring me closer to Zen! One night I went to bed in tears, and just tossed and turned. Precious sleep would not rescue me. After a while, a radical idea occurred to me. After ten years of doing no zazen, maybe I could give it a try as a last resort. At least it couldn't hurt. So I dragged myself up to a vertical position and began to sit, expecting nothing. But before long, there was something. The sitting became very soothing, and warmth seemed to come up from the cushion, enveloping me. Tears of joy began to flow, blending with the tears of sorrow.

This really got my attention, so I began to sit everyday. This extraordinary sitting lasted for several days, then faded. I'd never had an experience like this even during sesshin. So I wrote Bodhin-roshi (then Sensei) to tell him about it and asked if I could rejoin the Center.

Some time later Roshi Kapleau was in Atlanta visiting Charlotte Kramer and the Atlanta Zen Group. I went down to see him—this time with something good to tell him. I told him how my mother, in all her pain and misery had somehow, unknowingly, given me a great gift. He was mostly silent but seemed slightly intrigued. It was good to talk to him while feeling some joy for a change and make peace with him.



The funeral service for Roshi was May 23, 2004 at Chapin Mill. I rode out with Jay Thompson,

who let me stay at his place. We'd been on staff at the same time almost thirty years earlier. It was my first visit to Rochester since the thirtieth anniversary celebration in 1996 and my first visit to Chapin Mill since the occasional picnic and a sesshin in the 1970s. The weather was typical Rochester: cloudy, cool, and damp—and it was just beautiful! The overwhelming feeling for me at the service was the most intense gratitude ever. Tears were flowing not just from sorrow, but joy and gratitude, all at the same time.

At the gravesite a flame was burning in an urn with a pad and pencil next to it. A sign instructed that anyone who wanted could write something down and then burn it. This was something new to me, and I wasn't sure about doing it, so I walked around a bit to mull it over. Before long I was back, wrote something, and then torched it. Any remaining negative feeling toward Roshi Kapleau evaporated in an instant, evoking tremendous liberation. On top of that, it was my birthday. Now how did that happen? It became the finest birthday present ever!

So between 1968 and 1988 I've been drawn to Zen practice not once but twice, and both times involuntarily. Both times I was led to practice by a severe life crisis. Somehow, some way my life has benefitted tremendously in spite of the ordeals, or perhaps because of them.

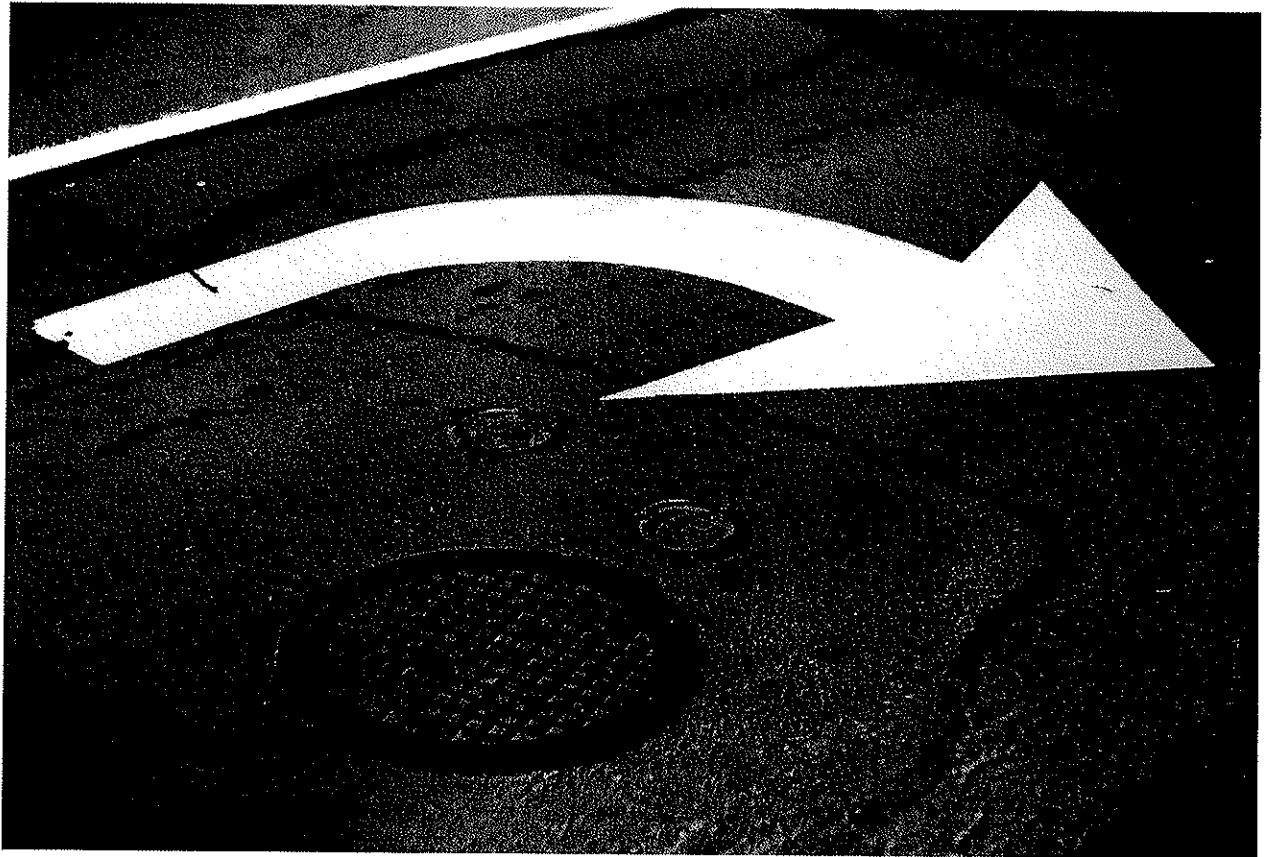
In addition to Roshi Kapleau, I owe gratitude to many others. Charlotte introduced me to Zen through the writings of Alan Watts and D.T. Suzuki. These writers primed me so that when *The Three Pillars of Zen* came along I was ready for it. Mildred and Charlotte have also helped me in many ways they could never know.

Everyone who's ever sat on the mat, especially in Rochester: thank you. When we sit, whether in the zendo or miles away, we help each other.

My mother and I were not too close, but there must have been something there that I never realized. She brought me back to the mat, which propelled my appreciation for her into the stratosphere.

*Jim is enjoying retirement after 25 years of working in building and grounds maintenance.*





Britta Brückner

## Winding Road

REBECCA GILBERT

When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.

—Buddhist Proverb

My Protestant religious upbringing left me longing for a way to understand more deeply the mysteries of the world and the meaning of my life. Memorizing the chapters of the Old and New Testament in Sunday School just didn't cut it. Yes ... I was baptized in a Methodist Church, and then later as a teenager, was saved at a Southern Baptist revival. I prayed like crazy to connect with God. Where was he? When I prayed, I only heard my own small forlorn voice promising to do good and asking for blessings in return. But I never heard any reply. Where was the booming voice of authority pointing the way to salvation or the comforting voice of com-

passion and understanding? And when I slept, I had disturbing dreams with images of the crucifixion and feelings of anxiety that no matter how 'good' I tried to be ... I was a hopeless sinner. Those religious experiences were not only confusing, but also frankly terrifying. Yet I was anguished in my desire to be wise and to follow the path that was my destiny. How can I know God's plan for me? What did all the threats of hell and promises of heaven have to do with how to navigate the twists and turns of my life?

Eventually music became my religious practice. About the time I was confirmed in the Methodist Church where I was baptized, I also sang in the church choir. There was something transcendent about hearing my voice mixing with the others in the choir ... it was a visceral experience of being a part of something much

larger than my own small self. I loved it. The sound of our collective voices was beautiful—harmonious, active, and alive. Later I began playing the flute, and eventually became professional musician. That process required two key elements that are also cornerstones of spiritual practice: daily disciplined practice and an abiding faith that if I followed my heart, I would find the right course. There were triumphant highs, cycles of disappointment, and many distractions. But, every performance was another opportunity to make something magical and divine, and sharing it with my fellow musicians and the audience continues to be powerful and deeply satisfying.

But life is suffering. Although my life as a musician brought meaning to my life, it didn't erase the emotional pain of drug and alcohol addiction or heal the scars of sexual trauma. When I finally sought help with a psychotherapist, I was relieved to know she could help me recover some of my emotional strength, but she wisely warned me that I couldn't fully recover without engaging my spirituality. As I left the office after our last session, I made a note to myself ... work on finding my spirituality. But where? Christianity was out, and there were many other faiths I could explore, but how? When and where could I find a 'religion expo' to shop and compare?

As is so often the case, the clues were right before my eyes. I had a close friend who was very interested in spiritual matters and who was exploring Native American spiritual practices. She had a meditation practice which she invited me to share with her. So we had a weekly meditation ritual that began with a short prayer invoking the spirit world to accept our 'highest and best' intentions to cultivate our wisdom. My friend had 'conversations' with her guardian angels while I only aspired to make a connection with mine. I consulted with a psychic for guidance and answers to the burning questions of the meaning of my life. I visited the healing vortexes in Sedona, Arizona, hoping for a sudden stroke of insight. I began practicing yoga to find a way to release the pain I was holding in my body's memory. I was open and searching

intuitively, but with no direction and no sense of urgency.

When my career brought me to Rochester, I was still very ungrounded and vulnerable to raging storms of emotion that seemed to blow up in my mind at the most unexpected moments. I had continued to work on my 'issues' in psychotherapy, but I never really felt secure and at ease with myself alone or in my friendships and romantic relationships. Just after I moved to Rochester I had an experience that seemed to finally point me in a specific direction. At the end of a yoga class, the teacher instructed the group to sit in an upright cross-legged posture and meditate for 10 minutes. Well, I had meditated before, but never in a group. This was an incredibly powerful ten minutes where I felt a sense of grounded calm as my awareness expanded and the thoughts and images that filled my mind seemed to fade and dissipate. I felt a detachment that made me feel stronger and more empowered and provided few moments of relief from the emotional storm that was the ongoing undercurrent of my life. I left the classroom with the realization that I must find a group to meditate with. In that moment, I was excited, eager, and motivated.

It was still two years before I would find my way to the Zen Center. I had no idea that Rochester was the home of one of the oldest Zen centers in the United States. I was living on Vick Park B, only blocks away from Arnold Park, and still never heard of the Rochester Zen Center nor walked down the street to notice the buildings. This interlude of time still seems miraculous and mysterious. I can only assume that I, the student, was still 'getting ready.' When I finally read an article in the local newspaper about Chapin Mill and decided to look up the RZC, I signed up for the next workshop on the schedule. I immediately began practicing daily zazen, joined as a trial member, and signed up for the first sesshin for which I was eligible for. I recognized my affinity for Zen practice immediately. It felt like coming home after a long journey, and I couldn't wait to dive in headfirst. Very quickly I recognized my affinity

with Roshi Bodhin Kjolhede and asked him to be my teacher. I was ready and the teacher appeared.

That was ten years ago and the beginning of a journey that has transformed my life. In one of my early interactions with Roshi he posed the question to me: are you a musician practicing Zen, or are you a Zen student practicing the flute? At the time I wasn't sure what he even

meant by that. I know now, and I am humbled and filled with gratitude for the opportunity to practice here in Rochester with the incredible loving wisdom and support of Roshi and Sangha.

*Rebecca has been a member of the Rochester Zen Center since 1999.*

## Burning Embers

JOHN CANINO

Let me start by saying that I'm not sure why you would want to read this essay, as I am somewhat unsure of why I agreed to write it. As I thought about how I came to discover Zen, I had to reach far back—at least as far as my recollections will allow—to the beginning. Everything is shaped by my early experiences, or maybe lack of them.

When I was a small child I lost much of my hearing due to a childhood illness. The reason is not important, but the effects were profound. I spent most of my youth trying to be normal, or at least thought of as 'normal,' when in fact I was not. As a result I became somewhat introspective. Added to this was the experience of being taught in a Catholic educational setting where spiritual conformity was enforced regardless of what you were actually feeling. Actually, as it was a Catholic military grammar school operated by a nun, 'conformity' is a somewhat benevolent term to use. Anyway, you get the idea.

After high school I went on to college. Because I was good in the sciences in high school, I continued on that studious track in college. Unfortunately, introductory science courses were usually held in large lecture halls with a minimum of 150 students at best. Even with having been recently fitted with hearing aids, I still could not understand a word that was said in my classes. So, I would find one of the more successful students in each class and copy their lecture notes.

Despite the struggle, I managed to get by until I took organic chemistry. You might be thinking this is all very interesting, but what does it have to do with coming to practice? Well, bear with me, for everything is connected.

My organic chemistry course was taught by a professor who was of the opinion that no one deserved an A. He graded on a curve, which permitted a smattering of students to be graded a B and the rest would get a C or lower. This was his pattern not only when I took this particular course, but for decades. The rumor was that he, himself, was the last student at the college to have received an A in the course.

I managed to obtain a B average after about four tests during the semester. And then I blew a test, the last one before finals. In discussing this particular shortcoming of mine, the professor advised that I would need to ace the final in order to get a C as my final grade for the course. During the discussion—actually at that point I was screaming at him—I told him what he could do with his course. That was when I dropped the science major and became a philosophy major.

When I started school the next year, another significant event happened: I was paired up with a new roommate, Ben, who was also a philosophy major. Ben was a rather brilliant guy. He was nominated for a Woodrow Wilson Fel-



Donna Kowal

lowship, and the bet was he would get it. However, he ultimately dropped out of college and began a personal quest involving various New Age cults—that is another story for a different time. We spent many an evening after we ceased studying—or rather after I ceased studying (I'm still not sure Ben had to actually study)—and discussed our thoughts about the nature of the universe. The time was enjoyable and thought provoking. Although these discussions did not directly lead me to practice, a small fire within me had been lit to seek answers. The fire would burn out, but embers remained.

When I finished college, I ended up going to law school. How I came to do this is a rather long story in itself, which is again something for another time. Let me shorten it up and just put it this way: becoming a lawyer was not a well-thought-out plan. In fact, there was no plan at all; I kind of just fell into it. The only signifi-

cance for me in the experience of law school was that it was actually a diversion from the spiritual path I had begun, the resolution of the question of 'What exactly is the nature of the universe and why am I here anyway?' I became involved in my career and family, and got away from this fundamental priority. Why go through this life just to die at the end? I began slowly dying not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense.

I was probably at the lowest point of my life, although I didn't realize it at the time. Then one day I got a letter from Ben. You remember Ben, my old roommate? I hadn't heard from him since he dropped out in our senior year some twenty years prior. He wrote to say that he had read a book entitled *The Seat of the Soul* by Gary Zukav and he couldn't recommend it enough. It was rather bizarre to hear from Ben after all that time. I felt a strong need, like a compulsion, to read the book. Although it felt very strange

at the time, I figured what harm could there be in reading it. Reading it was like having a dry bonfire that had been left for years waiting for someone to put a match to it, and Ben restarted the fire from the embers. I really haven't thought about the actual contents of that book in a great while, as I read the book some fifteen-plus years ago. All I remember was how I felt. I felt a deep need to know why I existed at all.

Upon reading the book recommended by Ben, I proceeded to read everything that I could get my hands on concerning spiritual practice. I frantically sought out reading material with such titles as *Out on Limb* by Shirley McClain, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* by Gary Zukav, among some two dozen or more others that I read in a two-week span. I went to a bookstore with my then law partner, continuing to feed my voracious appetite for reading material. I was looking at *The Three Pillars of Zen* by Roshi Philip Kapleau, and my partner said not to take that one, as it looked like too much to read. Instead, he recommended that I read another book that was on the shelf authored by Alan Watts. While the Watts book certainly looked interesting, I couldn't help but feel that the book I should read was *The Three Pillars of Zen*. I think that I should point out that as a student of the sciences, and certainly as a trained lawyer, I dealt in facts and more or less did not let emotions or feelings guide decisions. From the moment I received Ben's letter to the time I bought *The Three Pillars of Zen* I was listening to my gut and not trying to follow reason. In many ways, it was the first time in my life that I started listening to the Universe.

I suspect that most of the students at the Rochester Zen Center have read *The Three Pillars of Zen*. I don't know about anyone else's reaction to reading the book; I can only share mine. The best way I can describe what I felt

after 'experiencing' the book was that I knew I had found the way. Not the answer, but that the answer was there. There was certainty in my feeling, which although inexplicable was and is as real to me as the earth I stand on. Just as quickly as I started reading, I stopped. With the guidance contained in the section on meditation in the back of the book, I started sitting. At first I sat just a little while for each sitting, but then I sat more often and for longer periods.

After a couple of months it became clear to me that it was time to find a teacher, as Roshi Kapleau had recommended in his book. Okay, I can now tell you that Zen teachers do not, I repeat, do not, advertise in the *Yellow Pages*. I know because I looked. I also looked in the *White Pages* and, alas, nothing. (To those who grew up with the Internet, let me remind you that once upon a time it was not what it is today.) Anyway, I was about to give up, when searching through Roshi's book, I realized that he started a center in Rochester. I immediately called directory assistance and got the phone number for the Center. When I finally got the nerve to call, I did and asked the receptionist if he had a list of Zen teachers at a center near me. I was told that no they did not maintain such a list, but that people came to the Rochester Zen Center from all over, and that there was a workshop. He then offered to send me a brochure and application. I went to the workshop and found my teacher.

Now, having completed this essay, indeed I can tell you about the events in my life that I recognize to have led me to the Way. But I can no more tell you what brought me to practice—short of you actually living my life down to the molecular level—than Roshi can tell me the meaning of Mu. One can only do that oneself.

*John lives in Guilderland, New York, and has been a member of the Zen Center since 1990.*

# Labor Pains

ANDY STERN

The problem with 'coming to the path' stories is that because the ending is given away at the start, there is no suspense. If I were to tell you that I write this story from prison, on death row, the very same events in my life story could be interpreted to be a logical progression to there, or to Zen practice. So, just for a little suspense, I think I won't give away the ending just yet.

I was the only kid never able to sit 'Indian style'; my back and legs just wouldn't go like that—certainly not an auspicious beginning for a journey to the Zendo. My childhood was unhappy; my parents were not so well suited to the job of parenting me. My earliest memory is of me in my crib. I hear my mother's footsteps approach the doorway of the room and pause there. I feel fear, or whatever the preverbal, premyelinated brain of an infant feels as fear. I recall the fear rising to terror as I hear her approach me, but an equal terror arising should she turn and leave the room without entering. In later life, as an adult, to receive a hug from my mother is not comforting: frigid, rigid, reptilian, or, like hugging an animal that is itself nearly paralyzed with fear. To be touched by her or abandoned by her leaving the nursery seems to have evoked similar anxieties.

My father's is a different story. He wants fervently, perhaps even needs, that everything be not only 'nice,' but 'wonderful.' Negatives to him, such as negative feelings or behavior, or messes, are to be avoided at all costs. Perhaps to comply with his need, I decided, very intentionally and consciously, at the age of nine, to stop making messes—I stopped having bowel movements. I suffered severe spasms of cramping abdominal pain, until finally after three months I had a surgical disimpaction.

So is this the childhood of a spiritual seeker or a death row inmate? Read on!

When I left home for college and began making my way in the world, I was lost. For some years, I abused alcohol, drugs and cigarettes. I rode motorcycles recklessly and crashed many times. I stole compulsively from stores, spent a few nights in jails, and pursued sex as though it would offer spiritual redemption. In retrospect I was depressed. Though I did consider suicide at times, I did not think of myself as depressed.

After two years as an English major at Yale, I left, disillusioned, vowing never to read another word. Perhaps I left just in time, as both of my roommates suffered drug-related deaths sometime later. I moved into a macrobiotic commune for months (this was the 1960s!), grew very thin, and became ill. I sold my motorcycle, bought a camera and built a darkroom. For a year I took pictures during the day, mostly of homeless persons in the poorest slums of Philadelphia, and developed and printed much of the night. Although I was entirely isolated with no friends and hardly any social interaction, I was sober. I also began to see a psychotherapist. Eventually, I returned to school and came to Rochester for medical school. *Gassho* to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, my first choice, for rejecting me!



My first encounter with Zen was in high school. My best friend was Griff Foulk, now a professor of Far Eastern Religion and a renowned Zen scholar. We would joke then about the 'Zen method.' Griff was very engaged for a time with throwing the javelin on our track team. He would say that success was not about how hard he could throw, but more just getting out of the way and allowing the universe to carry the javelin without the interfering resistance the ego interposed (Zen and the art of javelin throw-





Tom Kowal

ing?!). I recall one argument we had for much of one night about whether the fact that trout return to the exact spot of their origin to spawn, jumping waterfalls to move back upstream, was a wonder, even miraculous, or not. Griff argued that only when one divided the going from the returning did it seem exceptional. As an undivided event it was only that; it could not have any other outcome and therefore was not inspiring of the least awe. I argued that one came to know things only by dividing, and that was a fair method of inquiry. We did agree, however, that whether this phenomenon seemed remarkable or not seemed to depend on our conceptual point of view. We had many such all-night discussions; what drugs we were taking for that one in particular I don't recall.

Griff, after college, went to Kyoto where he entered a Zen Temple as a monk for the next four years. I recall his accounts of sittings, ses-

shins and particularly the kyosaku, and still have a calligraphy he gave me, made by his Roshi. He told a story of an experience there, which made a lasting impression. One day, Roshi collected the monks, Griff among them, and asked that they move a large rock on the temple grounds to another place and that it be placed on end, standing. Well, Griff was a big strong guy, an ex-football player and loved a challenge. What's more, his father was a landscape architect—Griff and I had worked for him the summers of high school, sometimes building stone walls. This was a project right up his alley! The stone weighed several tons, though, so they had to devise clever means of moving it with levers, pulleys, rollers, etc. After maybe eight weeks the job was done. They had landscaped the new setting and were very proud of their work. They called Roshi out to applaud the job well done. He looked at it, and simply said he would like it instead to be

in another spot, which he indicated. After the shock had simmered some, they went back to work. Now they were experienced, though, and this time they were proud to have accomplished the job in half the time. Again they called Roshi out, though, this time not quite as confidently. And again, he indicated yet another spot where he thought it might work even better. According to Griff, this sequence was repeated four or five times. Wow! Interesting! Especially for me, an 'arrived-mind' addict!

I was first shown the Rochester Zen Center by Mary Wolff, a long-time member and a medical resident in training with me back then. But it wasn't quite time for me.



My first wife, Laurie, died of cancer in 1995. I took care of her at home for the last four months of her life. She had begun meditating; I think mostly guided visualizations on cassettes, about little 'Pac-men' in her bloodstream eating up the cancer cells. Her final months were, oddly, the most peaceful, grounded, and fulfilled of her life. She said I *must* begin meditation!

At that time I had been seeing a psychotherapist very intensively, three or four times a week for a decade. Some months after my wife died, he also died, suddenly. *Death and death*. I was left with my two children, then twelve and thirteen, to parent alone, without any of the support I had relied on for many years—the very people I would have turned to at such a time. I would burst into sobbing frequently with no apparent trigger, overwhelmed with the grief. This was it! In the jargon of recovery programs, I had 'hit bottom.' The losses, as painful as they were, even devastating, were also an opening—something in me had cracked loose and was ready.

I did not begin my exploration at the Rochester Zen Center. I began doing yoga earnestly as a daily practice. I got rolled! I went to Catholic Church and took communion—a little strange for a nice Jewish boy! But I was searching. I initiated in Mankind Project, a fellowship of men committed to reclaiming a sacred mascu-

linity and serving the community as healthy men. With those men I participated in Native American Sweat Lodges. I began seeing another psychotherapist, a psychologist rather than the more traditional psychiatrist, who taught me how to meditate.

I recall the strangest sight, while taking a yoga class held in the Zen Center's Buddha Hall. It was mid-winter—I think below zero. Looking down into the snow-covered Zen Center Garden there were about five or six zombies—people bundled to the hilt, all with brown robes to their ankles below winter coats and all walking with a very, very slow and measured gait. What the \*#%^@? Day of the Living Dead?? And the yoga teacher's, François, wry comment: 'Zey are weally cwazy!'

One memory I have of the Rochester Zen Center workshop, which I attended in 1996, was telling Roshi (then Sensei) about my wife's death and his response being very different than any I had received. There was no display, no 'I'm so sorry to hear of your loss,' only an acknowledgment that he had heard, and not much of any reaction. I recall feeling hurt that I had not instantly won support, empathy, even the coddling I was used to receiving. But I did come back on Sunday for the sitting ... and OMG!

I believe that Sunday sitting was the watershed moment in my coming to the path (or ending on death row!). I had been sitting at home for 15–20 minutes with the time limited by the onset of leg pain. So I was apprehensive about, egads, *two 25 minute rounds*. The first 15 minutes were not bad. Then I began to have increasing pain. The crescendo was rapid, reaching to a pain that not only filled this universe, but all parallel universes and all black holes in all of them, with red-hot, searing, mind-obliterating agony. Sweat poured off my body. First I thought the guy who rang the bell at the end of the round was a sadist, then a murderer, then a mass-murderer. The bell finally did ring, I stood and slowly I regained sanity—but not quite. For the only sane thing to have done at that moment would have been to bolt, and never look back. Not I! I sat back down knowing fully that

I would be subjecting myself immediately again to, with no doubt whatsoever, *the worst pain of my life*. And I was perfectly correct.

Although my return to the Center after that was slow, and my beginning to sit regularly there slower yet, I have a sense that the moment I chose to sit back down that day was the moment of my commitment to this practice. Why else would a person do such a thing? To not look bad? To finish what I had started because I am not a quitter? Maybe. Although I did not know it until years later, I now suspect that somehow the pain had catalyzed an alchemical reaction:

a base metal had been transmuted into gold in the crucible of the Zendo. I have never experienced that level of pain again, and never want to. However, I wonder if the pain of that labor didn't herald my spiritual birth.

Now for the ending! Indeed, I find myself today in prison, on death row, as are we all. The prison is delusion, the sentence the cycle of birth and death!

Excuse me, I am going to sit.

*Andy has been an RZC member for over 10 years and currently serves as Vice-President.*

## Longing for ... What?

ELIZABETH McMAHON

I remember vividly opening the door to 7 Arnold Park and stepping inside. It was March 2002 and I was attending an introductory workshop. Three people in my life at that time had mentioned the Zen Center to me within weeks of each other. When I crossed the threshold I knew without a doubt that what I had so long been searching for was right before me.

What was it I had searched for those many years? Answers to questions reaching back to early childhood? Relief from a life-long general anxiety that had controlled and limited me and left me sleepless for most of my life? Freedom from the cursed Judean-Christian guilt syndrome? An acceptance of myself and my life as it was, had been; not as I fantasized it to be? Of course it was all of the above and, deeper yet, a longing to be whole and free.

When I look back, reflecting on the long winding path of my life, it is clear how one experience led to another. My question as a six year old was one we probably all ask at one time or another. Why? For me it took the form of asking, why did my little brother die? Why did he die on his fifth birthday? Why did he die and not me? We were both sick. Why did they say

at school he could not go to heaven? And, having died in our bedroom, how could I sleep anymore? Thus a longstanding sleeping problem developed for me. As a six year old I sought to control my fears by controlling as much of life around me as I could.

Growing up in the 50s did not resemble 'Leave It To Beaver' for me. There was much pain and suffering within my family and in the neighborhood. One did not need to look far. Why? Why did the boy upstairs die? He was 15 or 16 years old and left his mother alone in the world. Why couldn't the black man up the street get a job where my father worked? Why were the nuns so unhappy when they believed in God? Why did my friend's mother take her own life? Why was the woman from Germany who taught at Brown University denied tenure? Why was my older brother beat up on the way to school? Questions in those days were discouraged, at least in the world where I lived, and especially for girls. Being quiet, not causing any more trouble, was both necessary and rewarded. I became the neighborhood social worker in an attempt to make sense of what I experienced, burying deep within me the pain, anger, con-



Donna Kowal

fusion and loneliness. I learned well to be the 'good' one, helping others, intervening in conflicts, putting self on a back burner and doing what needed to be done. This, of course, would be the expected role for the middle child and only daughter of Irish Catholic immigrant parents, would it not? These experiences blended with the many happy childhood ones of carefree days playing with friends, vacations at the ocean, family gatherings, hours spent exploring the city library, dance and piano lessons and church youth activities. My parents were good people who worked hard. They were devoted to family, instilling a respect for education and providing for one. They also passed on their simple faith based on the Golden Rule. All of this shaped the person I would be when I entered adulthood.

The 60s came with all the promise, turmoil, and upheaval the are known for as I began my senior year in high school. Urban decline had

come to the neighborhood in the previous years, and eventually there would be no trace of my childhood left. All would be burned down or torn down for freeway expansion. Years later I would recall this with my son and daughter while visiting the town where my parents grew up in Ireland. There stood the farms, houses, schools, and churches they had called home so many years before. This was in stark contrast to the disappearance of my own childhood places in the United States.

With its intense demands, attending nursing school absorbed me in the early 60s, followed by a two-year stretch in which I immersed myself in training to be a Catholic foreign missionary, a dream I had had for years. The social activism of the American Catholic Church inspired me then and still claims my respect. During that two-year period I studied Philosophy, Theology, History of the Ancient Civilizations and Biblical

Studies. An important component of the training was developing the skill of contemplation. There were specific times in the daily schedule for contemplation and other times devoted to the teaching of it and discussion. The social activism of the 60s and the vision of brotherhood that Pope John XXIII, John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr stood for influenced us all and we dove headlong into the many causes of the day, as only the twenty-something set can. But, my stay was short. I was needed at home as my father was ill. What I learned those two years was immeasurable. My life was broadened and enriched by the experience of meeting the profoundly committed, compassionate, and highly intelligent women who were on that path.

The 70s found me married and building a family, trying, as was usual for me, to do a good job and be a close-to-perfect wife and mother. Underneath I was scared to death! The demands of adult life, maintaining a career, struggling with financial issues, and assuming the responsibilities of parenthood outstripped my ancient childhood coping and learning styles. In addition, my husband developed a chronic disease that strained us both. I dug in and worked harder, tried desperately to continue to be part of the Catholic Church, which I had loved, respected, and devoted a large portion of my life to in the past. What I was finding was that it spoke less and less to my deeper needs. Day-to-day life took precedence, and I was absorbed in it, leaving no time or energy for reflection that would have allowed me to see how my life REALLY was rather than how I wished it to be. I was in classic denial, fast-forward, somehow-it-will-work mode. We had a beautiful, bright, and delightful son at the time that brought such joy into our lives as only little kids can, but the marriage was strained and difficult. Our equally beautiful, bright, and delightful daughter arrived in the late 70s. My mother passed away later that same year.

The 80s found me devoting my energy and time to family, volunteering at the children's school, gardening, bread-making, canning, sewing, and doing all the motherly things one does

with young children. I again became more involved with the church, engaging in daily readings and contemplation exercises. This did help me manage myself and my anxiety, but the gnawing emptiness remained. At this point my physical health was showing signs of the years of burying feelings, ignoring self, and compartmentalizing my life. I experienced increased headaches and developed a back problem. The strain of my husband's chronic illness was becoming too much for me. I did not have the resources or personal strength to manage myself and provide guidance and support for my children. Nor was I capable of being supportive of my husband in a healthy, productive, caring way any longer. I did not accept the situation as it was and tried in vain to make it go away. Of course, what happened then was that everything only got worse. During these years the ordinary parts of family life went on. Our son and daughter grew and developed into wonderful little people, and then remarkably great big people. They did the things kids do: went to school, played sports, participated in bands and chorus groups, etc. We went on vacations, camped, volunteered in the community, and I went back to school part time.

My older brother died in the early 80s from complications due to AIDS. It was before Rock Hudson came out and a time when AIDS created panic, even within the medical community itself. It was a difficult, difficult time. My marriage unraveled the following year. My husband was at last able to acknowledge his gay orientation and set himself free. He went about this as compassionately as possible, trying to hold the children's and my needs in mind as he struggled through this difficult personal time. No matter what brings about the end of a marriage, it is an end, a death, and one must deal with the grief that follows. We both did our best during this time, however, old patterns are hard to contend with, especially in a time of crisis. I did not do well with this. The truth is I never could let go. I was so tenaciously attached to my delusions, greedy to have what I perceived I didn't, that I missed what was right there. And I was angry, angry because nothing seemed to be as it should

be according to me, myself, and I. Mostly I was scared to death and of death.

So began the journey of healing, an arduous one as anyone who has begun this journey knows. I went to psychotherapy with a wonderful caring therapist for a long time. This helped tremendously. I exercised, cut back on coffee, developed friendships, took up Tai Chi, yoga, hypnosis, volunteered, went to a chiropractor, got massages, had a relationship, and most of all tried to be a better Mom. Gradually, inch-by-inch, I grew and became a better person. As I worked with children living in foster care, I sought to find new ways to help heal the deep wounds and enormous pain they brought everyday when I saw them. In that searching for them I found healing also for the deep wounds within my own heart. Still, an emptiness nothing could fill remained.

As the 90s passed my children grew up, my father died and I wondered 'Who am I?' What was still missing? I did intensive Qigong training as well as training in hypnosis and storytelling. I left my full-time position as a nurse practitioner managing a program and took a part-time

clinical position. I opened a private practice in energy medicine. Again, in searching for ways to help the people who came to me, I found I was healing myself. Even though I was doing Qigong meditation, my underlying anxiety was still there, hovering in the wings, ready to come forth unbidden. This annoyed me immensely. I had worked so hard to manage stress and anxiety, why was it still such a force in my life?

And so I found my way to the Zen Center that day in March for a workshop, a day that would change the course of my life. I am deeply grateful and humbled to have been fortunate enough to have found the practice of zazen. Having this practice has opened my heart to what is right here right now. Everything remains the same yet everything is changed as I see more clearly and hear more clearly. What a precious gift, what a joy! And yes, each day I renew the effort, cross my legs as best I can and bow. The journey continues on ... and on ... and on ...

*An RZC member since 2002, Elizabeth is a Nurse Practitioner who works with children in foster care and also has a private practice in energy medicine.*

## From Silenus to Joshu

MASSIMO SHIDO SQUILLIONI

My first encounter with Zen Buddhism was through reading Roshi Philip Kapleau's *The Three Pillars of Zen*, the first Italian edition of which dates to 1981. For me, this was undoubtedly a fundamental book. I still recall the emotion with which I read it: finally a complete Zen experience narrated by a man of western culture, skilfully structured to offer a panoramic overview of the different forms and characteristics of the practice, written without esotericism ... and then, the transcriptions of the *sanzen* dialogues. (I thought to myself, 'Are they crazy?')

This reading generated in me (a Florentine, now fifty-three years old) the desire to get to

know Zen. Back then I was twenty-eight years old and unhappy in the usual way. My questions about the *meaning* of life, about my position in the world, found no answers either in my study of the history of religion, or in the traditional Catholic religious practices. An experience of psychoanalysis lasting over a few years had helped me to come to terms with my personality and this enabled me to get by in the world with less difficulty, but it had left my existential anxiety intact. The philosophy expounded by Silenus to King Midas — "The best thing is absolutely impossible for you to achieve; not to have been born; not to be; to be nothing. But





Manlio De Fraja Soggi Ghighen

the second best thing is, if born, to die as soon as possible'—despite its famous ambiguity and the multiplicity of interpretations, got stuck in my mind unable to find a way out.

Nearly six years passed before a series of (apparently) casual circumstances brought me to the Zenshinji temple at the time of a sesshin in July 1987.

At that time, Zen had already laid down solid roots in Italy through the work of the Roshi Engaku Taino, lay name Luigi Mario, born in Rome in 1938. After he had been ordained by the Roshi Yamada Mumon and qualified for teaching through practice at Shofukuji in Japan (1967–1973), Roshi E. Taino returned to Italy. In 1974, he founded the Zenshinji temple in a place called Scaramuccia, located in the countryside close to Orvieto ([www.scaramuccia.it](http://www.scaramuccia.it)).

Then, as now, the sesshin was broken down into the traditional periods of zazen, kinhin,

sutra and *sanzen* and lasted for a week. However, all it took was a few periods of meditation, silence (*who had ever really experienced it!*), and pain to set off the process of systematic investigation of the self that was to bring me, koan after koan, many years later, to comprehend its true nature.

In recent years, Roshi E. Taino has composed a collection of koans (under the name Bukkosan, that is, Buddha's mountain of light, the name that Roshi Mumon gave to Scaramuccia), which the older practitioners study after the traditional koans in the conviction that '... Zen needs to be de-Japanised, just as the Japanese of the thirteenth century succeeded in de-Chinesing Chan transforming it into Zen. The purpose of the koans is to render the disciples capable of living the art of life.' For this reason, the koans of the Bukkosan focus attention on the Zen vision of everyday contemporary problems, declining the

absolute and the relative in modern contexts. I like to think that the Bukkōsan is the Italian contribution to western Zen.

In expressing my gratitude to all the individuals who, directly or indirectly, have helped me to set off on the endless path of Zen, and in particular to the Rōshi E. Taino, I have to admit that when I began to practice I was looking for full and total happiness, believing that self-realization would automatically guarantee this. That's not the way it is, I now know, at least not in the sense that drove me to practice. In the

final analysis, MU is the only path that allows us to transcend the terrible dilemma posed by Silenus. Understanding one's own nature allows us to see things the way they are; pain persists and experiencing impermanence every day continues to be an arduous endeavour. But it is well worth it.

*Massimo lives in Florence with his wife Stefania and their two daughters Irene and Sofia. He works in a bank and has been a Zenshin Sangha member since 1987.*

Da Sileno a Joshu

di Massimo Shido Squilloni

Il mio primo contatto con lo Zen è avvenuto con i *"Tre Pilastri"*, la cui prima edizione italiana risale al 1981. Un libro per me fondamentale, senza alcun dubbio: ricordo ancora l'emozione di quella lettura: finalmente un'esperienza zen integrale raccontata da un uomo di cultura occidentale, sapientemente montata per consentire una panoramica sulle diverse forme e caratteristiche della pratica, scritta senza esoterismi ... e poi le trascrizioni dei dialoghi di sanzen (pensai: *ma sono matti?*).

Quella lettura instillò in me (fiorentino, oggi cinquantatreenne) il desiderio di conoscere lo Zen. Avevo ventotto anni, ero normalmente infelice, le domande sul *sense* della vita, sulla mia posizione nel mondo, non trovavano risposta né nei miei studi di orientamento storico-religioso, né nelle tradizionali pratiche religiose cattoliche; un'esperienza psicoanalitica di alcuni anni aveva sì dato ordine alla mia personalità, consentendomi di muovermi nel mondo con minori difficoltà, ma aveva lasciato intatte le mie ansie esistenziali; la sentenza del satiro Sileno a Re Mida *"il meglio è per te assolutamente irraggiungibile: non essere nato, non essere; essere niente. Ma la cosa in secondo luogo migliore per te è – morire presto"*, pur nella nota ambiguità e nella molteplicità delle interpretazioni girava nella mia testa senza trovare una via d'uscita.

Passarono, però, quasi sei anni prima che una serie di (apparenti) casualità mi portassero al tempio Zenshinji, alla sesshin del mese di luglio del 1987.

A quel tempo, lo Zen in Italia aveva già messo buone radici per l'opera del Maestro Engaku Taino, al secolo Luigi Mario, nato a Roma nel 1938. Dopo aver ricevuto dal Rōshi Yamada Mumon l'ordinazione e l'abilitazione all'insegnamento durante la pratica a Shōfuku-ji, in Giappone (1967-1973), Taino era tornato in Italia e aveva fondato, nel 1974, in una località chiamata Scaramuccia, nelle campagne vicino ad Orvieto, il tempio Zenshin-ji ([www.scaramuccia.it](http://www.scaramuccia.it)).

La sesshin, allora come oggi, si articolava secondo i tradizionali momenti di zazen, kihnin, sutra e sanzen e durava un fine settimana; furono però sufficienti pochi periodi di meditazione, di silenzio (ma chi lo aveva davvero mai sperimentato!), di dolore, per avviare quel processo di sistematica indagine dell'io che mi avrebbe portato, koan dopo koan, molti anni dopo, a realizzarne la vera natura.

Negli ultimi anni, il Maestro Taino ha scritto una raccolta di koan (che ha preso il nome di Bukkōsan, ovvero montagna della luce di Budda, il nome che Mumon Rōshi ha dato a Scaramuccia), che i praticanti più anziani studiano dopo i koan della tradizione, mosso dalla convinzione che *"... lo zen sia da de-giapponesizzare, così come i giapponesi del 1200 e successivi sono riusciti a de-cinesizzare il chan facendolo diventare zen. Lo scopo dei koan è quello di rendere i discepoli capaci di vivere l'arte della vita"*: a questo scopo, i koan del Bukkōsan chiedono di lavorare sulla visione zen dei problemi della quotidianità contemporanea, declinando assoluto e relativo in contesti moderni; mi piace pensare che il Bukkōsan sia il contributo *italiano* allo Zen d'occidente.

Nell'esprimere la mia gratitudine a tutte le persone che mi hanno, direttamente o indirettamente, aiutato a iniziare a camminare la strada senza fine dello zen, e, in particolar modo, al Maestro Engaku Taino, posso dire che quando ho iniziato a praticare cercavo la felicità piena e totale, credendo che la realizzazione del proprio sé l'avrebbe automaticamente assicurata. Non è così, oggi lo so, o, almeno, non lo è nel senso che mi spinse a praticare. In ultima analisi, MU è la sola via che consente di trascendere il terribile dilemma posto da Sileno. Comprendere la propria natura consente di vedere come stanno le cose; i dolori rimangono e vivere quotidianamente l'impermanenza rimane un'impresa ardua. Ne valeva comunque la pena.

# Following the Lead of a Child

STEVE DAVIS

Although I had first visited the Rochester Zen Center in 1975 while on a tour with some clients I was working with, it was not until January of 2002 that I attended an introductory workshop. My journey to practice was somewhat unusual.

When my younger daughter Rachael was about eight years old she became interested in religion and the spiritual aspects of life. Although her mother is Jewish and I was raised as a Methodist, we had no significant religious experience or affiliation as a family. Rachael began attending religious services with friends. She attended the services of a variety of Christian denominations, but after a while she stopped attending, often saying that she didn't really like what they were saying. When questioned she related that she felt that what was being said was very rigid and critical. She then began attending services at one of the local synagogues with her best friend at the time. Rachael became especially interested in the synagogue, and I offered to attend with her. She accepted and we began

attending services together. She later expressed an interest in joining the temple. At this point, her mother and I were in the process of going through divorce, and my sister was terminally ill, so my life was in serious turmoil. I'm sure my 'supporting' Rachael in her spiritual quest was part of my own search to come to terms with the upheaval in my life.

One day, as Rachael and I sat outside a church waiting for my cousin and her family to come out so we could spend the day with them, Rachel announced that she didn't want to continue attending temple. As in the past, she related that she just didn't like a lot of what was being said. She then said, 'Actually, I'm interested in that religion that asks all the weird questions.' Before we could discuss Rachel's latest religious interest any further, my cousin and her family emerged from church and off Rachael went. At this point she was eleven years old.

A few weeks later, she reopened the conversation about 'that religion.' She told me she had

been talking to her friend Emily's godfather about Buddhism and that she wanted to learn more. She had gotten Emily's godfather's phone number and asked if I would call. I agreed, picked up the phone and dialed. I asked for the person Rachael had told me about, introduced myself as Rachael's dad and explained that I was calling because she wanted to learn more about Buddhism and she had told me that he knew something about it. After a brief pause, the man on the other end of the phone related that he was the Abbott of the Rochester Zen Center and indeed he had had some conversations with Rachael. I apologized for interrupting his evening and then we talked about the introductory workshop. Roshi (then Sensei) explained that Rachael was too young to attend, and then discussed some other things such as books or other reading materials that might help her. I thanked him, and we hung up. To say the least, Rachel was unhappy with Roshi's assessment that she was too young to attend a workshop, but we discussed other options for her to learn about Buddhism.

A few evenings later she raised the subject again and asked me to 'call Bodhin' to tell him she really wanted to go to the workshop and would he please let her do so. I told her I would call and requested that she not call him. After a week of phone tag I finally reached Roshi and he told me Rachael had already talked with him (so much for her following my request). Roshi proceeded to explain that he had been thinking about her request and that persistence was an important part of a Zen practice. Upon reconsideration, he decided that Rachael could attend under certain conditions. First, I had to agree to attend the workshop with her and secondly, there had to be a plan for her to be able to leave if it wasn't working out. The final condition was that I had to agree to stay even if Rachael left. I told Rachael about the conditions and needless to say, she immediately said she wanted to go.

The next workshop was a few weeks away so we signed up without delay. During the work-

shop, as soon as we arrived, Rachael refused to acknowledge my presence and began interacting with other participants. I was excited and somewhat hesitant about what would be happening, but my life was in such turmoil that I was open to anything that would be helpful. The workshop was quite powerful for me. I remember experiencing some shift inside that I couldn't express in words. Eventually the words did come and said 'I've never been here before except I've been here my whole life.' I also found that many of the philosophical principles from which I had operated for over twenty-five years as a psychotherapist were very much in line with what I learned about Zen Buddhism. As if I wasn't already pretty convinced this was worth pursuing, an experience in the first round of sitting sealed the deal. I remember the priest, Amala, instructing us to remain still regardless of what happened. She pointed out that this would help us learn about impermanence. Within the first minute or so of that first round, I got a cramp in the arch of my right foot that felt like someone had shoved a knife in it. I decided to adhere to Amala's instructions partly out of sheer determination and partly out of a desire to 'test' the accuracy of what she said. To my amazement, the cramp went away after a brief time. I didn't think I needed to attend the remainder of the workshop to know that I wanted to pursue this practice called Zen.

As for Rachael, she did quite well through the first rounds of sitting and over lunch talked about how interesting the workshop was for her. After lunch, she asked to leave because she was feeling tired and left in accordance with our plan. I stayed for the remainder of the workshop and decided to sign up for a trial membership. About a month later, I knew that I belonged at the Zen Center and became an active member. Rachael also decided to get involved; she attended youth group activities and joined the Coming of Age program. However, after about a year, she decided that she no longer wished to participate and has not returned since.



Richard von Sturmer

Growing up, I had been significantly involved in my hometown's Methodist Church, though I never really felt that Christianity was a good fit for me. I did become very close to the minister and spent untold hours during my high school years discussing religion, morality, and ethics. After high school, I looked into a variety of religions, but nothing stuck. At some point, for all intents and purposes, I abandoned spiritual pursuit altogether. The simultaneous death of my sister and end of my marriage with the accompanying impact of the changes in my relationship with my kids propelled religious and spiritual needs to the forefront of my life. Coming to the Center's introductory workshop

awakened within me that long-dormant sense of being part of something much bigger, and it did so in a profoundly valuable and meaningful way. I really felt like I had no choice but to begin a Zen practice.

For me, as I think for many of us, the road of Zen practice has been far from smooth. That being said, I will be forever grateful to my daughter Rachael for her persistence in wanting to attend that introductory workshop.

*Steve has been a member of the Zen Center since 2002 and remains grateful to his daughter for leading him to the Center.*

# Mother Superior and Me

LOU ANNE JAEGER

The only reason I remember the Kennedy inauguration is because I was home with a terrible sore throat, and watched it on TV with my father. When I was five, in the days before they treated strep with antibiotics, I had strep throat so many times that they were concerned I would get rheumatic fever as a result. Rheumatic fever is an inflammatory infection that is caused by antibody cross-reactivity during a strep infection, and it can damage your heart. Two months after my inauguration-day episode of strep, I was hospitalized for two weeks, and then spent at least a month at home confined to my bed.

The family was pretty worried about me, and my mother wanted to do everything she possibly could to ensure my recovery. I had been brought up in the Methodist church, and both sets of my grandparents were also Methodists. Methodism got its name from the belief of its founders in a methodical, meticulous study of the Bible, rather than the sort of mystical, magical, ceremonial aspects of religious practice found in the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. So, it was a pretty big surprise when our Methodist minister showed up at our house one night during my convalescence, carrying a fancy-looking bottle.

He told me he was going to do something to help me get better. He put some oil from the bottle on his thumb and swiped it across my forehead and prayed for God to help me recover. The only other anointing I had ever heard of was in the *Bible's* 'Book of Samuel,' when soon-to-be-King David was anointed; the minister assured me that, unlike David, my anointing would not result in my becoming King of Israel.

I did get better, but I have no idea how much the prayers and oil had to do with it. Because of this odd experience, though, I got the idea

that there might be more to religion than being bored out of my mind during Sunday church services. My mother was the music director at our church, so I was always required to sit in the front pew, near the choir. This was so that she could give me a stern look if I wiggled too much. Besides wiggling on Sunday mornings, I started asking a lot of questions that one doesn't normally expect to get from small children; I recall asking the minister what on earth was good about 'Good Friday' if that was the day Jesus was killed. It seemed to me, even as a child, that there might be more to life than I was seeing day-to-day.

When I was about eight years old, I came across a book in the children's section of the library entitled, *Bernadette Takes The Veil*. It was the story (with pictures!) of a young woman who becomes a nun. I'd seen nuns before and had always been awed and a little scared by them. Bernadette looked so beautiful in her nun outfit, full of inspiration and ready to marry Jesus, that I was fascinated. I went so far as to talk to my mother about the book and cautiously mentioned that I might like to become a nun when I grew up. I give my mother credit for not showing visible shock when I told her. My paternal grandmother, who had made my father exclude a Catholic girl when he gave valentines to the rest of his second-grade class, would have washed my mouth out with soap. My mother, however, said something like, 'Well, we'll see when the time comes'—the safe parental answer. It just seemed to me from pictures of Bernadette's face in the book that she had gotten some answers to the nameless questions that bothered me.

About two years later, Hollywood provided a double-whammy to my religious questioning by releasing two films: *The Sound of Music* and





Tom Kowal

*The Trouble with Angels*. What was not to like about *The Sound of Music*? Beautiful nuns, singing beautifully, brave nuns outwitting Nazis! I thought Maria made a big mistake in leaving the convent for that incredibly stiff Captain von Trapp, but the kids were energetic and cute. The sound of the convent bells and the nuns' singing wafting over the mountains was glorious. Step aside, Bernadette, where can I find an Austrian convent to join?

Years later, I learned that Rogers and Hammerstein had offered my college voice teacher the role of Mother Superior in the original Broadway cast of *The Sound of Music*. Since it would have meant moving to New York, her husband

threatened to leave her if she took the job, so she threw Rogers and Hammerstein's contract in the fireplace. She never really recovered from that disappointment, and was very bitter right up until her death twenty years later. See what happens when you turn down your chance to be a nun?

I've never turned down a chance to play a nun on stage, including being the mean nun, Sister Berthe in *The Sound of Music*. I absolutely loved being able to wear a nun's habit. It makes you feel very safe, tucked inside all those layers, and when you clasp your hands together under the scapular, you look so columnar, like a statue on the outside of an ancient cathedral.

It was always interesting to see the reaction of other cast members the first time all the nuns in a stage production put on their costumes. People said that suddenly all the women playing nuns stopped being individuals and became a unit. There's a sense of safety and harmony in looking like everyone else, which has crossed my mind more than once when seeing everyone in brown robes in the zendo.

The nuns in *The Sound of Music* were impressive, but Mother Superior in *The Trouble With Angels* really wowed me. *The Trouble with Angels* takes place in a Catholic girls' school, overseen by Rosalind Russell as Mother Superior. The chief troublemaker, Mary, was played by Hayley Mills, who was always telling her best friend and partner-in-crime, Rachel, that she had 'a scathingly brilliant idea' for a prank, which inevitably ended up with the two of them washing the kitchen pots for weeks as punishment. Scathingly brilliant ideas included giving their classmates guided tours of the nuns' quarters (charging fifty cents a piece), which were strictly forbidden to the girls, while the nuns were all in church. They experimented with cigarettes in the basement, creating enough smoke for someone to think the worst and call the fire department. Mary and Rachel invented exotic diseases to get themselves out of swimming class, which ultimately resulted in their nearly drowning when finally forced to take a swimming test.

All of these adventures seem pretty tame by today's standards—that is, no illegal substances or weaponry was involved—but the inevitability of them definitely wore on Mother Superior. Rosalind Russell played her as strict, rather scary, but evenhanded and never mean. To the girls, she seemed unemotional, impenetrable. However, as the film progresses, Mary starts to catch glimpses of Mother Superior in private moments, feeding the birds, crying over the death of another nun, and in solitary prayer. She always looks radiant and transported in these private moments. It becomes clear to Mary that there is more to Mother Superior's life than

rapping schoolgirls on the knuckles with a ruler, and Mary seems to want to understand it.

The scene that really got me, however, was when Mother Superior helps one of the girls complete a dress for a sewing contest. Coming upon her in the sewing room late at night, Mary listens to Mother Superior talk about her youth sewing in a Paris *haute couture* house, like Chanel, dreaming of one day designing dresses herself. Mary is flabbergasted to discover this other side of Mother Superior and blurts out,

'How could you have given all that up?'

Then comes the line that, to this day, gives me chills. Mother Superior, once again looking radiant, says,

'Because I found something better.'

From the moment I first saw that scene, I was filled with a desire to have that 'something better' that Mother Superior had found. It struck deeply enough for me to see that, as terrific as I still thought the nun's habit looked, what she was talking about was beyond just being a nun. Here was pay dirt, confirmation that the feeling I had first gotten from *Bernadette Takes the Veil* was something real.

That was the beginning of the genuine search for meaning, for the 'something better,' that eventually led me to Zen. Along the way I tried out other paths. In high school, I had a Jesus Freak stage, during which I carried a Bible around with me all the time and went to Christian coffee houses. After my high school boyfriend went to college in Utah, I investigated Mormonism and was even baptized in the Mormon Church. Mormonism, and belief in God altogether, ended for me in college in Philosophy 101, when the professor told us that God could not be at the same time, omniscient, omnipresent, and morally perfect.

Suddenly an atheist, I majored in philosophy in college. The old joke is that scientists learn more and more about less and less, and that philosophers learn less and less about more and

more. My favorite subject was epistemology, the study of knowledge and cognition. I particularly like reading Berkeley, who said the world consists of nothing but minds and ideas (he should have been introduced to Zen). It was all very intriguing, but didn't satisfy the longing for that 'something better' that I still carried around with me.

After four years of studying philosophy, I said I didn't and couldn't know anything at all. 'Not knowing' sounds very Zen, but this was a matter of being unwilling to say I could *prove* I knew anything, quite different from understanding that there's nothing permanent to know.

I bumped into Zen through my brother-in-law who loaned Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* to me. He was a biker and I was dying to have a motorcycle of my own. That book led to the *Tao te Ching*, Han Shan's *Cold Mountain Poems*, *The Empty Mirror*, dozens of other books, and finally to *The Three Pillars of Zen*. I eventually got the motorcycle, but I also got the 'something better' I'd been looking for, too, when I decided to try Zen meditation.

Through long years of practice, my understanding of what 'something better' means has changed. The blissed-out look on Rosalind Russell's face in *The Trouble with Angels* made me want to feel like that, to get to a place where it would all make sense. Zen practice has its moments like that, especially in the beginning and in sesshin. I knew someone once who, at the

beginning of her practice, had many blissful sesshins in a row, and who seemed to think she was immune from struggle. Then she had a 'hard' sesshin and came out of it sobbing, 'Now I'm like all the rest of you!' If only she had known at the time how true that was! The transcendent moments in practice are like dessert—a treat, and unrelated to hunger. Day-to-day practice, like eating one's vegetables, is what really nourishes us, ultimately unfolding into the 'something better' that truly satisfies our hunger for completion. I've come to appreciate that dealing with troublesome schoolgirls, balancing the convent's budget, listening to her fellow nuns complaining or expressing joy, aches and pains, loneliness, happiness, and all the daily vicissitudes of Mother Superior's life were her real spiritual practice, not any blissful state she might have been lucky enough to experience.

Sometimes it's hard to accept that 'something better' is really so simple. When life feels like a grind, just grind away; things will change eventually. When life is joyful, enjoy it, because it's not going to last forever. It's all 'something better,' and that's what I learned from Mother Superior.

Oh, by the way, the Haley Mills character became a nun at the end of the movie.

*Lou Anne lives in Rochester with her two children and four cats. She is very sorry that she has not had an opportunity to dress up like a nun recently.*

# Thanks, Fidel

AMAURY CRUZ

I was born and raised in Cuba. On January 1959, Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista dictatorship. Most people were elated and poured into the streets to celebrate. *Gracias, Fidel* soon became an idiom applied to different situations. When I think about how I came to practice, I also have to say, 'Thanks, Fidel.' If it were not for his revolution, my family wouldn't have gone into exile in the United States. It is very unlikely I would have been the blind turtle who comes up to the surface of the ocean every one hundred years and nails its improbable chance to stick its neck in the hole of a floating yoke.

Fidel Castro's contribution to my coming to practice may be remote. But how many other remote causes—conditions and circumstances—must 'dependently co-arise' with proximate causes to bring about any particular result? How many people and events must coincide in how many ways for the future to unfold as it does?

My father's decisions were factors, too. He was scared of what was happening after the revolution and moved the family to Miami while it was still possible to do so, in April 1961. I was thirteen years old. After a couple of years of hard work, he saved enough to start a business with three partners—a meatpacking plant, of all things! To me it was disgusting because I was born a vegetarian, and incomprehensible because my father had been a rice farmer with no experience in meatpacking. It turned out an ideal location for the plant was Walden, New York, a tiny town in the Catskills. There, I finished high school and heard about what is now Binghamton University from other seniors who wanted to attend there. It was a good and inexpensive school, and I was offered a scholarship.

In my junior year at Binghamton, I had a philosophy professor who gushed about a recently published book, *The Three Pillars of Zen*, so I bought it. At that time, I was an atheist

and agreed with Marx that religion was the opiate of the masses. When I read *Three Pillars*, however, I found a religion that resonated with me—especially because I had 'dropped' LSD and some of the experiences narrated at the end of the book sounded like a good trip. I wanted enlightenment. Or rather I wanted the acid experience *au naturel*.

Inasmuch as Roshi Kapleau wrote that *The Three Pillars of Zen* was a manual of self-instruction, I started sitting on my own and working on Mu. Stumped, I soon realized I needed a teacher and vaguely started looking for one. Little did I know that Roshi, right around that time, had inaugurated the RZC, only a couple of hours from Binghamton.

After graduation, I was involved in the anti-war movement. My cohorts called me *el cubano budista* (the Cuban Buddhist), but I was far from it. I bounced around Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side, Cambridge, Miami, and Puerto Rico, reading books about Zen and raising hell against the establishment. But no teacher appeared on my horizon. I was intrigued, however, about the connection between Zen and the martial arts. I trained with Japanese senseis who purported to teach Zen karate, got my black belt, and competed regularly. It was an excellent discipline, but karate wasn't Zen and my teachers weren't like the wise masters I had read about.

I renewed my quest for a real Zen teacher. While attending law school in Tallahassee, Florida, I discovered a Zen center and started sitting occasionally. But there was no teacher in residence. Whenever he visited, I either had an exam or something else interfered. In three years I never met him.

Moving back to Miami, I looked in the *Yellow Pages* and, surprisingly (would a Zen teacher advertise in the *Yellow Pages*?), I found an entry



Amaury Cruz

for Zen, Rinzai. Soon, I was looking inward on a mat with a small group. But again, there was no teacher in sight. And when he came to visit once, I had to go out of town. Soon after, he retired.

I found another Zen center in the Miami area. The story in a nutshell: absent teacher redux, and she died before I could meet her. Digging deeper, I visited a Vietnamese Pure Land temple and was referred to a highly respected Zen practitioner. It took many calls and much persistence to find him. Strange people answered his phone; they were rude and seemed to be trying to discourage me from talking to him. Was this some kind of bizarre test, like having the door of the temple closed on your arm until you ask for an amputation?

Finally, I met the man. An official in the Vietnamese government until the fall of Saigon, he was well-educated, charming, and articulate.

Like my father, he had fled from communism. He had an impressive zendo at home and an aura of being enlightened. He offered to put me in touch with Thich Nhat Hanh, but suggested I start sitting regularly for a few months to make sure Zen was for me. He said I could come and sit with him. I expressed my gratitude and looked forward to it.

I was never able to reach this mystery man again. The strange people who answered his phone put up an impenetrable barrier. So I went to his house. Incomprehensibly, no one answered the door, although I could see the shadows of people moving inside. The last time I checked, the house seemed deserted. I was perplexed and frustrated.

One day in 1994 I competed in a karate tournament. Books were on sale outside the dojo. I bought *Immovable Wisdom, Letters from a Zen Master to a Sword Master* by Takuan Soho. The

translator, Bill Wilson, was said to live in Florida, and I found him in the Miami phone book.

I invited Bill, a very friendly man of great culture, out to lunch. I told him about my difficulties in finding a Zen teacher. 'I know where you can find a teacher,' he said. 'Roshi Phillip Kapleau has a center in Hollywood.' I couldn't believe my ears. Roshi had been relatively close to me in Rochester while I was in Binghamton and later he had been in Hollywood for years, close to Miami, and I never knew it.

Immediately, I called the number Bill gave me, and my wife Connie and I signed up for an introduction. When Roshi came into the zendo and we made eye contact, I said to myself, 'Eureka, this is my teacher!' I joined the Hollywood Zen Center and began to practice seriously. One year later my wife and I took the precepts and became the last students Roshi accepted before his second and final retirement.

So, Fidel Castro scared my family into exile, my father decided to start a most unlikely business in a remote location in upstate New York, from where I learned about a college in Binghamton, where a professor introduced me to *The Three Pillars of Zen* and my friends to LSD, both of which aroused my *bodhicitta*, which led me to the martial arts, and the martial arts to a 'zenny' translator who knew Roshi, who formally introduced me to the practice, with mind-boggling obstacles and diversions along the way, including karate senseis who purported to teach Zen but did not, a mysterious Vietnamese practitioner, and Zen teachers who eluded me. Very strange, but definitely for the best. *Gracias, Fidel.*

*A lawyer, writer, political activist and photographer residing in Miami Beach, Amaury has been a member of the Sangha since 1994.*

### *Countless Good Deeds.*

If you're thinking about financial planning, estate planning, or both, please remember that there are myriad ways you can help the Rochester Zen Center through planned giving. The right kind of plan can help you reduce your taxes significantly while providing for a larger, longer-lasting gift to the Zen Center. Because there is a wide array of bequests, annuities, trusts, and other financial vehicles to consider, you'll want to work with your financial advisor to decide what's best for you. Long-time Zen Center member David Kernan, an attorney who concentrates his practice in tax law, has generously offered to help point you in the right direction at no charge. For more information about planned giving and David's offer, please contact the Center's receptionist.



## *Zen Bow*

NUMBER 1 • 2009

### Caregiving

Submission Deadline: April 1, 2009



NUMBER 2 • 2009

### Money

Submission Deadline: May 1, 2009

Readers are invited to submit essays and/or images pertaining to the above themes to [donna@rzc.org](mailto:donna@rzc.org) (or mail to the Center).

## SUBSCRIBING TO

### *Zen Bow*

The subscription rate is as follows:

	<i>Four issues</i>	<i>Eight issues</i>
U.S.:	\$20.00	\$40.00
Foreign:	\$30.00	\$60.00

Please send checks and your current address to:

Zen Bow Subscriptions Desk  
Rochester Zen Center  
7 Arnold Park  
Rochester, NY 14607

*Please Note:* If you are moving, the Postal Service charges us for each piece of mail sent to your old address, whether you have left a forwarding address or not. So, if you change your address, please let us know as soon as possible. Send your address corrections to the Zen Bow Subscriptions Desk at the above address or call (585) 473-9180.



ROCHESTER ZEN CENTER  
7 ARNOLD PARK  
ROCHESTER, NY 14607

*Address service requested*

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 1925  
ROCHESTER, NY