

MOUNTAINS TALKING

WINTER 2017



NO STORY EVER TOLD

PEGGY METTA SHEEHAN

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NO STORY EVER TOLD

Peggy Metta Sheehan



From a talk delivered during sesshin.

This is the first full day of our Rohatsu sesshin. I hope the world's events have a lit a fire for you – a fire that will become a roaring blaze this week, and in effect burn away the underbrush of bushes and grasses that obscure our clear seeing. This is our chance to break the habit of self-identification, the fundamental cause of suffering, not just ours, but the world's.

Peter Hershock wrote, “We do not suffer because we are in pain. We suffer because something has gone wrong with our story – wrong enough that it threatens the structure of our narration.”

This is wonderful. The structure of our narration... the bushes and grasses that we cling to, that we permit to create a self, the story of me. Let it be threatened. Let everything you ever believed be questioned, be suspect.

The Buddha said:

*Through many a birth in samsara
have I wandered in vain,
seeking the builder of this house of life.
Repeated birth is indeed suffering.*

*O house-builder, you are seen!
You will not build this house again.
For your rafters are broken
and your ridgepole shattered.
My mind has reached the unconditioned;
I have attained the destruction of craving.*

This is our work this week: Brick by brick, breath by breath, we will allow this house of cards to come tumbling down, for it is an illusion, a mirage supported by our beliefs, opinions, expectations, requirements, demands, likes and dislikes, and on and on. As we tear down the rafters and support beams with each breath, each Mu, we will and do meet the unconditioned.

David Loy says, “What happens when I realize that my story is a story?” And then he says, “Am I the story

teller or the story told? And if my sense of self is derived from stories, who is telling them?”

Well, that is the heart of the matter, isn't it? Who, who is hearing, who am I, or MU, just Mu – what is Mu? – or simply sitting, making nothing, not resting in being or in non-being. This is our truest freedom, not freedom from, but freedom to, to live wholeheartedly right in the midst of yes and no.

It's easy to follow the path of habit-force, to get trapped in our perceptions that have a well-worn path – so well-worn that we don't appreciate their blinding effect. Sesshin offers the chance to break free from these gravitational forces, and the tools we will need are love, forgiveness, patience, persistence and compassion. Fortified and armed with these, we take up our seats and engage our practice, the practice of Buddha, the practice of single-minded concentration, absorption and relinquishment.

Relinquishment: The Buddha saw the four signs – sickness, old age, death and a monk – and these compelled him to leave home. Something has compelled you to leave home. It's important to be in touch with that – that which compels you. That is Truth yearning for itself. And all that is needed is here now: silence, stillness, support of the many beings, and your practice, your inquiry, following the thread of what compels you.

You are supported and nourished by your fellow travelers and the practice of countless beings from the beginningless beginning. The earth beneath you and the sky above are your true home. The wind is your breath. All you must do to realize this is to settle and sink into your practice with every fiber of your being, holding nothing back. When you drift into storytelling, recognize, let go and return – again and again and again, with kindness, love and patience.

Gather your energy around your inquiry. Does the dog have Buddha nature or not? Chao-chou replied, “Mu” – what is Mu? Does the sound go to ear or the ear go to the sound? Who is hearing? Feel into the question with your whole body, drop into it, before and beyond

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Editor: Joel Tagert



Above: View of the Columbine property looking east (photo by Jeff Black). Right: Buildings by Semple Brown Design.

OUR ARCHITECTS: SEMPLE BROWN

We are pleased to announce that on Tuesday, December 27, the ZCD's board of directors approved the selection of Semple Brown Design for the initial discovery phase of our building process.

The selection was made based on the recommendation of the design committee, composed of Karin Ryuku Kempe, Ken Tetsuzan Morgareidge, David Lee, Dennis Sienko and Joel Tagert. From a larger group of candidates suggested by the sangha, the committee selected three architectural firms for further interviews, during which they examined these candidates' portfolios of previous projects, their working relationships in Denver, knowledge of environmentally sound building practices, ability to work within our budgetary constraints, and many other criteria.

Following the interviews, the committee recommended Semple Brown, a premier architectural firm with offices here in Denver, on Santa Fe Boulevard.

Semple Brown is a well-established firm with a multitude of projects under their belts, ranging from private homes to large public works. Their three decades of experience give us tremendous confidence in their ability to aid and guide us throughout the planning and construction of our new temple, avoiding unnecessary and possibly costly pitfalls and seeing the project through to completion. We also appreciated the down-to-earth presences of Sarah Semple Brown, Rusty Brown and Chris Wineman, with whom we met, and their clear and avid enthusiasm for our project.

In the initial discovery phase, Semple Brown will develop a conceptual site plan to be presented to city agencies for approval, and from which a building contractor could generate a preliminary budget. An expanded design committee will work with the company to develop this plan, seeking input from the larger sangha at our sangha circle meetings, held each month this winter.



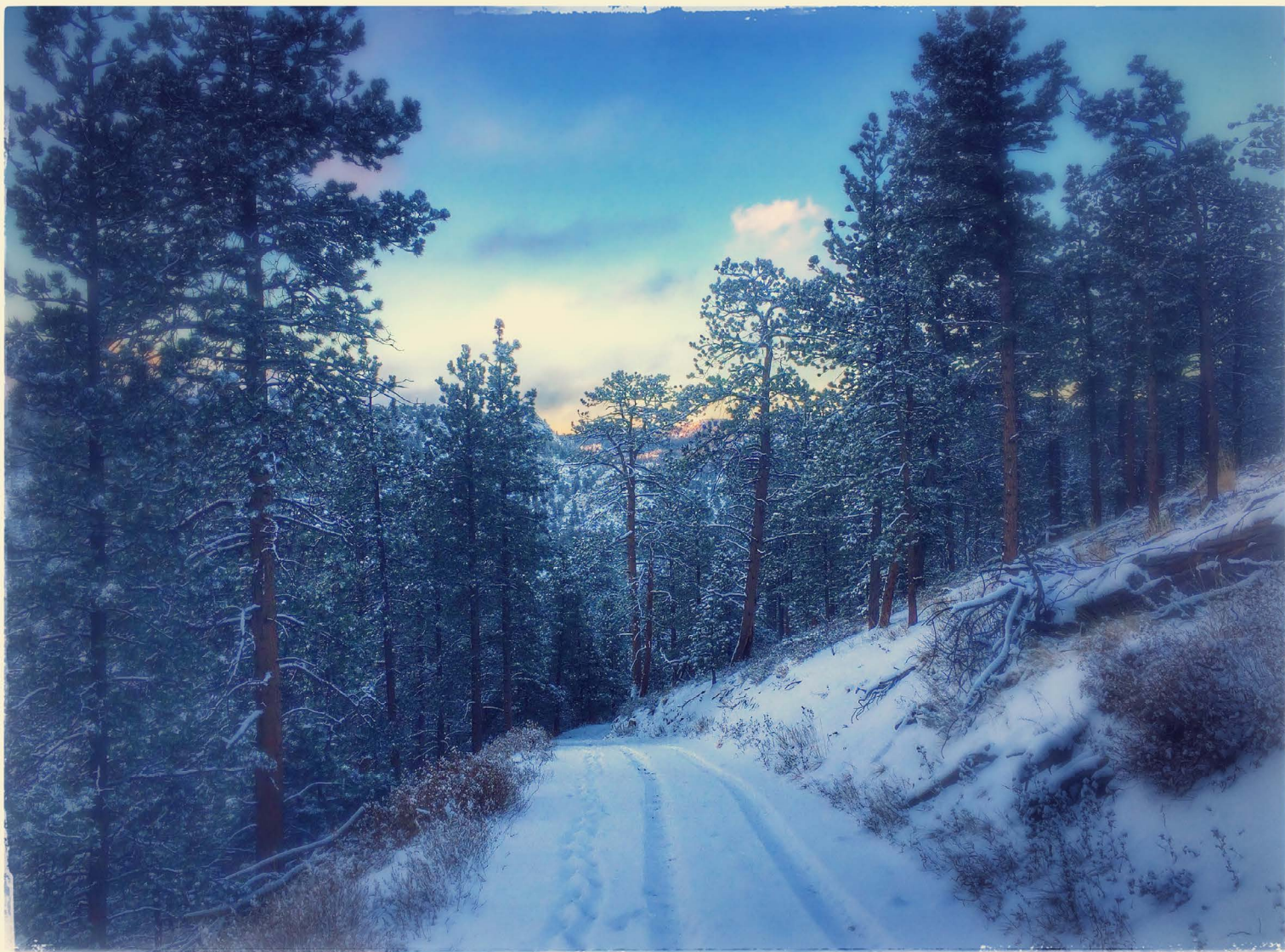


Photo by Jason Polk

ENTERING THE WAY

By Dennis Sienko

From a sesshin encouragement talk.

A philosopher asked the Buddha, “I do not ask for words; I do not ask for silence.” What was the philosopher seeking? What are you seeking? Enlightenment, perhaps? What is this Enlightenment we seek?

In response to this inquiry, the Buddha sat silently, and the philosopher said admiringly, “The World Honored One’s great kindness and great compassion have opened up my clouds of illusion and enabled me to enter the Way.”

Allow this mountain, the snow crushing under you feet, the cold, starry night, to open your clouds of illusion and allow you to enter the Way. Like the philosopher, ask and you will receive. Pure love, emptiness and divine acceptance are your birthright.

ROHATSU: SNOW AND SILENCE

This December we returned to Shambhala Mountain Center near Red Feather Lakes for our annual Rohatsu sesshin. Getting out the car in the parking lot to check in, I was again struck by the serene beauty of that valley – and by the cold wind sweeping across it.

Sesshin begins with a little hubbub, with everyone setting up the zendo, getting settled into their rooms, looking at their seating and job assignments, and if they are a leader, attending to the many small details of the first day and the days to come. We also greet each other warmly, affirming friendships with those we see regularly, and renewing them with those from far away.

There are many rituals in the first day of sesshin, formal and informal. The opening orientation is a sort of ritual, intimately familiar to those who have attended sesshin previously. Practicing the routine of meals that evening is another, and following supper we embark upon the formal rituals of the Repentance and Gratitude Ceremony and the opening ceremony of sesshin.

With these latter, we also leave casual speech behind, and enter the embrace of deep silence. Even on that first night it could be felt, a waiting immensity as we sat for one or two rounds before retiring. The sky was exceptionally clear that night, the stars brilliantly shining for

those walking to their rooms in the seasonal dorm or elsewhere.

The silence grew and deepened on Sunday, the first full day of practice, each round and block of zazen strengthening our attention to the moment. Monday it was felt even more profoundly, as we let go of even the spoken rituals of encouragement talks, Dharma talks and chanting, setting aside words in this day of silence. That night the stars were hidden by a new veil of clouds.

Tuesday morning in the seasonal dorm, like the mornings before, began with simply turning on the lights (no bells here). After getting dressed, using the bathroom and washing my face, I went out to the shoe room to prepare for the trek to Rigden Lodge, where the zendo was located.

Stepping outside, I found that it had snowed during the night – was still snowing. I was the first outside, and the blanket of white, and the silence it imbued upon the landscape, was utterly unbroken. Amazed, I walked ten or fifteen steps, hearing solely the crunch of snow beneath my boots, and stopped again. Nothing – pure silence – my own breath – and the minutest whisper of the snowflakes themselves, smallish crystals, rasping upon the pine branches.

– Joel Tagert

Below: The traditional end-of-sesshin photo. Hey Dennis, I thought this was about waking up!



FLOWER CEREMONY

By Peggy Metta Sheehan

From a talk during sesshin, Dec. 8.

This evening we are having a flower ceremony. This ceremony is prior to formal transmission, but is equally profound and wonderful, conferring acknowledgment and recognition that a former student is ready to begin teaching – or shall we say, that the student and teacher have exchanged heads. This is a time of apprentice teaching.

It is called the flower ceremony after this well-known exchange of the Buddha and Mahakasyapa:

Once, in ancient times, when the World-Honored One was at Mount Grdhrakuta, he held up a flower before his assembled disciples. At this all were silent. Only Mahakasyapa broke into a smile.

The World-Honored One said, “I have the All-pervading Eye of the True Dharma, the Subtle Mind of Incomparable Nirvana, the True Form of Formless Form and the Flawless Gate of the Supreme Teaching. It is not established upon words and phrases and is transmitted outside all teachings. I now entrust this to Mahakasyapa.”

So this evening we are twirling the flower; I hope it is readily apparent. Here are a few words by Aiken Roshi commenting on this case:

The realization experience is itself a kind of transmission. This story of the Buddha twirling a flower is an archetype for the unity of these two kinds of transmission: first the message of the flower and second the acknowledgement of the Buddha. The flower is one of the myriad things that advance from nowhere and confirm the self. Confirmation by a sense experience of the world, confirmation by the master, and, finally confirmation by the Buddha Sangha – these are the three transmissions. All three are transformational experiences, and no one can teach unless each of them is in place.

Well, each of them is in place. And it is the right time and place today to turn the Dharma wheel. The Buddha was confirmed by the morning star 2,500 years ago on December 8. And on this December 8, 2016, the flower is twirling. And as it passes or transmits to one person tonight, it indeed is twirling for all of us.

Cathy Wright has been practicing with us for



Cathy Wright and Peggy Metta Sheehan.

eighteen years and her eye is clear. She began training with Danan Roshi and worked at least ten years with Roshi before his retirement and has worked with me for the remainder.

Many of you know Cathy as a gifted yoga instructor and a body worker who has magic in her hands. You may also know that she has a deep affinity with the natural world. Now, that at times causes a bit of consternation to her Dharma friends, learning about hut-to-hut mountain ski trips through blizzards, trail-running and bike-relay races in the dead of night, and bear encounters. Hearing just a few of these tales, one begins to wonder: perhaps there is such a person who can leap tall buildings in a single bound.

Truly the natural world is her home. It fills her and informs her teaching and practice. Also, if you have seen Cathy's pottery or other works of art, you realize she has an aesthetic artistic sense that is simple, quiet and beautiful.

So for Cathy, I would like to share a poem written by Muso Soseki, a Japanese Zen master who lived 1275-1351. He is the originator or father of the Zen rock garden and spent many years in remote temples and hermitages.

*The mountain range
the stones in the water
all are strange and rare
The beautiful landscape
as we know
belongs to those who are like it
The upper worlds
the lower worlds
originally are one thing
There is not a bit of dust
there is only this still and full
perfect enlightenment*

PRACTICING THE WISDOM OF ENLIGHTENMENT

By Cathy Wright

From a sesshin encouragement talk, Dec. 8.

In Buddha's eightieth year, when he was dying, he gathered his disciples together and said:

The last moment has come, but do not forget that death is but the vanishing of a body. The body was born of parents, and was nourished by food, so sickness and death are unavoidable. But the true Buddha is not a human body. It is Enlightenment. A human body must vanish, but the Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truths of the Dharma and in the practice of the Dharma.

Did you know you were continuing the Wisdom of Enlightenment when you took your place in the zendo tonight? When we bow and sit down, and don't move, we are the unbroken chain of Dharma practice. This ancient Zen practice is the Wisdom of Enlightenment that will exist forever.

The Buddha ancestors are flowing into this room, guiding this Rohatsu sesshin. They are flowing through us, through our three teachers, through the mountains, the roaring wind and the snow. Let us continue this strong Dharma practice in a strict way. Out of gratitude

and respect for the Dharma teachings, let us be strict. This means to match our will to the will of sesshin and not the other way around.

Sesshin demands a seated posture that we can hold comfortably and steadily round after round. Be strict with yourself. Know the limits of your knees and back and take the appropriate support ahead of time.

Adjust your hand mudra. Be aware of the space created inside your palms and the touch of the thumbs. Open that space. Breathe in that space. Our hands are practicing, too. If you hold a different hand mudra, what pressure are you gripping your thumb with? Is it too much, and your jaw is set tight? Is it too loose, and your chest is dropping? Hold your hands accountable for contributing to the overall moment of being awake and alert.

Adjust your spine upwards by pressing your sitting bones downward and extending up straight through the crown of the head. Move the temple skin back. Stay present.

Buddha's words are embodied right now: "The Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma and in the practice of the Dharma."

Practice the Dharma by not moving a single thing. Not your body. Not even your mind-posture moves. When mind is challenged, recall the Diamond Sutra, and challenge the mind-state back: "This is not mine. This am I not. This is not myself."

Challenge back the antics of the mind. After six days and nights of sitting zazen and following the sesshin schedule, we are bright, clear-eyed, well-honed. Ripe to go toward – "This am I not."

When a round of zazen has ended, get up. Have you noticed that getting up is different each time? Sometimes we don't want to get up; we could sit a bit longer. Sometimes we can't wait to get up. Sometimes the knees hurt, but not always so. Getting up is fresh each time. Don't miss it.

Walk kinhin. Don't miss it. Pay attention to your steps. The Buddha's teachings unfold step by step – so simple, so close.

For dokusan, practice bowing deeply. Practice straightening your cushions before leaving for dokusan. How much of this has become automatic?

Stop – a full stop. Stop now the routine of sesshin. Get back the fresh encounter with each form. Open and close the dokusan door silently. Pay attention to your arrival time at sitting. Let's work together to arrive five minutes early for kentan, and be settled.

The Buddha said, "There is no secret teaching, no hidden meaning. Everything has been taught openly and clearly." I believe him.

Stay abreast of those mind-states that sink battleships. The dark rolls in fast on cold winter nights. Let's use this nighttime dark as a comforting cloak, a gift from the ancestors. Let's tug on the garment of the Infinite by staying awake – staying awake through each round. Be awakened by each form, each step, each breath.

This we can do. This is how we practice the Dharma teachings in sesshin. This is how we pay homage to our three teachers.

These final words come from Buddha's dying days. He highlights the Rule of Transiency:

Life is ever-changing; none escape the dissolution of the body.

Do not vainly lament – but wonder at the rule of transiency.

Learn from it the emptiness of human form.

Do not cherish the unworthy desire that the changeable might become unchanging.

Today we acknowledge the Buddha's Enlightenment. He urges us not to forget the rule of transiency; let us take this Dharma teaching and work with it. What is uncovered is unique and rich, ordinary and extraordinary. May we all freely watch a flying bird and trace its path, and stand in the snow with arms loose and enjoy the beauty of snow on rooftops, branches and shoes.

TAKING REFUGE IN THE NEW YEAR

By Josh Mather

This year has been a particularly tough year for most of us. The death of David Bowie appears to have started a downward spiral that has yet to find a bottom. Perhaps he was a lynch-pin between universes and the

space-time continuum has begun to unravel. Our world now appears to be more divided than ever. I can't remember a time when fear was more prevalent than it is right now.

The last few weeks I have begun to become very intimate with the Buddhist notion of taking refuge, the idea that when I suffer to turn inward and experience exactly what is: patting my dog on the head in the morning; kissing Erin on the cheek as she sleeps early in the morning; the quiet hum of the city early in the morning on the way to work; the foul smells of the train; the children whose eyes I meet in the hallways at work; laughing with friends in between classes; exhaustion after a particularly long week. Suffering allows me to feel more connected in a way to the present moment and opens me up to make certain choices.

I choose to take refuge in the personal. This is not to say to block out the world, rather let it come in and out of my mind as a breath. I propose that the personal is where we will find the answers to the peace we all seek. Answers are not to be found elsewhere in other countries or in the past. An aggressive effort to meet each other in the moment is all that we have. We literally cannot control anything else.

I choose hope. I choose to see hope in my morning meetings with students as they laugh and cry. I choose to hope for a better today and tomorrow. This is an active hope; it is not a passive sitting around. This is a hope that activates in me energies to seek ways toward peace. This is a hope that wishes for a better tomorrow, but does not wait until tomorrow to start the work that is needed.

I choose optimism. This is an idea every day that we all live under the same sky and that we are all made of the same star stuff. This is an optimism that opens me up to teach children about the importance of sharing, compassion and kindness. This is an optimism that allows me to be available for my family and friends in the ways that they need me. This an optimism that accepts my privileged position in the world and leads toward humility. This is an optimism that leads toward better listening, not more answers. This is an optimism that pauses before acting to wonder what the right way forward might be.

I wish everyone a truly happy end of the year in whatever way you choose to spend it. Find refuge wherever you can.



GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

By Clark Dollard

At a recent Lay Order meeting, we were talking about prostrations and it made me think of this poem. It uses a romantic metaphor, but when I wrote it, I was primarily thinking about doing prostrations. Of course, it is also about bowing at the entrance to the zendo, sitting down on the mat, and all of the other things we do as a part of practice.

There's a bunch of new red roses on the table, candlelight reflecting in your hair.
I've done most everything that I am able, to try and make you see how much I care.
I held you close and told you that I love you,
and I swear that every word I said was true,
I've been going through the motions of loving you.

I tend to get all caught up in confusion, tangled up in everything I feel.
Fantasies, projections, and illusions, who am I to say what's real?
So I reach out through the darkness trying to touch you,
with the faith that I'll find something there that's true.
I keep going through the motions of loving you.

Everything in life is so uncertain, and there's so much I'll never understand.
And there's no way that you can stop the hurting, but you can take me by the hand.
When the emptiness is slipping through my fingers,
there's just one thing that I can hold on to,
And that's going through the motions of loving you.

There's a bunch of new red roses on the table, and candlelight reflecting on your skin
I've done most everything that I am able, and I'd do it all again
Just for the pleasure of giving,
and the joy in all the simple things I do
Going through the motions of loving you.



A BIRTHDAY IN BODHGAYA

By Joel Tagert

From my journal, Nov. 24, 2016.

I am forty years old today, and here I am in Bodhgaya, the place of the Buddha's Enlightenment. It has a beautiful symmetry, I think: a marker at the mid-point of my life, honoring that which is most important to me, this ongoing inquiry into fundamental nature, into ultimate reality.

Recently Peggy Sensei asked if we (Zen Center of Denver members) would write a paragraph answering the question "How has Zen changed you?" As it happens, in Varanasi someone asked much the same question in person. I explained how Zen had made me calmer, more aware, more centered, and how ultimately it was about seeing one's connection to all things, and actually experiencing that connection in the moment.

It wasn't terrible, as answers went, but afterward I felt dissatisfied. Because I don't practice just to gain some balance. If that was all I sought, I could probably accomplish something similar by exercising for an hour a day; certainly that will improve your mood. No, I don't practice to improve myself. Nor do I practice to obtain

some experience, however grand. I practice to reach the root, to touch the firmament, to live beyond the reach of petty doubt.

And this is Zen's great strength, this direct approach in addressing the roots of suffering and separation. It refuses to become lost in the leaves and branches; it moves straight down the trunk into the black earth.

"Wonder of wonders! From the very beginning all beings are by nature whole and complete." The Buddha's words, spoken in this very place, perhaps the most profound words ever spoken.

How have I changed? It isn't necessarily much on the outside. I look much the same, I speak much the same, my mannerisms and even my faults are much the same. But these are only the outward appearance, the leaves and branches; it's what lies at the root that is different.

This is hard to see in another. It takes real perception and insight. Often, we look at someone else and say, "Oh, it's the same old John. He still curses like a sailor, and eats too much, and watches football on the weekends." Because outward change is slow, we miss the inner transformation, which may happen in an instant.

And if you could stand in my shoes, you would see that I am irrevocably changed from before I began this practice. The difference lies not in an alteration of any habit, not in whether I watch television or not, eat meat

or not, wear certain clothes, change my hairstyle, expand my vocabulary, gain a job or lose one, gain a partner or split with them, nor in any circumstance or condition; because all these are transient. It lies rather in the timeless, the unceasing, the limitless and vast, an understanding that reaches beyond the stars and down to the very core.

This is what Zen offers: a truth beyond the reach of opposites, of you and me, here and there, knowing and not knowing. It offers a certainty not found in words – including these – but only in reality itself. This is partly why Zen teachers so often seem to present such randomness: because they are guided by the reality of this moment, with all its particularities, and no other.

So forget what you think you know. True knowledge isn't found by knowing. I'll do the same, and tell you instead about this moment, this place and time:

This room is on the fourth floor of an out-of-the-way guest house in Bodhgaya, India. The concrete walls are painted the color of straw, and the floor is a dusty red. There is a desk, some shelves and a nightstand, all painted lavender. There is a flatscreen TV on the wall opposite the bed, its plug dangling because its status light was shining in my eyes at night.

There is a strong smell of indefinite origin, perhaps from the many cookfires outside, that reminds me of pot resin. On the wall, around the spiral of the light bulb, many small insects are gathering. I'm not sure what they are – some kind of aphid? – nor how they are finding their way inside. This reminds me to touch my neck, where a previously enormous mosquito bite is slowly subsiding.

Bodhgaya isn't quiet; far from it. Just now an auto-rickshaw honks outside; two men are speaking in Hindi outside my door; some children are playing in the courtyard; someone is chopping vegetables in the rooftop restaurant, a hollow wooden rhythm; a dog barks; a door slams; a pot clangs; my pencil scratches on the page.

The place of enlightenment isn't quiet. It is full of noise, cacophonous, complex. But none of this is a stumbling block; it is, just as it is, the living truth.

Now forget all this, crumple up the page, turn off the computer. Where are you now? What is this place? What's really happening here?

"No Story Ever Told," from p. 1

thinking or perceiving.

Denkoroku, Transmission #4:

Upagupta, the Fourth Ancestor, attended the Venerable Sanavasa for three years, then finally shaved his head and became a monk. Sanavasa asked him, "Has your body or mind left home?"

Here it is, this yes-or-no question again, this or that, here or there. Buddha nature or not? Body or mind?

Upagupta replied, "Truly it is my body that has left home." And Sanavasa said, "What has the sublime truth to do with body or mind?" Upon hearing this Upagupta had great realization.

The Buddha left home, cut his hair and walked into the forest. Was that body or mind? You have left home to be here: body or mind? Notice the urge to reply or answer in some way. And then just stop, stop that very movement. Don't get caught in that movement. Rest in what is before body and mind, before the movement into yes or no. For if you answer, "Body" – thirty blows! If you say, "Mind" – thirty blows! If you say, "Body and mind" – sixty blows!

The Buddha said in the *Dhammapada*:

Why is there laughter, why merriment, when this world is on fire? When you are living in darkness, why don't you look for the light?

This body is a painted image, subject to disease, decay and death, activated by thoughts that come and go. What joy can there be for him who sees that his white bones will be cast away like gourds in the autumn?

Around the bones is built a house, plastered over with flesh and blood, in which dwell pride and pretense, old age and death.

What is before body and mind?

Now when the Buddha left home, he set out leaving behind his wife and son. That is a challenging part of the story for many. Do I need to leave my family? My loved ones? Perhaps best not to embark on this path if that is the case? Or perhaps that holds you slightly back as you sit here now, uncertain about letting everything go.

Well, I have recently read a bit of the story of Yasodhara, Buddha's wife, whom we know later joined

the Buddha as one of the nuns in his order. But there is an additional piece to the story. She also was an unusual child with an auspicious birth, and when she met Siddhartha, they recognized each other immediately. She accepted his invitation for marriage and her father warned her of the prediction that Siddhartha would one day leave his family to seek enlightenment, and she replied: “Yes, father. I know this, but I will have none other than Siddhartha for my husband. We have been promised to one another over many lifetimes. This is to be our last and we are to do it together.”

So you see, the stories we hear and the stories we tell are always incomplete. I have been practicing a long time and I never heard this – have you? And what if the story you tell of you and those close to you is simply the tip of an iceberg? What if what you know about it is infinitesimal compared to what you don't know or see? What if you turn toward that? What if we begin to welcome and avail ourselves of that which is unknown, the mystery of you and everyone around you?

This touching story continues:

After Siddhartha left, Yasodhara heard that he had relinquished his fine clothing and had taken to wearing simple yellow robes. She too donned simple yellow robes and gave up wearing jewels. When she heard that he was taking only one meal a day, she also took only one meal a day. When she heard he slept on low, hard beds, she gave up the luxurious palace beds and slept as he did. And when she heard he had given up garlands and perfumes she did so as well. As Siddhartha pursued enlightenment outside the palace gates, Yasodhara joined him on the path within hearth and home. This was, after all, to be her last round of birth and death. She was a laywoman raising her son, but that did not change her auspicious destiny. Staying home did not mean she could not join her beloved husband on his journey towards enlightenment. Although they each played different roles in the story, he seeking enlightenment outside the palace while she stayed within, their intent and focus remained in alignment. (Jacqueline Kramer,

from “Yasodhara and Siddhartha: The Enlightenment of Buddha's Wife”)

Now you could say that one left home in body and one left home in mind, but do you see – that would miss it. Don't imagine that you must leave anywhere; in fact that is often the problem. What we must do is find our home Here. Deeply and profoundly Here. We recite each morning, “Our form now being no form, in going and returning we never leave home.”

What if we begin to welcome and avail ourselves of that which is unknown, the mystery of you and everyone around you?

Zen Master Dogen,
from *Moon in a Dewdrop*:

When you find your place where you are, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point. When you find your way at this moment, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point; for the place, the way, is neither large nor small, neither yours nor others'. The place, the way, has not carried over from

the past, and it is not merely arising now. Accordingly, in the practice-enlightenment of the buddha way, meeting one thing is mastering it – doing one practice is practicing completely.

Everyone sitting here has had an auspicious birth, or you would not be here. Your loved ones are sitting here with you, cheering you on. This is not a personal endeavor. This is one inspired by and for all beings. Allow your intent and focus to remain in alignment.

Don't waste a moment. Your family, the earth, sky and wind are counting on you. They are ready to confirm you, and all you must do is engage your practice with single-minded, direct and loving attention, trusting that the fire of Mu, of breath, of sitting, will burn down the rafters and reveal the vast essence of no story ever told.

Together with all beings we realize the Way. ☸

Gassho Corner

Thanks are due all those who helped transport items to Shambhala Mountain Center for our Rohatsu sesshin, including Brian Meadows, Billy Wynne, Mike Griffiths, David Lee, Francine Campone, Geoff Keeton and Jason Polk. Thanks also to our sesshin leaders, namely tanto Dennis Sienko, jiki Melanie Ritter, jisha Cathy Wright and anja David Lee. And naturally nine bows to our teachers, who work ceaselessly to “gouge wounds in healthy flesh,” as Hsueh Tou wrote.

Credit is also due the architecture and design committee for their work in reviewing and interviewing architects, ultimately making their recommendation to the board; and to Karin Sensei for managing communications with those companies. Gassho!

Lastly, thanks to Francine Campone for hosting our holiday party at her apartment building in Capitol Hill (pictured right), and to those who helped set up and clean afterward for our little shindig.

Calendar Highlights

This training period we have a wonderfully regular schedule, with a sangha circle meeting on the first Sunday of each month; a Dharma talk on the second and fourth Sundays (except for March 12, when we will have a Kannon ceremony); and a zazenkai at Santosha Yoga in Wheat Ridge on the third Sunday. No doubt this will help us step into the natural rhythm of practice.

We will also be introducing a new format with our Beginners Nights, during which we have discussion, questions and answers geared toward beginners following two rounds of zazen. We may yet tinker with the details, but we hope they will serve to encourage new people as they begin their meditation practice.

January 14 - Introductory Seminar

January 22 - Zazenkai with Peggy Sensei

February 19 - Zazenkai with Karin Sensei

February 25 - Introductory Seminar

March 12 - Kannon Ceremony

March 19 - Zazenkai with Ken Sensei



Entering the Gate

A warm welcome to Greg Clark, who has been practicing with us for some time, and formally became a member just recently. Greg is CEO of a medical laboratory servicing the transplant industry. He is married with four children, and in his spare time enjoys outdoor activities like skiing, hiking, biking, swimming and amateur astronomy. Welcome, Greg!

In the Marketplace

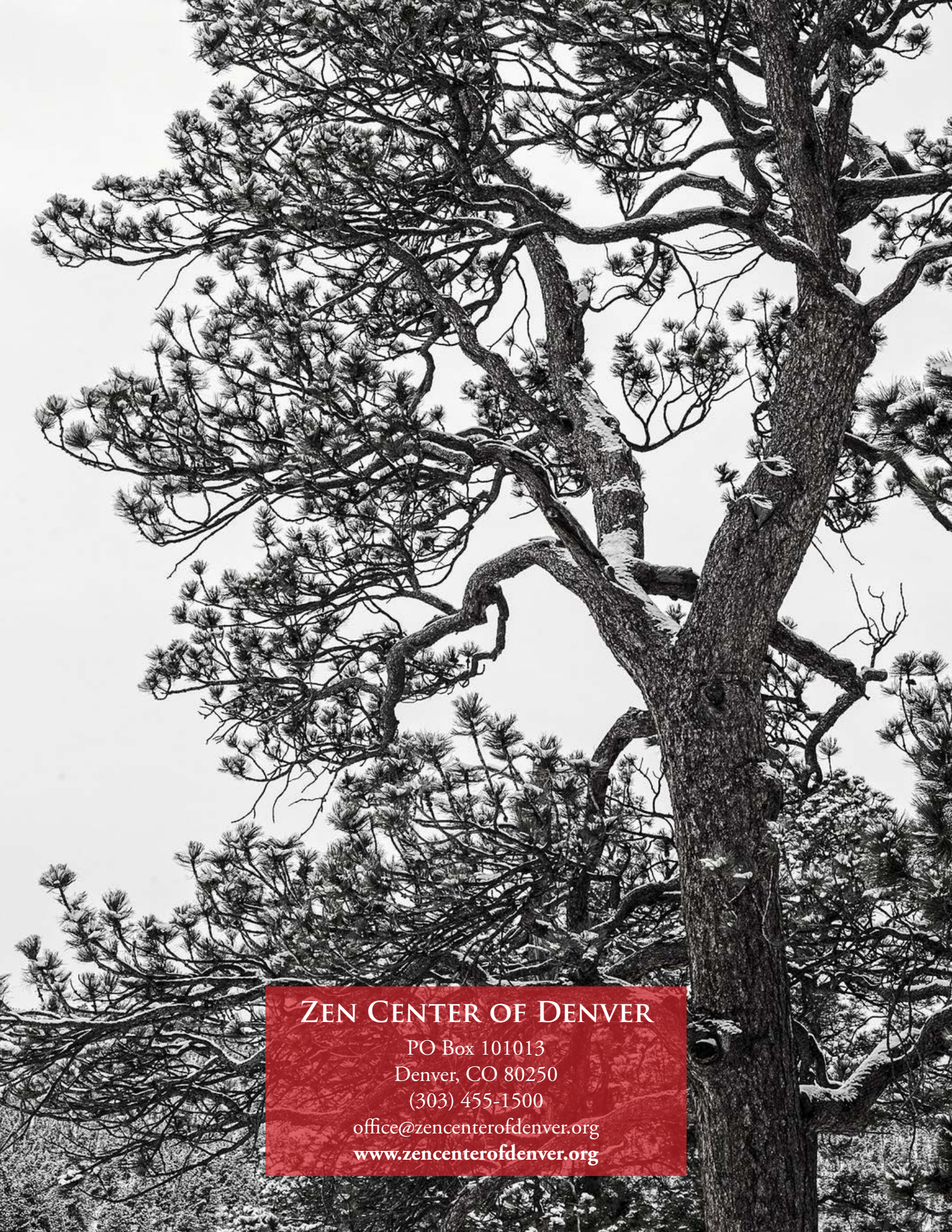
In the Marketplace allows ZCD members to reach fellow sangha members with business, for-sale or want ads. If you would like to place an ad in our next issue, email office@zencenterofdenver.org.

Photography by Geoff Keeton: Family pictures and portraits, picture editing, or if you wanted to combine a picture and Zen saying or koan together I can do that as well. Contact gkeeoft@gmail.com or 720-227-2997.

What Remains by Jacqueline St. Joan, from Turkey Buzzard Press: “*What Remains*, with its dramatic, gorgeous cover enfolding a tour de force of memory, openness, linguistic dexterity, human pain and inextinguishable love, is a triumph of heightened perception over brutal reality, of human spirit over human degradation.” Email jackiestjoan@earthlink.net or see <http://jacquelinestjoan.com>.

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