



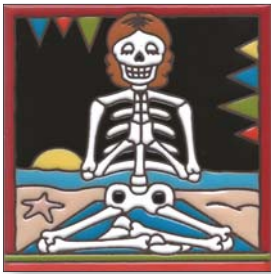
Water Wheel

Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Practicing Generosity

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



A monk asked Hui-hai, "By what means can the gateway of our school be entered?"

Hui-hai said, "By means of Dana paramita."

The monk said, "According to the Buddha, the Bodhisattva Path comprises six Paramitas. Why have you mentioned only one? Please explain why this one alone provides

a sufficient means for us to enter."

Hui-hai said, "Deluded people fail to understand that the other five all proceed from Dana Paramita and that, by its practice, all the others are fulfilled."

The monk asked, "Why is it called Dana Paramita?"

Hui-hai said, "Dana means 'relinquishment.'"

The monk asked, "Relinquishment of what?"

*Hui-hai said, "Relinquishment of the dualism of opposites, which means relinquishment of ideas as to the dual nature of good and bad, being and non-being, void and non-void, pure and impure, and so on." **

This year we are undertaking a practice-study of the Ten Paramitas, or the Ten Perfections. The Sanskrit word *paramita* can be considered with two different roots, *para* or *param*.

Para means *distant* or *opposite*, often rendered freely as *the other shore*. A common Buddhist metaphor is of using a raft of the Dharma to cross over from *samsara*, this shore where we are standing, to the so-called other shore of liberation. Zen practitioners understand that this very place where we are standing is already the so-called other shore. We have already crossed over, and yet, we are not quite there either.

This point is clearly expressed in Hui-hai's first meeting with Master Matsu in 8th Century China. Upon meeting, Matsu asked, "What do you hope to gain by coming here?"



From left: Reiju Wasserman, Tim Zamora and Kaizen Venners studying the new Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.

Hui-hai replied, "I am seeking the Buddhadharma." Matsu said, "Instead of looking to the treasure house which is your very own, you have left home and gone wandering far away. Why?" Hui-hai asked, "What do you mean by 'a treasure house of my own?'" Matsu replied, "That which asked the question is your treasure house. It contains absolutely everything you need and lacks nothing at all. It is there for you to use freely, so why this vain search for something outside of yourself?"

(Continued on page 2)



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PRACTICING GENEROSITY *(Continued from page 1)*

Param means *highest*, or *supreme*, as in the highest perfection. In this sense, the paramitas are the qualities or virtues that we practice to develop into mature Dharma practitioners, truly mature human beings. One has reached perfection when one embodies these qualities honed with the realization of Not-Knowing.

We can get caught up in the word “perfection.” We each have our own subtle standards of what is perfect. Zen practice asks each of us to examine closely what standards we are holding, what core beliefs we are using as a measuring stick. These fixed reference points are difficult to discern until Not-Knowing becomes a lived experience.

Master Hui-hai points to Dana Paramita, the perfection of Generosity, as the fundamental quality from which all the other paramitas proceed. In Mahayana Buddhism, the Ten Paramitas are: Generosity (Dana), Morality (Shila), Forbearance (Kshanti), Zeal (Virya), Settled Focused Meditation (Dhyana), Wisdom (Prajna), Skillful Means (Upaya), Aspiration (Pranidhana), Spiritual Power (Bala), and Knowledge (Jnana). Each is a stepping stone to the other; each contains all the others.

“The mutual co-arising of life passes
right through our hearts, always.”

Just as the monk asked long ago, we, too, ask, “What is Generosity?” We hear Hui-hai’s response, “Generosity means ‘relinquishment.’” Relinquishment means to “voluntarily cease to keep or claim, give up.” What exactly are we giving up? Give up our ideas of perfection, give up our beliefs that keeps us from realizing and utilizing our treasure house for the benefit of all. We must give up self-centeredness. To the degree that we are self-oriented, as in self-protective, self-involved, self-possessed, self-righteous and so forth, the practice of Generosity is not quite available to us.

The practice of all the Paramitas rests on our capacity to realize Wisdom (Prajna Paramita) – the wisdom that everything, including yourself, is empty of a fixed, unchanging self. The Buddha said that when he penetrated the nature of this reality, he found that everything is impermanent, always fluid and changing. Can you see this, too? He said that he saw that all things co-arise, dependent upon all other things, therefore mutually interdependent. Can you see this, too? He said that because we have come to believe that this “I, me, mine” is a fixed entity, we suffer. Can you see this, too?

The Mahayana practitioners consider two broad categories of Generosity: the practice of giving worldly goods and the practice of the threefold purity. What distinguishes these two types of giving is the degree to which we realize the true nature of a giver, a receiver, and a gift. Our giving is self-centered until we become All-centered, experiencing ourselves not as separate and isolated persons, but rather as the result of the co-arising of all of life.

When we give worldly goods, we give from a sense of “a giver, a receiver, and a gift.” Worldly goods include all material goods such as money, food, clothing, shelter – whatever is needed to sustain practice. It also includes luxury goods and ranges from small gifts to gifts of immense value, such as donating a hospital wing. These acts all require some degree of relinquishment, although not of the most profound kind since the hospital wing is usually named after the giver. We have expectations for outcome, for recognition or reward. We are, after all, complicated and nuanced beings. Nevertheless, although our motives may be self-centered, we do not let this insight stop us from giving, for someone is benefiting, including ourselves.

The paramita of Generosity is fulfilled in the Threefold Purity. This is the realization that giver, receiver, and gift are inherently without a self. The Perfection is not our self-created standards for giving or the value of gifts, but rather the realization that the act of giving-and-receiving is mutually co-arising. It serves the truth of our interdependence and keeps the flow of life-energies moving in mutually beneficial ways. As Master Matsu said, “It contains absolutely everything you need and lacks nothing at all.”

We come to see that Life itself is the Gift; we ourselves are the Gift. Sunshine, oxygen, trees, the oceans are all Gifts. Generosity is the matrix of our lives. The mutual co-arising of life passes right through our hearts, always. Our practice is to keep the flow moving in a boundless recognition of the interweaving of the web of life. We develop an All-centered sense of self, expansive and inclusive. Our lives are no longer lived just for ourselves, or just for our immediate family. Rather, for all beings throughout the world, throughout space and time. We are maturing when we relinquish our self-interest and act for the good of our neighbors, community, locally and globally. Then we are manifesting as bodhisattvas, using our treasure house at will.

Roshi Egyoku is ZCLA's Abbot & Head Teacher.

*John Blofeld, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Instantaneous Awakening: Being the Teaching of Zen Master Hui Hai.*

(The picture of the trivet on page 1 is from www.handnhanddesigns.com.)



DANA BOOKLET

October 1, 2008 – December 31, 2013

Dear Members and Friends of ZCLA:

*“... the giver who gives without any discrimination, impartially, with no expectation of reward,
and with great love – this giver I say, totally fulfills the perfection of generosity.”*

– Vimalakirti (*The Vimalakirti Sutra*)

It is a privilege for the Zen Center to acknowledge its many financial donors through our Dana Book. The previous Dana Book covered through September, 2008. This book spans over four years, from October 1, 2008 through December 31, 2013.

The Zen Center relies on the generosity of its donors. The Sanskrit word “Dāna” means “Giving,” one of the most fundamental virtues in Buddhism. In Zen practice, we are encouraged to take up the practice of giving so that generosity becomes a perfection of character that is motivated out of concern for all beings. Your gifts are received by the Zen Center with the full acknowledgement of the all-embracing interdependency of each of our lives and of all reality.

The Legacy Fund was established in 2006 and currently has thirty-five legacy donors. Prior to its establishment, the Zen Center received some very important, large bequests. Since 2008, the Zen Center has been the beneficiary of two legacy bequests, one of which in particular has played a significant part in our sustainability.

The Zen Center remains focused on its mission and vision, which is born out of our deepest love and aspiration for your awakening and for the liberation of all beings everywhere. In addition to these financial offerings, we are grateful for the generous dana of gifts-in-kind, time, and expertise. It is because of your practice of giving that the Zen Center continues to turn the Dharma wheel in support of our collective awakening and a better life for all.

Thank you, once again, for your generosity.

With gratitude in Dharma,

Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao
Abbot & Head Teacher



The Zen Center holds an annual memorial service for its donors with photos of legacy donors on the altar.

Continued on page 4

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“When one learns giving well, being born and dying are both giving. All productive labor is fundamentally giving. Entrusting flowers to the wind, birds to the season, also must be meritorious acts of giving ...”

– *Dogen Zenji*

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Maezumi Roshi with his parents Baian Hakuju and Mrs. Kuroda. circa 1967



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“... One should give even a single coin or a single blade of grass of resources – it causes roots of goodness in this age and other ages to sprout.”

– *Dogen Zenji*

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Meet Our Co-Temple Directors

Debbie Faith-Mind Thoresen and Darla Myoho Fjeld

by Burt Wetanson



Darla Myoho Fjeld (left) and Debbie Faith-Mind Thoresen

WATER WHEEL: How did the position of Temple Director come into being?

MYOHO: It arose out of an awareness that the Zen Center needed a go-to person with a broad overview of the Zen Center. In the world of non-profits, that means an executive director. Faith-Mind and I are Co-Temple Directors. Faith-Mind was named in January 2013, I was named a year later. Our job is to maintain the big vision so we can anticipate what needs to be taken care of.

FAITH-MIND: For me, that awareness began during Roshi's sabbatical. That experiment gave those of us on the Day Group the chance to run the administrative functions of the Zen Center in conjunction with the Executive Circle and the Shared Stewardship. I gained tremendous experience observing the daily functioning of the Zen Center.

MYOHO: Over the years, I was amazed at the million and one things that Roshi kept her eyes on while trying not to micromanage. That kind of vision is remarkable and we're taking that as our responsibility. It will free up our abbot to focus on teaching rather than running things.

WW: Being two different people, you must have different backgrounds and decision making styles. How will you work smoothly together?

MYOHO: By grounding our work in our Zen practice experience. I've been in other non-profit organizations where big blow-ups occur. So it's good that we know each other so well and that we've been trained in the same spiritual practice.

FAITH-MIND: That's a foundational strength. We're both ordained as priests, so we have one goal in mind and it's not ourselves; it's really the Zen Center.

Myoho has a strong foundation having been part of the executive circle and its Steward for many years. She'll be working in the growth area, having expertise in development that I would never be able to provide. I'll be more of a hands-on, nuts and bolts person.

WW: What are your backgrounds away from the Zen Center?

MYOHO: I've been a development director and executive director for non-profit organizations such as Coalition LA. We worked with organizations serving the poor. We handled housing issues and taught people how to go down to City Hall and meet with their City Council person. I also teach at El Camino College where I'm a professor of philosophy.

This past month, I've been finding my way at the Zen Center, seeing how people interact, what the nuances are. Always with the question: what's needed at the Zen Center; how can I serve?

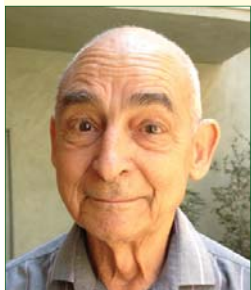
FAITH-MIND: My life experience includes being a flight attendant for 30 years. Locked in an airplane with people, you don't call home and ask dad what to do. Every time you take a flight, you work with and serve a different group of people. It's great training in the street sense, handling emergencies where you don't have access to 9-1-1.

I've been very involved with our grounds, and in 2013 and 2014, as a link to the Executive Circle, I oversaw construction projects such as repairs to the driveways and parking areas as a safety measure.

WW: Two unique individuals with complementary sets of skills who are dedicated to the Zen Center will ground their work as Co-Temple Directors in their practice experience.

Appreciating Charles Duran

by Burt Wetanson



For more than 30 years, Charles Duran has lived, practiced, and worked at ZCLA where he has made an indelible impression through his versatile skills, unique personality, and devotion to the Zen Center. Now over 80, Charles is preparing for a much-deserved retirement.

Having read books about Zen and being interested in finding a spiritual practice, Charles arrived at the Zen Center in November 1978 when Maezumi Roshi, ZCLA's founder, was its primary teacher. An electrician by trade, Charles became one of the crew of resident-practitioner carpenters, plumbers, house painters, etc. who took care of a Center about twice its present size. When the Zen Center grew smaller, he became its jack-of-all-trades, taking on all manner of maintenance and repairs.

For the resident Sangha, Charles has been an always available go-to person when anything needed to be fixed or installed. Whatever the task, he handled it promptly and well, often with a bonus of some interesting conversation.

"I've always tried to be helpful to people coming here to practice. I did whatever I could to make residents, and members at large, feel comfortable and welcome at the Zen Center. Looking back over the years, there have been so many people I liked very much, people I thought were really wonderful.

"One consolation I have about laying down my responsibilities at ZCLA," he said, "is that my successor, Robert, has turned out to be a very competent, helpful, and friendly individual."

What does the future hold for one of ZCLA's handful of formally honored Sangha Guardians? "I'm looking forward to retirement," said Charles. "There was a time when I had fantasies of getting away from Los Angeles with its smog, traffic, and crime. But recently I visited a quiet rural community where I might move and realized I'm very much a city person. I love and enjoy this city."

Deep bows to you, Charles, as you enter retirement, carrying with you our affection and best wishes. May your life go well!

Welcome to Robert Diaz



We welcome Robert Diaz as ZCLA's new resident facilities manager.

WW: Hi, Robert, what will your responsibilities be?

ROBERT: I'll be doing about the same repair and maintenance as Charles but with more work on the grounds. I got some excellent training and experience in the army where my job description was combat engineer. For four years, I was a mechanic repairer of construction equipment along with light maintenance.

WW: How do you mean "more work on the grounds"?

ROBERT: We're in the middle of a drought in California, so we have to be very water conscious. Roshi and Faith-Mind have talked about cutting back on landscaping, maybe take out some of the grass and integrate gravel in its place. Where we have grass on slopes and water runs down onto the sidewalk, we could put rock in there and gravel. We have gardeners, but I'll be doing the overall landscape map by myself, unless it's too big a project for one person.

WW: How about our trees, the redwoods?

ROBERT: It looks like they're doing well. Sometimes, a tree's roots get so long, they tap into a ground water source and survive.

WW: When you're not working, what do you enjoy?

ROBERT: I like working out at a local gym and going to the beach. Growing up in Texas, I did a lot of outdoor activities like camping and riding mountain bikes.

The Zen Center is a great place to work and live. Everyone is friendly and there's a lot of openness. People work together, which I like to see. It's a hardworking community, and it's nice to be part of it.

WW: Robert is helpful and friendly, so the next time you see him – he's a big man and hard to miss – come on over and say hello.

Plum-Hermit: An Appreciation

by Darla Myoho Fjeld



The Zen Center wishes to express our deep gratitude to our Dharma-Brother John Plum-Hermit Swanger for his 18 years of practice and service for the Zen Center. Even after moving to Austin, Texas, in 2008 to live with his life-partner Jennifer, Plum-Hermit continued to serve as a priest, on the board, on staff as Development Steward,

and as overseer of the Zen Center's Grounds and Facilities Master Plan. He also gave dharma talks and saw students in face-to-face interviews. To accomplish all of this, Plum-Hermit commuted from Austin to Los Angeles six to eight times a year, often staying at the Zen Center for two weeks at a time.

Plum-Hermit arrived at the Zen Center for the first time in 1995, shortly after the death of Maezumi Roshi. When Roshi Egyoku arrived in 1997 as our guiding teacher, Plum-Hermit played a big role in the renewal efforts that we all now benefit from. He served as Steward of the Executive Circle and on staff as Operations Steward, as a member of the Fundraising Committee, as Steward of the 2007 Shared Stewardship class, on the Collective Awakening and Wisdom Group, and was one of the stewards of Shared Stewardship on staff. His appreciation of and

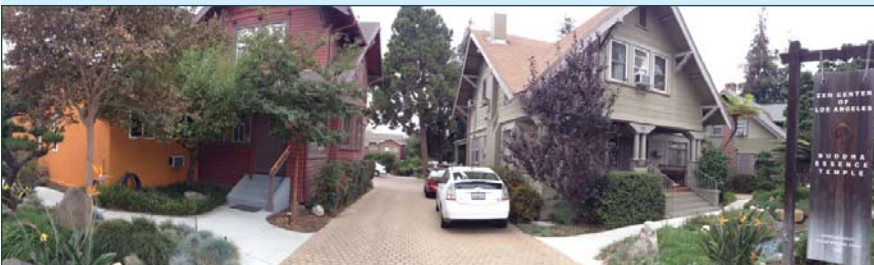
commitment to Shared Stewardship and to Council Practice have also greatly served the Sangha.

Over the past year, Plum-Hermit took some time for reflection about how much he could realistically commit to his service at the Zen Center while living in Austin. He has decided that he needs to spend more time in Austin, building a life there as an artist and as a partner to Jennifer. This means that we will be seeing less of Plum-Hermit in person. We are fortunate, however, that he has also decided to continue to serve on the Board and as a member of the Development Circle, most often through video conferencing. Recently, we had him with us in person at our all-day Board Retreat, where his insights were greatly appreciated.

A good way to appreciate Plum-Hermit and all he has done for the Zen Center is to simply look around the next time you are on Normandie Mountain. Much of what you see is there, in part, due to Plum-Hermit's service – the colorful driveway, the walls of the Zendo, the office and Pine House remodels, the bathrooms in the Sangha House, and the dining area floor, to name a few physical contributions. Consider the way the Zen Center operates – contained in a Mandala and manifested by Shared Stewardship Circles through Collective Awakening and Wisdom, and by council meetings – these were all made stronger with the help of Plum-Hermit.

Thank you, Plum-Hermit, for your many years of practice and service and for your continued service on the Board of Directors and Development Circle. May your life continue to go well.

Residential Training Opportunities



Resident training offers Zen students the opportunity to deepen their practice by living with a resident teacher and a community of practitioners. Residents combine Zen training with family and careers, engage in shared stewardship, and explore the dynamic life of Sangha. The Zen Center of Los Angeles (ZCLA) has two apartment buildings for its Residential Training Program. We currently have one studio and a

two-bedroom apartment available. Applicants with either a little or a lot of experience as a Zen student may apply. Before the application process begins, prospective residents are asked to complete the introductory Zen practice classes, ZP1 through ZP3. The Buddha Hand Circle (BHC) oversees the application and admission process. Interested parties can contact Senshin Griffith, our Program Steward, at programsteward@zcla.org for information and requirements.

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Lincroft Zen Sangha (NJ)

led by Sensei Merle Kodo Boyd

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)

coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The Ocean Moon Sangha (Santa Monica, CA)

led by Sensei John Daishin Buksbazen

The San Luis Obispo Sitting Group (CA)

coordinated by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)

led by Sensei Patricia Shingetsu Guzy

The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)

led by Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley

Contact info@zcla.org for information.

The *Water Wheel* is published by the Zen Center of Los Angeles, Great Dragon Mountain / Buddha Essence Temple, which was founded by the late Taizan Maezumi Roshi in 1967.

Our mission is to know the Self, maintain the precepts, and serve others. We provide the teaching, training, and transmission of Zen Buddhism. **Our vision** is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which all beings live in harmony, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized, and compassion flows unhindered.

Founding Abbot: Taizan Maezumi Roshi

Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman

Abbot: Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao

Staff: Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen, *Co-Temple Director*; Darla Myoho Fjeld, *Co-Temple Director*; Mary Rios, *Business Manager*; *Guest Steward, Office Assistant to Roshi Egyoku*; Ty Jotai Webb, *IT Steward*; Robert Diaz, *Facilities Manager*. *Water Wheel: Editor:* Burt Wetanson; *Production Artist*, Tom Yudo Burger; *Proofreaders for this issue:* Sensei Ensho Berge, Bonnie Myosen Nadzam and Ty Jotai Webb; *Photographers for this issue:* Roshi Egyoku and Tom Yudo Burger.

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Welcome New Members

Laos Onshin Chuman

Maria Teresa Collantes

Marika Dvorak

Dan Liebgold

Roland Palmer

John Schlottig

Welcome New Resident

Gemma Cubero

Shared Stewardship Entering

Co-Temple Director,

Co-Shared Stewardship Steward:

Darla Myoho Fjeld

Co-Tenzo Coordinator:

Reeb Kaizen Venners

Altar Flower Circle Steward:

Diane Enju Katz

Tenzo Resource Person:

Ty Jotai Webb

Shared Stewardship Leave-Taking

Altar Flower Circle Steward:

Lorraine Gessho Kumpf

Co-Shared Stewardship Steward:

Katherine Senshin Griffith

Co-Tenzo Coordinator,

Tenzo Resource Person:

Tim Zamora

Note: Our Heartfelt Thank You list that normally appears in each issue will be in our next issue.