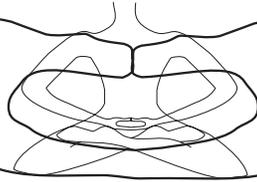


Sangha Life



The Missouri Zen Center

April-May, 2008

The Missouri Zen Center

220 Spring Avenue
Webster Groves, MO 63119
(314) 961-6138



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Coming Events

- April 5: Movie Night
- April 13: MZC Board meeting
- April 26: Garden work day
- May 2: Taiun Elliston at MZC
- May 4: Vesak Day
- May 10: Movie Night
- May 23-25: Zuiko Redding at MZC
- Mar. 20-22: sesshin



*Address Correction
Requested*

Visit Our Web Site:
www.missourizencenter.org

New Board Members Take Office

At the Zen Center's annual meeting on March 15, attendees elected two new members to MZC's Board of Directors, Gary Byrd and Ryushin Don Benage, for three-year terms. Kuryo was re-elected for a full term of three years; Sheryll was re-elected for a one-year term. They join continuing board members John Hale, Kathy Albers, and Mitsudo. Rosan, as our teacher and abbot, is automatically a member of the Board.

For the next year Kuryo is president, Kathy is vice president, Ryushin is secretary, and John is public relations manager. Sheryll is treasurer until another person can be named to this role. Please see the accompanying article for more info on our search for a new treasurer.

Treasurer Needed for MZC

MZC is searching for a person to take over the duties of Treasurer of the organization. Duties of this position include accurately accounting for all income and expenses of the organization; depositing all receipts and paying all bills in a timely manner; investing excess funds as directed by the Board; providing timely reports to the Board of Directors; and other such duties as may be required. While the Treasurer need not be a member of the Board of Directors nor attend the Board meetings (although it would be helpful), the Treasurer must make monthly reports of income and expenses to the Board. The Treasurer also must comply with Board directives on making investments and providing cash for fundraisers such as the Japanese Festival.

The ideal candidate handles financial details in an ac-
Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page

curate and timely manner. MZC's accounts are similar to those of a household, so anyone who takes care of their household accounts in an accurate and timely fashion will be able to handle those of MZC. You must commit to making deposits and paying bills on time, avoiding late fees. Generally a few hours of work a week is required. Experience in using Quicken (or equivalent personal money management software) to manage accounts and a semester or more of college-level accounting or equivalent experience will be very helpful. MZC uses Quicken software to track income and expenses. You will be required to use MZC's computer for this work; if you don't already know how to use Quicken, you will need to learn it.

If you are interested in serving MZC as Treasurer or want more information on what is involved, please contact Sheryll through MZC.

Volunteers Needed

Do you like to work with books, garden, sew, do repair work? If so, we could use your help in the library, yard, doing repairs or home improvement projects, or in sewing and stuffing zafus. Or you may have some other area of interest or skill that you'd like to contribute to improving the Zen Center. If so, contact John at halej55@hotmail.com or call 314-961-6138.

Community Vegetable Garden at MZC

A Community Vegetable Garden is being started at MZC. If you'd like to participate, contact John for more details: halej55@hotmail.com or call (314) 961-6138.

Movie Nights, April 5 and May 10

April 5, 6:00 p.m. Dinner: Pizza from Pizza World! Contact us by Sat., April 5 at 2:00 p.m. to make dinner reservations if you'll be joining us for the dinner. To make your reservation send an email to halej55@hotmail.com or call 961-6138.

7:00 p.m. Movie: *Blood Diamond*, 2hrs, 15 min. Rated: R for strong violence and language. Starring: Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly, Djimon Hounsou. Blood diamonds, sometimes known as conflict stones, were so named in the 1990s by advocacy groups wanting to call attention to the fact that diamonds were being smuggled out of countries at war specifically to buy more arms and kill more people. This situation, the film emphasizes, "created millions of refugees who've never seen a diamond."

May 10, 6:00 p.m. Dinner: to be announced, contact MZC by May 8 for reservations.

7:00 p.m. Movie: *The God Who Wasn't There*. The taboo-shattering documentary that Newsweek says "irreverently lays out the case that Jesus Christ never existed." From exposing the hidden history of Christianity to lampooning the bloody excesses of Mel Gibson's *The*

Passion of the Christ (which caused Gibson to attempt legal action against the documentary), *The God Who Wasn't There* pulls no punches. Directed by award-winning filmmaker (and former Christian) Brian Flemming, the movie includes stimulating interviews with Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation*; Robert M. Price, Jesus Seminar fellow and author of *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man*; Alan Dundes, Professor of Folklore at the University of California at Berkeley; Richard Carrier, historian and author of *Sense and Goodness Without God*; Barbara and David P. Mikkelsen, authors of the *Urban Legends Reference Pages* at snopes.com; and many others.

Garden Work Day & Plant Exchange

Now that spring has arrived, the Zen Center's gardens are greening up and beginning to grow. And like any other garden at this time of year, they need a little help to look their best. We invite all members and friends to join us at the Zen Center on Saturday, April 26 following the 8 a.m. sitting to do spring garden cleanup and maintenance. Work will begin around 9 a.m. and last until about 2 p.m. You may break at 10 a.m. to attend family sitting or continue working through the morning. You can arrive later (after family sitting, for instance) and work as late as you can stay. Workers will enjoy lunch together. You may bring a vegetarian dish for a potluck lunch. Bring garden gloves if you have them; other supplies are available at the Zen Center.

Those of you with your own gardens may have some extra plants on your hands. Bring them to the Zen Center and take part in an informal plant exchange! To make it easy for exchanges to take place, please label all plants that you bring, and please avoid bringing the more troublesome plants (like poison ivy). You can bring divisions of perennials, vegetable seedlings, herb plants and seedlings, annual flowers, divisions of fruiting plants like strawberries, tropical plants, even seedling shrubs and trees. If you need pots for your plant divisions, you can likely find extra pots in the garage at the Zen Center. We look forward to working with you on April 26!

Taiun Elliston at MZC, May 2 & 3

Zenkai Taiun Elliston, abbot of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center, will offer a Dharma talk at MZC following the evening meditation period on Friday, May 2. Please join us for meditation and the talk.

Taiun will also attend the sitting at 8 a.m. on Saturday, May 3. After sitting, he and others will head to MABA to set up for Vesak Day. Following conclusion of the preparations at MABA, participants will eat lunch and hear a short talk from Taiun. All are welcome to go to MABA and help with preparations.

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page

Zenkain Taiun's teacher was Zengaku Soyu Matsuoka, Roshi. For more info on Zenkai Taiun and his center, please visit www.aszc.org.

Vesak Day, May 4

Please join the Missouri Zen Center and other member organizations of the Buddhist Council of Greater St. Louis in celebrating the birth, awakening, and death of the Buddha (according to the southern Buddhist tradition) on Sunday, May 4, 2008 beginning at 10 a.m. The celebration will take place at Mid-America Buddhist Association (MABA) Monastery in Augusta, Missouri. It is free and open to the public.

This year's guest speaker will be Zenkai Taiun Elliston, abbot of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center. Taiun's teacher was Zengaku Soyu Matsuoka, Roshi.

The schedule of events is as follows.

- 9:30 a.m. Arrival and parking
- 10:00-10:15 a.m. Opening ceremony, led by the Monastics
- 10:15-10:45 a.m. Bathing Buddha Rite, led by the Monastics
- 10:45-11:45 a.m. Guided meditation and Dharma Talk by Zenkai Taiun (children's program under the tent)
- 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m. Vegetarian lunch (music and entertainment during lunch)
- 1:00-1:15 p.m. Walking meditation to the Guan Yin Pavilion
- 1:15-2:00 p.m. Dharma Talk on the Bodhisattva Path by Lama Chuck, founder of the Rime Center, Kansas City (at the Guan Yin pavilion)
- 2:00-2:15 p.m. Walking meditation back from the pavilion
- 2:15-3:30 p.m. Dharma Talk by Zenkai Taiun, with Q&A
- 3:30 p.m. Dedication of Merit and Closing Ceremony

Directions: from St. Louis, take I-64 west over the Missouri River. The exit following the bridge is Highway 94 to Augusta; exit to the left (west) and continue on 94 westbound for about 25 miles. Follow the signs to MABA.

For more info: www.maba-usa.org, or contact Don Sloane at 314-576-4900 or donshushu@maba-usa.org

Zuiko Redding at MZC, May 23-25

Zuiko Redding, abbot of Cedar Rapids Zen Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, will be at MZC beginning Friday evening, May 23, through Sunday, May 25. Zuiko is a Dharma sister of Rosan's, and we are very happy to welcome her again to MZC.

At press time the schedule for her visit is still being determined. We hope that she will arrive in time to sit with us and give a Dharma talk on May 23; there may be an opportunity to eat dinner with her as well. On Saturday, May 24 we may schedule a short sesshin or

other extended sitting period for the morning and early afternoon, including dokusan with Zuiko (family sitting will be held as usual on Saturday). A public Dharma talk at a different location is planned for Saturday evening. The usual schedule will be followed on Sunday, May 25, with Zuiko giving the Dharma talk. She will be leaving on Monday morning.

Once arrangements for her visit are confirmed, we will announce the schedule on our listserv and through postings at the Zen Center.

Great Sky Sesshin, Aug. 9-16

The annual Great Sky Sesshin, a Soto Zen style sesshin, draws together teachers and practitioners from all over the Midwest for seven days of deepening understanding of the dharma under the extraordinary big sky of Hokyoji. You are invited to attend the sesshin at Hokyoji Zen Practice Community, a beautiful rural setting of meadow, forest, and rolling hills in southern Minnesota just west of the Mississippi River. The daily schedule will consist of zazen, dharma talks, services, dokusan, meals with oryoki, tea breaks, and work.

Our abbot and teacher Rosan will be one of the teachers at the sesshin, joined by Susan Myoyu Andersen (Great Plains Zen Center in Palatine, IL); Tonen O'Connor (Milwaukee Zen Center); Zuiko Redding (Cedar Rapids Zen Center); and Brad Warner (Dogen Sangha, Los Angeles). Associate teacher will be Dokai Georges, Hokyoji Zen Practice Community.

You must register to join the sesshin, which is limited to 24 participants. Registration cost is \$285 for a bunk bed, \$250 for camping. The deadline for registration is July 1. Registration materials are available from Milwaukee Zen Center at www.milwaukeezencenter.org. For more info, contact Milwaukee Zen Center (414-963-0526, kokyo-an@earthlink.net, www.milwaukeezencenter.org) or Cedar Rapids Zen Center (319-247-5986, crzc@avalon.net, www.avalon.net/~crzc/).

Reflection of a Sesshin Past

By Sheryll Coulter

Every other Monday night I try to arrive very early at the zendo, just in case someone shows up very early for the Beginners Class. While waiting for the first student to arrive, I sit and read David Chadwick's *Thank You and OK*, which I temporarily borrow from the for-sale shelf. The Zen center resident used to walk by and say, "You could buy that, you know," but he gave it up and now he just occasionally chuckles as I read and giggle.

Recently a Chadwick paragraph became Proust's madeleine for me. He wrote about coming into the meditation hall of a Japanese monastery, arranging himself mindfully, picking up the chant book and holding it correctly, and waiting to be told what he was doing wrong this time.

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page

I experienced a flood of memories of ten days at a rainy uncompleted monastery among the relics of Katagiri and the gentle but constant correction by his students. Cooking breakfast and following its aroma on the Sun Rising through Fog path to the meditation hall to lean against the rail and listen to the tail end of the heart sutra. Getting the almost undrivable pickup unstuck. Rosan chanting the heart sutra over a long dead but recently buried mouse skeleton. And the routine of up early, cook, eat, sit, miss a change in work schedule, reminded to pay attention, sit, sit, eat, can't seem to remember the order of flipping that oryoki napkin, reminded to pay attention, sit, work, reminded to pay attention. Bell rings, han raps, routine starts to fall in place, a level of comfort, miss a cue, reminded to pay attention.

It is practice on speed.

And then the third day and there are no cooking duties and it is mostly sitting most of the day. Not enough sleep. Sore knees, thighs, and back. Mosquito buzzes around ears. Fly crawls across nose. Bug

Live a karma-free life

By Rosan Daido

Honeysuckle chokes plants and gardens. Droplets dig ditches and canyons. Houses invite dust and leaks. House dwellers are karma machines, tangling tight and digging deep. Samadhi stops karma, sees the truth, and severs suffering, leading to the dustless domain of limitless life. Only practice makes perfect in unconditioned peace and unsurpassed awakening.

slithers across foot. I am sitting on the edge of a big black hole. I am miserable. Would jumping in that hole be jumping off the thousand-foot pole? Or just putting myself out of misery? Either way, I go for it. Another bug across the foot.

As I packed my bags for this journey, my boarder told me that when she goes to sesshin, there always seems to be a point where she asks herself what she is doing there. She said it like she meant, "What in the world am I doing here?"

Amid the insects, I asked it of myself but it was more of a, "So why did I come here?" I immediately knew I came for something other than what I was experiencing. I sat straighter, settled into counting breaths, the insects disappeared for the rest of the week, and that bowl of water Rosan is always referencing stilled.

Rain and baby bats. Broken water pipes, windfall apples. Cabbages for lunch gone missing and people not showing up for work. People anxious about the food and people sick. People showing unexpected kindnesses and people wanting to talk despite the silence rule. A lot of people in a rather small space and still the water remained relatively calm.

E-mail List

Subscribe to our e-mail list at:

<http://groups.google.com/group/mzclist>

Once you are signed up, you can send messages to the list using this address:

mzclist@googlegroups.com

Regular Zendo Schedule

Sunday

6:20-7:00 am	Zazen
7:00-7:20 am	Service (sutras)
7:20-8:00 am	Zazen
8:00-8:10 am	Kinhin
8:10-8:30 am	Zazen
8:30 am	Talk/discussion, work period, tea

You are welcome to come throughout the morning, but please do not enter the zendo during zazen. Enter quietly at other times.

Monday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
7:00-9:00 pm	Writing Practice
Beginner's Night*:	
6:30-7:00 pm	Instruction
7:00-7:20 pm	Zazen
7:20-8:00 pm	Discussion/Q&A

Tuesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen
7:40-9:00 pm	Tea/discussion

Wednesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

Thursday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

Friday

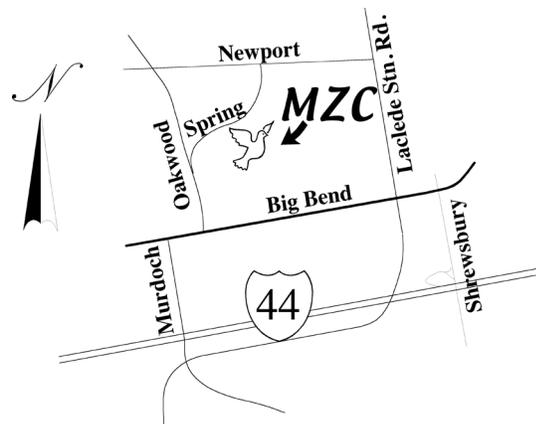
6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

Saturday

8:00-8:40 am	Zazen
8:40-9:30 am	Discussion
10:00-10:30 am	Family Sitting

Work periods may be scheduled following zazen.

** Anyone bringing a class to the Monday Beginners Night, or wishing to bring a class at any other time to the Zen Center, should contact the Zen Center well in advance.*



The Ethical Lawn: To Fertilize or Not?

By Kuryo

Lawn grasses are an early-successional stage of ecological landscapes. Seeds of other plants already in the soil will sprout over time. Wind, water, and animal bodies and manures will bring more seeds to our lawns. Fertilization of lawns can increase the growth of grass and help the grass out-compete weeds, as can other kinds of soil amendments. If you wish to maintain a small area of well-manicured lawn grasses, you may want to consider ways to fertilize the lawn or amend the soil that don't harm the rest of the ecosystem.

First, consider whether to add any fertilizer or soil amendments at all. Lawn grasses will grow without any of these as long as you choose the right grass for the right area (shade-tolerant grasses for shady areas are especially important). Such a lawn will have a few more "weeds" and look less well manicured, but it will still pass for a lawn as long as you mow often enough to satisfy your community's weed ordinances. Major benefits to not fertilizing or amending include reduced costs (for the equipment to apply the materials as well as the materials themselves), reduced need for mowing, and no chance of disrupting the rest of the ecological community through misapplied materials.

If you decide you'd like to have a green, well-manicured lawn, you can do that ethically. First you need to know the differences between chemical lawn fertilizers and organic fertilizers. Chemical lawn fertilizers are very high in nitrogen compounds that plants can use immediately. Organic lawn fertilizers such as compost or composted manure are somewhat lower in nitrogen compounds, and more of the nitrogen is in forms that can't be used as quickly by plants. Most people choose chemical lawn fertilizers because they green-up lawns quickly when applied during the active growth period of the grass.

Unfortunately, most people add more chemical fertilizer to lawns than the grasses can use. When it rains, the excess washes into lakes and streams and stimulates the growth of algae. The overgrowth of algae depletes the water of oxygen needed by other organisms like insect larva. The insect larva die, and in turn fish and other creatures dependent on the insect larva die. Excess nitrogen from farmland and lawns in the Mississippi River watershed (only about 18% of the nitrogen applied is actually used) ends up in the Gulf of Mexico, creating a huge dead zone in the Gulf that is growing larger with time. In addition, chemical lawn fertilizers are salts; the salts destroy soil structure and soil water-holding capacity and adversely affect the various microorganisms that are a vital part of a living, healthy soil. For these reasons, it's best to avoid chemical fertilizers for an ethical lawn. Applying a thin layer of compost or composted manure at the start of the growing season is an ethical alternative for people who wish to give their lawn grasses a boost – and it will improve the quality of the soil at the same time. Be sure any manure you use is composted animal manure, not Milorganite or other manures obtained from sewage treatment plants, as these are contaminated with industrial wastes, including heavy metal residues, that don't belong on any soil. The city of St. Louis and some small farmers in the area offer manures to the public for free; all you need is a way to transport them.

An excellent and ethical way to add fertility is to add white clover seeds to an existing lawn. Clover, along with most other plants in the legume (bean and pea) family and a few plants in other families, forms associations with bacteria that can convert nitrogen compounds already existing in the soil into forms that the plants can use. Some of that usable nitrogen becomes available to nearby lawn grasses. Some organic materials suppliers offer a mix of clover and grass seed for new lawns. Clover seeds can also be purchased separately and added to existing lawns. Clover may well find its way into your lawn on its own once you stop using fertilizers and herbicides, as it has in mine.

Your soil may not be ideal for the growth of lawn grasses. If all you want is a mowed area, an ideal soil is not necessary; use grasses appropriate for sun or shade as needed, and mow whatever you get. If you want a well-manicured lawn, it may be worth your while to get the soil tested to learn if any deficiencies are present and to correct any that exist. Soil tests are available at low cost through your county's extension service (the Missouri Botanical Garden offers soil-testing services for St. Louis area residents; call them or check their website for details). The test results will include suggestions for correcting any deficiencies found. Be wary – most often the recommendations are for chemicals you may not wish to apply if your ideal is an ethical lawn. Organic lawn care resources such as books or websites can tell you about organic substitutes and how much to apply. Take special care to measure your lawn surface area and apply only the recommended amount; excessive amounts can be as or more toxic than too little!

In the next issue we'll look at "weeds" and find out if, and how, we can live with and even use these for our and the ecosystem's benefit.